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Globish and Basic Global English (BGE):
Two Alternatives for a Rapid Acquisition of Communicative Competence in a Globalized World?[*]

Abstract

In this article Globish and Basic Global English (BGE) are presented as two systems that attempt to enable learners to acquire communicative competence in English as a lingua franca in a comparatively fast way. The system of Globish is criticized because the systemic principles for its elaboration are nowhere explained. Globish and the way it is presented does not seem to be based on any empirical or theoretical observations. Moreover, Globish shows a tremendous amount of errors and inconsistencies. BGE, on the other hand, consists of linguistic forms that analyses have shown to be functional in non-native/non-native communication. In addition, BGE respects the needs for both active and passive communication. The empirical analyses have revealed that the use of non-standard or non-native grammatical variants only rarely leads to any communicative breakdown, whereas most breakdowns occur due to lexical or phonetic obstacles. As a consequence, BGE works with a reduced grammar and accepts all functional pronunciations. In addition to this, BGE not only encompasses systemic but also pragmatic rules. The focus, however, is on the rapid acquisition of 750 words to be learnt by everybody and 250 words selected by the learner individually as well as a number of vocabulary-expansion techniques.

Sommaire

Dans cet article le globish et le Basic Global English (BGE) sont présentés comme deux systèmes qui veulent rendre possible pour l'étudiant une acquisition assez rapide d'une compétence communicative en anglais comme « lingua franca ». Le globish est critiqué parce que les principes systémiques pour son élaboration ne sont expliqués nulle part. Le globish et la manière de sa présentation ne semblent pas être fondés sur des observations ni empiriques ni théoriques. De surcroît, le globish se caractérise d'une grande quantité d'erreurs et d'inconséquences. Le BGE, au contraire, consiste de formes linguistiques qui se sont révélées fonctionnelles dans le discours parmi des non-natifs. De plus, le BGE respecte les necessités pour la communication active et pour la communication passive. Les analyses empiriques ont révélé que l'usage de variantes grammaticales non-standard et non-natives ne mènent à des faillites communicatives que rarement, tandis que la plupart des faillites sont causées par des obstacles lexicaux et phonétiques. Par conséquent, le BGE travaille avec une grammaire réduite et accepte toutes les prononciations fonctionelles. En outre, le BGE n'inclut pas seulement des règles systémiques, mais aussi des règles pragmatiques. L'accent, cependant, est mis sur l'acquisition rapide de 750 mots à apprendre par chacun et de 250 mots à choisir par l'étudiant individuellement ainsi qu'un nombre de techniques pour l'élargissement du vocabulaire.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel präsentiert Globish und Basic Global English (BGE) als zwei Systeme, die Lernern einen möglichst schnellen Erwerb von kommunikativer Kompetenz in Englisch als Lingua Franca ermöglichen wollen. Das System Globish wird dabei kritisiert, weil die systemischen Prinzipien für seine Ausarbeitung nirgends erklärt werden. Globish und die Art seiner Darstellung scheinen weder auf empirischen noch auf theoretischen Beobachtungen zu beruhen. Darüber hinaus weist Globish eine ungeheure Anzahl an Fehlern und Inkonsequenzen auf. BGE dagegen besteht aus sprachlichen Formen, die sich in Analysen als funktional im Diskurs zwischen Nicht-Muttersprachlern erwiesen haben. Zusätzlich berücksichtigt BGE die Bedürfnisse in Bezug auf die aktive und die passive Kommunikation. Die empirischen Analysen haben aufgedeckt, dass der Gebrauch von nicht-standardsprachlichen und nicht-muttersprachlichen grammatischen Formen nur selten zu Kommunikationsbrüchen führt, während die meisten Brüche auf lexikalische oder lautliche Hindernisse zurückgehen. BGE arbeitet man folglich mit einer vereinfachten Grammatik und akzeptiert alle funktionalen Ausspracheformen. Zusätzlich enthält BGE nicht nur systemische, sondern auch pragmatische Regeln. Der Schwerpunkt liegt jedoch auf dem schnellen Erwerb von 750 Wörtern, die von allen zu erlernen sind, und 250 Wörtern, die vom Lerner individuell ausgewählt werden, sowie einiger Wortschatzerweiterungstechniken.

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1. Introductory Remarks: Two New Concepts for Beginners of English

The fact that English is the most dominant language used as a lingua franca in conversations between people with different mother tongues should influence the way English is taught. Most of the time, non-natives are faced with non-native English (in conversations with other non-natives) or non-standard English (e.g. when reading CNN headlines). Teachers need to realize that, very often, learners (especially beginners) do indeed not want to learn English to get to know American or British culture the way they learn Spanish in order to delve into a Hispanic culture or French in order to familiarize themselves with a Francophone nation. Many learners of English simply want to be able to communicate with "foreigners". They see English as a tool for exchanging information and ideas and for creating social bonds; the aesthetic function, if we want to adopt Jakobson's terminology, plays virtually no role then. Not everybody strives to get to know a native English-speaking culture. In this article I want to present two systems of teaching English that attempt to enable students to acquire communicative competence in a comparatively fast way: Globish and Basic Global English (BGE).

2. Globish

In 2004 a new closed system of "reduced" English received attention, first in France and later also in other nations: Globish. This system was invented by Jean-Paul Nerrière, a former businessman, who was supported by two Canadian teachers of English for his second book (cf. Nerrière 2004 and Nerrière/Dufresne/Bourgon 2005). Since Nerrière's system seems to be receiving quite a bit of attention, it is definitely worth discussing further. In the following paragraphs my pagination always refers to the 2005 publication. To begin with, the ideas and elements of Globish according to Nerrière are:
• being able to communicate with merely 1,500 words
• using a pronunciation of intelligibility, not of perfection
• teaching simple, but standard grammatical structures
• making learners "ambilingual" by making them achieve a threshold level of English (p. 14)
• providing a tool for leading conversations as a business person or as a tourist in any country of the world (p. 13f.).

There are without a doubt some positive aspects in Nerrière's work. I support his idea of providing a great amount of reading and listening material on his homepage **for free**. Quite helpful passages in the book are his "Alternative globish" remarks where he introduces readers to easier structures and constructions (sometimes, however, the alternative suggestions are unnecessary, e.g. *I'm gonna* instead of *I'm going to*, or wrong, e.g. the statement that *a lot of* is always combined with the singular, or actually more complicated, e.g. *Am I permitted to park here?* instead of *Can I park here?*). I also welcome his general desire to provide a simplified English for communicating with both native and non-native speakers. But this is where the problems start.

It is certainly unfortunate for a book on English for international communication that the cultural information is only given for the US and the UK. A more serious point of criticism concerns methodology. Nowhere are the systemic principles for the elaboration of Globish visible. Obviously, it is not based on any empirical observations, neither on native-nonnative nor on nonnative-nonnative discourse. Furthermore, there are no recognizable (didactic) principles as far as the order and the presentation of the grammar and vocabulary items are concerned. However, what is certainly most alarming is the tremendous amount of errors and

mistakes that you find in the book—including the fact that the "wrong" treatment of some phenomena is not even consistent. Let me illustrate these points with a few examples from phonology, grammar, vocabulary, discourse and the didactic method.

2.1. Phonology

- It remains unclear what exactly is so revolutionary about the pronunciation technique (p. 14).
- The stress and rhythm of English are described at length (p. 20-23), although this is not necessary for being understood in international settings.
- The explanation for *shwa* is incorrect, since his French examples of *s'il te plaît > s'te plaît* and *à cette heure > as'theure* make the reader think that it is a zero sound (p. 26).
- Why do Nerrière and his co-authors not use IPA, which is probably the most current transcription system in dictionaries world-wide? Why should learners be more comfortable with their system, where <ä> represent the diphthong [eɪ] and <ë> the monophthong [iː], where the lengthening circumflex marker is used to represent long [ɔː] in <ô>, but short [ʊ] in <û>, and where [ʒ] is represented by <jh>, but [dʒ] by <dj> and not by <djh> as one might expect (p. 37).
- Some of the phonetic descriptions are unfortunate or wrong: the underlined sound in *b**e**st* does not equal the one in *sup**e**r*, since final -*er* is quite frequently pronounced [ɛːr] in French. Also for this reason the explanation for *ch**ai**r* doesn't help the French reader at all. The authors say that the vowel is pronounced like the one in French *pair* and state, without establishing a connection with the entry word, that there's a difference between *père* and *paire* (p. 37)—as a matter of fact, *pair*, *paire* and *père* are pronounced homophonously in the standard French of France.

Moreover, the pronunciation of a number of words is given incorrectly (even in the authors' system):
- sometimes [é] (Globish [ê]) instead of [e] (Globish [è]), e.g. *nowh**e**re, t**e**rror, t**e**rrible*
- occasionally [e] (Globish [è]) instead of [ə] (Globish [∂]), e.g. *s**u**cceed*
- occasionally [ɔː] (Globish [ô]) instead of [ɒ] (Globish [ò]), e.g. *o**range, h**o**rrible* (this is a feature of English in Canada, where the two co-authors come from, but this should be done consistently then)
- occasionally [ɑː] (Globish [â]) instead of [ɒː] or [ɔː] (Globish [ô]), e.g. *law* (whereas *withdr**aw*** is transcribed with [ɒ ~ ɔ], Globish [ò])
- [toʊˈwerd] (Globish [töwèrd]) instead of [tʊˈwɔːrd] (Globish [tûword])
- [ˈfɔðər] (Globish [fòdh∂r]) instead of [ˈfɑːðər] (Globish [fâdh∂r])

2.2. Grammar

Nerrière and his co-authors promote simple but correct grammar. However, many descriptions of structures with respect to standard (native) English are wrong.
- It is wrong to state that all elements of a phrase that are not the head are optional (p. 44).
- On p. 51 they use the sentence *I have served twenty years in the Navy* for Fr. *Je suis dans la marine depuis vingt ans*. In fact, the correct English sentence should have been *I have been serving in the Navy for twenty years*. A few lines later *I had waited fifteen minutes when the bus arrived* should be corrected into *I had been waiting for fifteen minutes when the bus arrived*. Throughout the entire book the authors themselves don't master the difference between present perfect simple and present perfect progressive, nor the

difference between present simple and present perfect simple nor the difference between past perfect simple and past perfect progressive (53f., 130ff., 166ff.).

- As to possessive constructions, dealt with in Lesson 14, the authors describe the *of-*construction with animate possessors as wrong (p. 174); its lower frequency with animate possessors doesn't make it incorrect.
- It is correctly said that present tense can be used for future reference as a timetable future, but I assume that women in particular would disagree when the authors use *I get married to Harry next month* as an example (p. 182).
- The relative pronouns are translated as *"who* 'qui', *whose* 'de qui, à qui'" (p. 198) instead of *"who* 'qui, à qui', *whose* 'de qui'". Moreover, it is also wrong to say that *who* and *which* can **always** be replaced by *that*, thus ignoring the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses (p. 199).
- The phrases *a lot of, a large number of, a large amount of* etc. are certainly not always followed by a singular form (p. 216, 218).
- *must* is said to be present tense as well as past tense and future tense (and thus *he must be in Paris* is wrongly paraphrased as 'he's got to be in Paris' and as 'I think he will probably be in Paris' and as 'I think he was probably in Paris') (p. 232f.).
- It is said that disyllabic adjectives form the comparative in *-er* (p. 241); as a matter of fact, it is only those disyllabic adjectives that end in *-y*; others form their comparative analytically.

2.3. Words and Phrases

As already stated, the suggested vocabulary of Globish is not based on any explicit principles. Moreover, the forms are not even attached to any meanings in the book. On his website, Nerrière offers a French-Globish list, which is, however, hardly helpful. For example, what is a French reader to do with the statement that the equivalent for Fr. *information* is *information* or *intelligence*. Can he say *I have a new intelligence for you* then? Would this be understood...? On top of this, the next line tells the reader that for the plural, *informations*, he should use the form *news* .... Besides, in the book, the reader will find phrases that, for a learner of Globish, seem unnecessary, too idiomatic, too rare or, in fact, wrong. For instance, the phrase *the upteeth time* (p. 191) must be corrected to *the umpteenth time*.

On p. 80 it is said that a Globish speaker should always say "Yes, I am", "No, I can't" etc. (p. 80) instead of a simple "Yes" or "No". But why a Globish speaker in particular should use these extended forms is nowhere made clear. There might indeed be arguments for the preference of such forms, but the authors should say what these arguments are.

As far as word-formation is concerned, the authors present a generally good table of word-formation patterns on p. 75, but one of the most productive types, conversion, is missing.

2.4.   Didactic Aspects

Nerrière and his co-authors present Globish as a manual or textbook for self-instruction. However, the method that the authors have chosen leaves a lot to be desired. While there is some didactic progression as far as grammar is concerned, the presentation of the vocabulary is, again, totally unstructured. It seems that the order of the words introduced is purely random: there is no structuring according to lexical fields, notional fields, antonyms, word-classes, actual contexts—nothing that would be based on psycholinguistic knowledge. This is also reflected in the following points:
- Prepositions are—totally illogically—called *postpositions*.

- The specific verb-marker for the 3rd sg. pres. is not mentioned at all in the grammar chapter and not before the third lesson of the main part (p. 97).
- Various negation and interrogative structures (auxiliaries aside from *do* periphrase) are introduced without further explanation on their distributions.
- Some of the translations are misleading. It is incorrect to translate *I can* as 'je peux' and *I may* as 'je puis ' (p. 60); Fr. *je peux* and *je puis* are not differentiated in meaning, but only in style. Similar example: *I will [do]* does not express nor reflect the present-day formal equivalent of Fr. *je veux [faire]* but of *je vais [faire]* (p.60).
- What should learners make of the many senseless, or incomplete, sentences like *Did you build?* (p. 124), *He's been pulling.* (with the punctuation mark that indicates the completion of a full sentence, sic!), *She's been putting.* (dito), and *They've been announcing.* (dito) (all p. 139).
- Nerrière encourages the reader to look up the meanings of his 1,500 in a dictionary. It is certainly a good general principle to encourage the learner to pursue different activities. But how should the learner know how many of the dictionary meanings of a word should be learned? The learner will then probably favor Nerrière's alternative of checking the meanings in his on-line Globish dictionary but will only find a French-Globish list there, and I've already pointed out this list's problems.

Apart from all these examples, there are also several other irritating passages. In general, it is rather doubtful that Globish in its current form and in the way it is presented reprents a form of functional and easy-to-learn English. Of course, it is always frustrating to get such a load of harsh criticism. I would therefore advise the authors to thoroughly revise their book. Then, Globish might still turn out to be a useful way of learning the global lingua franca.

3. Basic Global English (BGE)

Comparing BGE to other suggestions for "reduced English" such as BASIC English (e.g. Ogden 1934, Templer 2005), Nuclear English (Stein 1979, Quirk 1981), Threshold Level English (van Ek and Alexander 1980), and Globish (Nerrière, Dufresne and Bourgon 2005)., I don't claim that it is *per se* a better solution for facilitated communication. BGE certainly still needs comprehensive testing, but it needs to be stressed that its creation is based on principles that sometimes very consciously differ from the principles of the other suggestions of "reduced" English already mentioned (cf. also Grzega 2005c, 67f.), principles that, in my view, better preserve and allow for a more "natural" English.

Analyses of non-native/non-native communication have shown that very seldom does the use of non-standard or non-native grammatical variants lead to any communicative breakdown, whereas most obvious breakdowns occur due to lexical or phonetic obstacles; the studies on pragmatic misinterpretations have not provided any clear results (cf. James 1998, Jenkins 2003 and Seidlhofer 2004 for a state of the art). As a consequence, the major aspect of BGE is the teaching of the necessary pronunciation of phonemes as well as the elaboration of a vocabulary and vocabulary-extension tools. Moreover, learners should be familiarized with a few general pragmatic skills for international communication. A full description of BGE is freely available in the Internet: in Grzega (2005c) as well as on the BGE website http://people.freenet.de/grzega/BGE.htm). BGE should be presented in the mother tongue of the learner (i.e. the mother tongue as a metalanguage). The BGE website offers the "raw material" version and a BGE version for German-speaking learners. A BGE version for Spanish-speaking learners is currently produced by two of my students and will be added to the website when completed.

3.1. Grammar

BGE accepts the fact that empirical studies (cf., e.g., Seidlhofer 2004) have illustrated that violations against native standard English grammar rarely impede communicative success. This allows us to accept forms that are not standard native English, but can, most frequently, be found in English non-standard varieties or standard varieties from the Outer Circle (in Kachru's terminology) as well. Non-standard or non-native forms to be included in BGE are primarily levelled-out irregularities (e.g. irregular verbs). This contributes to the acceleration of the learning process. Experience with Esperanto classes in elementary school have shown that learners master a language more rapidly and easily (and also other languages that they will study in the future) if their first foreign language is regular (cf., e.g., Frank and Lobin 1998). However, the absolutely strict regularity of Esperanto can, of course, not be offered in BGE, as it does not exclude native variants. But the regular forms are especially highlighted. Nevertheless, the learners are encouraged to remember particularly frequent exceptions to a "regular grammatical pattern". In general, BGE should only offer the most basic and most frequent grammatical patterns in English.

Here are three grammatical BGE rules as examples (N.B.: The grammatical terms are explained at the beginning of the grammar chapter; plus, the eventual metalanguage of BGE should be the mother tongue of the learner):

(2) With nouns we distinguish between (a) forms referring to one item (= singular) and (b) forms referring to more than one item (= plural). With (a) you use the basic form, with (b) you normally write an *s* or, if the word already ends in an *s*-like sound (i.e. [s, z, ʃ, ʒ], *es* attached to the basic form. This *(e)s* is pronounced [ɪz] after an *s*-like sound (*glasses*), [z] after any other voiced sound (*boys, girls*), [s] after any other voiceless sound (*cats*). Important irregularities are: *man* [mæn] > *men* [men], *woman* [ˈwʊmən] > *women* [ˈwɪmɪn], *child* [tʃaɪld] > *children* [ˈtʃɪldrən], *foot* [fʊt] > *feet* [fiːt], *tooth* [tuːθ] > *teeth* [tiːθ].

(7) To describe something that is only valid and in progress at a certain moment ("frame action"), a construction called *progressive* is used: "form of *be* (depending on whether *I/you/we/they/he/she/it* or a noun precedes it) + basic form of the verb + *ing* attached to the verb", e.g. *I am singing, Paul is painting*. However, if the normal verb form is used instead of the *ing*-construction, there will be no danger of miscommunication, if forms like *now* [naʊ] or *at the moment* [æt ðə ˈmoʊmənt] are used.

(10) To describe something in the future, the present tense can be used as long as the future reference is made clear otherwise (e.g. adverbs). Native speakers of English use several different constructions, which express different notions. The two most frequent ones are "*will* [wɪl] + basic verb form" or "*am/are/is going to* + basic verb form". Present tense is used by native Americans and Brits only in connection with time-tables. However, if present tense is generally used, successful communication will hardly be endangered.

Critics may say that grammar must be normative and must not allow variation, but we have to keep in mind that every standard also has (quasi-)synonymy with grammatical constructions. Possessive constructions in standard native English, for instance, can be expressed by the *s*-construction (Saxon genitive) or by the *of*-construction (*my best friend's wedding = the wedding of my best friend*). Even if the stylistic and the pragmatic, or connotative, value may potentially differ, the denotation is still the same. I do admit that, in particular, deviations from standard morphology are most easily spotted. However, non-native speakers seem to consider these deviations as "more serious errors" than native speakers. In a study carried out

by Hecht and Green (1983, especially 66-70) British teachers marked mistakes such as *she want* for StE *she wants* and *we go* for *we'll go* (or another future tense) more mildly than German teachers of English as a foreign language. Also of note, Jenkins (2006, 43f.) reports that the non-standard features in *There's five cars in my picture* and *I've got less cars* often go unnoticed in spoken native English; moreover, constructions like *four furnitures* for BrE and AmE *four pieces of furniture* have become standard in what is called Englishes of the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. This clearly speaks in favor of a larger range of accepted grammatical structures.

3.2. Sounds and Sound-Letter-Equivalents

Jennifer Jenkins (e.g. 2003) was the first to emphasize the necessity of defining empirically deduced "lingua franca core" features, in other words: forms that are essential even in non-native/non-native discourse. As to sounds, which she concentrated on, these include the following elements:

- the correct consonant sounds except for /θ/, /ð/ and dark 'l' [ɫ], which might be substituted
- the correct vowel quantity (but not necessarily the quality except for /ɜː/)
- aspiration after initial /p/, /t/, and /k/
- correct word initial and medial consonant clusters
- nuclear (tonic) stress
- rhoticity (like AmE rather than BrE)
- /t/ should always stay /t/ (like BrE rather than AmE)
- allophonic variation is permissible as long as there is no overlap to another phoneme (e.g. Spanish [β] for [v] is often perceived as [b] by other non-native speakers; non-aspirated [p, t, k] in word-initial position instead of [pʰ, tʰ, kʰ] is often perceived as [b, d, g])
- simplification of consonant clusters is permissible only in mid- and final position, but only according to native English rules of syllable structure (e.g. for *factsheet* [-kʃ-] is permissible, but not [-tʃ-] or [-kt-].

The BGE sound chapter is based on these findings and describes the production of sounds in everyday terms. The difficulty of articulating specific sounds will depend on a learner's mother tongue. A useful way to teach foreign languages is to search for internationalisms or Anglicisms in the source language and contrast their pronunciation with English pronunciation. For some sounds, there are better phonetic surrogates and worse phonetic surrogates. For instance, if [θ] cannot be pronounced correctly (e.g. by German and French learners), it's better to use [t] than to use [s]. These should be pointed out to the learners as well. Finally, the usual spelling for a sound or a sound combination needs explaining. Here are two examples (again, the mother tongue of the learner is supposed to be the metalanguage; the wording here is from the BGE "raw material"):

[p]	*pop*	Like [b], but without vibration of vocal chords (= voiceless). At the beginning of a word the sound has audible aspiration: [pʰ]. This sound must not be mixed up with [f] or [b].	[p] is always written *p* or *pp*; each *pp* is pronounced [b], but some *p*'s are silent
[d]	*daddy*	Put the tip of the tongue behind the upper incisors; the vocal chords must vibrate. This sound must not be mixed up with [ð].	[d] equals *d* or *dd* and vice versa

3.3. Vocabulary and Vocabulary-Extension Techniques

Vocabulary is the most vital point in communication. On the one hand, each learner should be aware that he already knows a lot of international words that are of English descent or of different descent but that are also known in English. These words are international because they denote international things or because they occur in names of internationally known things or because we know them from international media. It might be useful in languages that share a lot of internationalisms with English to compare the formation of internationalisms in both languages. This will enable the learner to coin other words not included in this list as well. On the other hand, there are three major problematic lexical areas: (a) lexical gaps, (b) "serious" false friends", (c) metaphorical expressions (that cannot be interpreted word-for-word or are not very obvious). Because of the first aspect BGE focusses on the development of a basic vocabulary with word-formation and paraphrasing techniques and an individual word-stock at the same time.

I have already described the guiding principles for selecting the words for my BGE vocabulary in my fundamental BGE article (Grzega 2005c, 80f.): Since BGE aims at enabling the rapid acquisition of active as well as passive communication skills for present-day communication, I could not pursue a purely notion-based approach. The latter aspect required that word frequencies be taken into account. Bauman and Culligan's General Service List turned out to be the most recent one (1995). For a start, I gathered all types that showed more than 500 tokens in their corpus. This yielded 208 words (including pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions). I then took out the grammatical words and put them into the grammar chapter where they could be presented together with bound grammatical morphemes. The remaining stock was then supplemented by words that seemed necessary for active conversation. For this, I checked "basic vocabulary" books for learners of English of different mother tongues as well as the basic word list of the DCE and extracted those words that were devoid of clear associations with a specific nation. Then I had my students discuss this list in class and on the *EuroLinguistiX* discussion forum. Finally, I reduced the list to 750 words. For the BGE material the words are now categorized into various fields and subfields. Thus the definition of the BGE vocabulary was based on both a language-based and a notion-based approach. In the various bilingual BGE versions (i.e. BGE version for German-speaking learners, BGE version for French-speaking learners, etc.), a lexical entry contains four columns: the word, the pronunciation, notes on grammatical particularities and the meaning. The "meaning column" should not contain all senses of a word; it should only contain the ones relevant for BGE, in other words: the respective word-field, followed by the word's senses that are included in other BGE word-fields. Thus, *court* is only glossed with 'courthouse', but not with 'royal home', *list* is only given as 'writing a record of short pieces of information', but not as 'leaning', *juice* is only the designation for 'drink out of fruits', but not for 'electric power' and

so on. In brief, the BGE vocabulary contains designations, not words.

Additionally, BGE teaches learners tricks to enrich their word-stock, merely with the words from the basic vocabulary. Here are two examples of BGE word-formation methods:
- by using a word in a different word-class—this method, as illustrated several times in the Basic Vocabulary, is very popular and frequent in English and is termed "conversion"; e.g. the words *offer, interest* and *list* from the Basic Vocabulary or *e-mail*, which can also be used as a verb, or *mix*, which can also be used as a noun
- by adding prefixes and suffixes, e.g. *er* attached to a verb expresses the Agent of an Action (the Agent can be a human being or a thing), e.g. *dancer, mixer, player, interpreter, driver, baker* (if a verb ends in *e*, only *r* is attached)

Finally, the vocabulary section includes advice for paraphrasing in order to fill lexical gaps, e.g. "In paraphrases and explanations the sequence "superordinate term – particular feature" may be helpful, e.g. *a cat is an animal that eats mice; a piano is an instrument with white and black keys; a piano is the instrument that Duke Ellington and Arthur Rubenstein played*." Moreover, learners must be shown how they can use hedges like *kind of* or *somehow*. We have already said that metaphorical expressions often turn out to be problematic. This not only refers to syntagmas, but also to single words. Learners must know that they learn equivalents for designations, i.e. concrete form-object relations; they don't learn equivalents for words (with the entire semantic range of their mother tongue). Metaphors should only be used if they are objectively obvious and if they are marked (*this is **like**...*). Furthermore, learners need to be aware that different nations or social groups categorize the world in different ways. If, for example, the word *family* comes up in a conversation, it should not come as a surprise if Americans think of 'parents + children', Europeans of 'parents + children (+ grandparents)' and Orientals of 'everyone that is related to him/her, even if only remotely'.

BGE also requires that each learner create an individual stock of 250 words for talking about himself or things he, or she, is interested in. This may include the job (or school), hobbies, family history, environment of one's home, and customs of one's own culture. This idea grants learners quite a large degree of autonomy. The teacher should recommend a good (bilingual) dictionary to the learners (a collection of links to on-line dictionaries is provided at http://www.onomasiology.de under "Helpful Internet Sources"). Learners should divide every page of their vocabulary books into 5 columns—Column 1: the English word, Column 2: pronunciation and grammatical particularities (if necessary), Column 3: a paraphrase consisting of the words of the Basic Vocabulary in Section 2 (if necessary), Column 4: a learning aid (if necessary), Column 5: equivalent in the learner's mother tongue.

3.4. Politeness Strategies and Further Conversational Strategies

In actual communication, speakers will quickly note that not only will knowledge of linguistic forms alone not guarantee a successful conversation, it is also vital to know *when* to use which form; in other words, it is also vital to know about politeness strategies. None of the other "reduced" Englishes really addresses this problem. Unfortunately, politeness strategies differ considerably from civilization to civilization. "Over-politeness" can be as irritating for the hearer as "under-politeness". Therefore, BGE aims for a compromise. Here are two rules from the BGE conversational strategies:
(3)   A positive atmosphere is created if positive words are used. This holds even true for complaints. If you want to stay polite, then it is advisable that you use the positive element of antonymic word-pairs. Instead of *good—bad* [gʊd bæd] it is better to use

good—not good or (still more polite) *good—not so good* [ˈnɒt soʊ ɡʊd].

(7)   With the words *Sorry* or *I am sorry* [aɪ əm ˈsɒri] you apologize for a small and big "offense" you've committed. It is already a small offense if you come too close to somebody. You respond to the phrase *(I am) sorry* with the words *That is* [or *That's*] *OK* [ðæts oʊˈkeɪ] or *No problem* [ˈnoʊ ˈprɒbləm].

In addition to these rules, learners should also be familiarized with some general rules for intercultural communication (cf. Grzega 2005a, 35f.):

1.   The only generalization one can make: "Don't generalize."
2.   Language not only serves for transporting information, but also for creating interpersonal bonds.
3.   Formulate questions in such a way that the addressee cannot answer with "yes" or "no", but that the addressee has to make explicit statements or explicitly choose an option.
4.   Listen and watch others and yourself attentively and consciously. There might be hidden misunderstandings.
5.   Respect other cultures' values as equally valuable and in the entire context of the other culture.
6.   Use standard speech or general colloquial speech. Speak slowly and distinctly. Your sentences shouldn't be too complex. You may support your utterance with body language.
7.   Don't make unexplained utterances that require "insider" knowledge.
8.   Be aware that linguistic politeness rules may be different from situation to situation.
9.   If you feel that there is a misunderstanding, you should verbalize this in a circumspect manner.
10.   Feel friendly toward the other. Smile!

3.5. Pedagogical and Cognitive Aspects

Since Selinker (1972) formulated the concept of "interlanguage", errors and mistakes have increasingly been seen as a valuable phenomenon rather than something that immediately has to be eliminated by the teacher. But even today, there exists a certain myth that errors/mistakes might never be levelled out again once the learner has grown too much accustomed to them or has learned too many non-native forms. Applied to the case of BGE, this may lead to the critique that learners will not be able to replace the non-standard and non-native forms of English they were allowed in BGE if they want to acquire a native-like level at a later period in their lives. However, this concern runs counter most experiences that teachers have with university students and learners who spend a long time abroad at an already very advanced level. If learners have acquired sufficient metalinguistic knowledge, this knowledge will enable them to note differences between their own forms and forms of the target country. A possible solution is that teachers supplement learners' non-standard forms with the native standard variants when they correct speech/text productions of their students. This does not mean marking the non-standard forms as wrong, as long as they are part of BGE, i.e. as long as they lead to communicative success.

It is a pedagogic myth that the younger the foreign language learner the better s/he will learn a foreign language. Several studies have shown that this only holds true when the learner is constantly and naturally exposed to the foreign language (e.g. when learning the language in the foreign country itself); for the average classroom situation it seems that "older" is "better" (cf., e.g., Cohen and Dörnyei 2002, 171, or Fröhlich-Ward 2003). Furthermore, although it has been shown that advanced age can have negative effects predominantly on learning the

foreign sound system, even here learners can nonetheless achieve native-like pronunciation if their metalinguistic knowledge is sufficient (cf., e.g. Cohen and Dörnyei 2002, 171). This underscores the need to contrast the target language with the learners' native language (and other languages they might already be familiar with) very consciously and to have learners train their metalinguistic, cognitive skills. Although BGE allows regular and simplified grammatical patterns—a fact that, as I've already said Frank and Lobin (e.g. 1998) have described as supportive in learning a first foreign language—, BGE cannot be learnt without a certain metalinguistic knowledge and conscious observations of the learner's own mother tongue.

Teaching BGE is based on a didactic formula that I've long based all my university courses on: providing "core knowledge + soft skills + a platform for individual specializations". This formula respects learner autonomy, it creates the type of people that seemed to be needed today, namely generalists with a basic knowledge in a lot of fields and key skills who could easily and quickly turn themselves into temporary specialists in many fields. As far as teaching and learning foreign languages, including BGE, is concerned, teachers should prefer a didactic model that focusses on activity. Here, Jean-Pol Martin's model *LdL* is particularly apt (*LdL* stands for the German expression *Lernen durch Lehren*, in English *Learning by Teaching*). Its basic idea is to hand over as much teaching responsibility to the learner as possible and to encourage as many students as possible to engage in the highest possible degree of activity (cf. Grzega in print, or the Wikipedia entry "Learning by Teaching" by Jean-Pol Martin). This means that learners should be encouraged very early on to carry out activities such as:
•   present their family
•   participate in a discussion forum
•   write a (fictitious) e-mail for a hotel room reservation
•   write a (fictitious) e-mail to an ebay merchant
•   write or supplement article for the Simple English Wikipedia (http://simple.wikipedia.org)
and also
•   introduce or have their peer elaborate a BGE word-field, BGE grammar rules or BGE politeness rules
As of yet, there are no specific BGE textbooks. It will probably be necessary to have some artificial material in the first stages of the learning process. There cannot be a general BGE textbook. The material should depend on the learner group; it must consist of content that affects the learner and must therefore respect factors such as age, degree of heterogeneity, cultural background, etc. As soon as possible, however, teachers should refer to simple but authentic (international) material such as commercials, cartoons, headlines, brief articles, small brochures, short stories, jokes, excerpts from discussion forums, etc. which students can use as a basis for discussions in class.

As regards the time frame, Ogden's concept that his 850 BASIC English words can be learned within one month (30 hours) may appear a little optimistic as an average number. Nevertheless, I think that BGE in all its areas (sounds, politeness strategies, vocabulary and grammar) can at least be **covered** in about 30 hours, but the learning process, or memorization process, will depend on the intervals between lessons, on the intensity of actual practice and on a learner's natural gift for languages.

Final Remarks

In overall comparison, the following aspects distinguish BGE from Globish and other

"reduced Englishes" (cf. also Grzega 2005c, 67):

- The most crucial point to understand about BGE is that BGE does not take native standard English as a model but includes the variants of successful lingua franca communication, also called the "lingua franca core", as elaborated by other linguists (cf. Jenkins 2003, Seidelhofer 2004, Sneyd 2001). This does not mean that BGE is artificial: the variants are not invented, but are already in use and can be found in native and/or non-native English dialects.
- BGE allows variation, which comes close to natural varieties of language(s).
- Not only vocabulary and phonology are "reduced", but also grammar.
- It not only encompasses systemic rules but also pragmatic rules.
- It respects the difference between needs for active communication and needs for passive communication. This means, for instance, that synonyms or synonymic structures are included in BGE if they are frequent in real-life communication.
- The internationally successful non-standard variants are often regularized forms. The acceptance and offer of such forms respects experiences with learners of Esperanto as a first foreign language, which have shown that a regular linguistic system in the first instance of foreign language learning accelerates the acquisition of any linguistic patterns in more advanced stages of the learning process and the acquisition of any additional language.
- It promotes a "core knowledge" of the language plus "individual linguistic expansion" from the very beginning of the learning process—the concept of offering learners "core knowledge" plus a platform for "enlarging their knowledge according to individual wants" should be a general didactic concept (cf. Grzega 2005c, 2005d), and this includes language learning. This should keep motivation and learner autonomy high and thus also accelerate the learning process.

Every teacher of English as a foreign language is invited to try out BGE and to ask questions and discuss experiences on the discussion forum of *EuroLinguistiX* (ELiX) at http://www.eurolinguistix.com.

Finally, after describing the BGE modules for beginners of English, there are also things that native speakers and non-native speakers with a more advanced command of English can do to improve conversation with speakers with a lower competence of English (cf. also Grzega 2005c: 68):

- accept the variants presented as rightful variants in international contexts, but without falling into "foreigner talk" such as generally uninflected verbs, simplified and preposed negation patterns, confusion of subject and object pronouns, loss of prepositions and general elimination of articles (cf., e.g., Ferguson 1975)
- aim at a pronunciation that favors full vowels over schwa in unstressed syllables (as this has proven to be more successful in lingua-franca communication)
- abstain from metaphorical expressions that cannot be interpreted word-for-word (as these have been shown to be problematic in lingua-franca communication)—in this respect a certain awareness competence might have to be practiced.

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