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TEACHING GLOBAL ENGLISH:
A REPORT FROM THE FIELD

Owing to ever-increasing globalization, most users of English in the world now speak a particular version of English – global English, which differs from the native-speaker English in three main ways: (1) global English generally lacks the grammatical complexity of standard native-speaker English; (2) speakers of global English tend to use the language only in the situations connected with international communication; (3) global English is spoken with a great variety of accents.

Due to these features, the standard of proficiency in global English that non-native speakers should aim to attain is very simple and pragmatic. It is the ability to express themselves effectively in very specific situations using the simpler language than the native speaker language and that may also be much simpler than the language one would normally use when speaking their native language. To achieve this standard non-native speakers щоf English should prioritize and personalize their learning. To prioritize their learning, they should focus on mastering only basic grammatical structures, learning particular lexis and on ensuring that their accent does not interfere with understanding them. To personalize learning, they should relate it to their own lives, set personal learning goals and learn to teach themselves.

To help the learners of global English whose native language is German prioritize and personalize their learning it is useful: (1) to divide English verb constructions into those that students should master actively and those that they may learn to recognize only; (2) to maximize the time spent learning vocabulary; (3) to focus vocabulary-learning on learners' specific needs; (4) to ensure that the learners' personal goals are realistic; (5) to maximize the student's input into the learning process and (6) to help learners devise the ways to describe their own daily lives, immediate environments and experiences in English. But whatever strategies are used they should enable the learners of English to communicate effectively not in the language of native speakers but in the language spoken on today's global arena.

Key words*: global English, prioritization, personalization.*

It is a widely held assumption that the ultimate goal of foreign language instruction is to enable non-native speakers to achieve the same or nearly the same level of competency in the languages they are attempting to learn as native speakers of those languages or – to put it another way – that the standard by which proficiency in foreign language acquisition should be evaluated is a native-speaker proficiency. This assumption is reflected in a number of different phenomena. It is reflected, for example, in curricula in schools and universities that the focus should be on providing students with a detailed and comprehensive knowledge of the grammar, syntax and vocabulary of foreign languages. It is reflected in examinations that test the extent to which students have acquired that detailed and comprehensive knowledge. It is reflected in the fact that students of foreign languages are generally encouraged to emulate native-speaker pronunciation. And it is reflected in the fact that students of foreign languages often prefer the teachers who are native speakers to those who are not. There are, moreover, at least two good reasons for thinking that this assumption is correct: (1) non-native speakers with less than native-speaker proficiency may not be able to understand or to be understood by native speakers and (2) linguistic competence is often assumed – consciously or unconsciously – to be a sign of an individual's intelligence, level of education and social status and, hence, speakers of a foreign language who make even slight mistakes in grammar, word choice or pronunciation are sometimes not taken seriously by other speakers of that language and may even become objects of ridicule.

But while all this may be true in some cases, I do not think that it generally applies to the learning and teaching of English in the twenty-first century. That is, I do not think that, in today's world, students of English as a foreign language should always – or even often – aspire to achieve native-speaker proficiency; and I do not think that instruction in English as a foreign language should always – or even often – make native-speaker proficiency the standard for assessing their performance. Therefore, in what follows, I would like (1) to explain why I think a different standard should be used to assess the proficiency of non-native speakers of English, (2) to describe in a general way what this standard is and what is required to achieve it and (3) to describe a few components of the strategy that I have found helpful in teaching global English in Germany.

1. Why a different standard of English proficiency?

Once upon a time – about 500 years ago – English was spoken by a few million people on the British Isles. Those people were divided, among other things, by region, culture, level of education and social position. Consequently, the language that they spoke and wrote was also divided into a number of different dialects and sub-dialects. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, native speakers of English colonized large areas outside the British Isles – North America, the Indian subcontinent, the Caribbean, South Africa, Australia and Singapore, for example [1, p. 254-509; 2, p. 29-59].This historical development led to even further linguistic differentiation, so that, by the end of the twentieth century, learners of English as a foreign language faced a dilemma – which of the many varieties of English in existence they should learn. For some, the answer was clear. They should learn the version that was standard in England since, as the mother country of the English-speaking world, the language spoken there must, they supposed, be the best, the purest and the most correct. Hence, it was not uncommon for students of English in Germany, for instance, to insist on being taught 'the Queen's English' or 'Oxford English' or 'BBC English', by which they presumably meant standard British English. And it was also clear to many English teachers and to the authors of many of the English textbooks used in Germany in those days. They, too, thought that the language that non-native speakers of English should learn was the language of England and, in some cases, the language of a particular social class in a particular region of southern England – the language spoken with what is sometimes called 'the received pronunciation'. Unfortunately, however, this privileging of British English – and, more particularly, of one variety of British English – was misconceived. Students, textbook authors and teachers in the late twentieth century had in many cases failed to notice two major developments. The first was that a Standard English language – one that was spoken, written and understood by virtually all native speakers of English – did, in fact, exist. However, this language was not the language of any one particular group of native speakers, let alone of any one particular group in any one particular region of any one particular country. It was a kind of international lingua franca that was understood and spoken with greater or lesser facility by native speakers all across the English-speaking world. And the second development that they had failed to notice was that, owing to ever-increasing globalization, most users of English in the world were no longer native speakers [2, p. 59-71]. In fact, there were at least three times as many non-native speakers of English by the beginning of the twenty-first century as there were native speakers [3, p. 339]. And this trend has not abated since. If anything, it has intensified in the last 15 years due, among other things, to the dramatic increase in global electronic communication. The result has been the creation of yet another version of English, global English, which, while it has much in common with the other versions, also has certain distinctive features of its own.

First, global English generally lacks the grammatical complexity of standard native-speaker English. There are two main reasons for this. On the one hand, most speakers of global English simply have not mastered the wide variety of grammatical structures characteristic of standard native-speaker English. This is because the overwhelming majority of them are non-native speakers, for whom such mastery is extremely difficult and time-consuming. And on the other hand, although many grammatical structures do exist in English relatively few are actually used in day-to-day discourse even by the native speakers. And thus, successful communication in global English requires relatively little grammatical proficiency to begin with.

Second, speakers of global English do not use the language for all types of communication but only in certain situations. This is because most of them are multilingual and use different languages for different purposes. For example, a German businessman will use German to speak to his family and global English to talk to a business partner in Denmark, while a French software engineer will use French to order dinner in a restaurant in Paris and global English to e-mail members of his project team in Italy and Finland.

And third, global English is spoken with a great variety of accents, each depending largely on the native language of its speaker. But just because global English has these three distinctive features – simplified grammar, situation-specific usage and great accentual variety – the standard for assessing the proficiency of its users is also distinctive.

2. What is the standard of global proficiency and what is necessary to achieve it?

The standard of global English proficiency – that is, the level of competency that speakers of the language should aim to achieve – is a very simple, pragmatic one. It is the ability to express oneself effectively in English in specific situations of one's own choosing, using the language that may be much simpler than the language that a native speaker might use and that may also be much simpler than the language one would normally use speaking one's own native language. To achieve this standard, I believe that non-native speakers of English should focus on two things, in particular.

First, they should focus on prioritizing their learning. That is, at every stage in the language-learning process, they should try to distinguish what is more important for them to learn from what is less important. And the most important thing for them to learn is vocabulary. Learners need a lot of words to speak global English, but they do not need a lot of grammar. As far as the latter is concerned, it is generally enough for non-native speakers to master a relatively small number of high-frequency grammatical structures and to learn to fit the ideas that they want to express into these. The same applies analogously to pronunciation. To communicate effectively in global English, learners do not need to emulate one of the many native-speaker accents that exist in

the world. All they need to do is to ensure that their accent does not prevent other speakers of global English from understanding them.

The second main thing that non-native speakers should do to achieve proficiency in global English is to personalize their learning. This means several things. First, and most generally, it means that non-native speakers have to relate the language they are learning to their own lives – that is, they have to learn to use global England to speak, write, read and think about those subjects that are of personal interest to them. Second, it means that non-native speakers have to set specific learning goals based on the particular purposes for which they intend to use global English– work, holidays, living abroad, for example – and then rigorously focus their learning on attaining those specific goals. And third, it means that learners must also learn to teach themselves for non-native speakers cannot achieve proficiency in global English – or, indeed, in any other foreign language – merely by mastering a particular school or university foreign language curriculum. To put it in another way, actual foreign language learning really begins when students leave the classroom and undertake to teach themselves. At the same time, however, it is not reasonable to expect non-native speakers to achieve proficiency in a foreign language wholly on their own. It is up to teachers to show them how.

3. Teaching global English – A few ideas from the German classroom

Whether they are aware of it or not, most of my students in Germany want to learn global English since (1) most of them will be using English – or, in some cases, already are using it – primarily to speak to other non-native speakers and (2) proficiency in global English will enable them to communicate effectively with native speakers of English as well. Therefore, they must learn to prioritize and personalize their learning. Here are some of the things that I do to help them.

Prioritization. Standard German has fewer verb tenses than standard native-speaker English. For example, it does not have continuous forms at all, and, while it does have a perfect form, this form has a different sense from the English present perfect. There are many other differences, too. Consequently, German speakers have a great difficulty in using appropriately the wide array of verbal constructions possible in native-speaker English. To solve this problem, I have found that it is advisable to divide English verb constructions into two main groups – (1) those that students should actively master and (2) those that they should learn to use only in specific contexts or only passively recognize – and then to focus my students' learning correspondingly. To the first group belong the simple present, the simple past and some of the modal verb forms. All the other forms – as well as phenomena like question tags, the verb forms used in indirect speech, phrasal verbs and constructions with 'used to' and 'about to' – belong to the second group. Prioritizing the learning of verb constructions along these lines makes it possible to spend more time on learning vocabulary, the most important component of global English. And here, too, prioritization is necessary. For example, native-speaker English contains, like every native-speaker language, a huge number of synonyms, idioms and expressions. But speakers of global English need to have an active mastery of only a few. For the rest, a passive understanding and, in some cases, simply the ability to guess the meaning of unknown words is enough. Of course, there are certain vocabulary items that all students should learn. Other lexis, however, will depend on the students' specific learning goals and specific areas of interest. And for both purposes – mastering basic vocabulary items and mastering learner-specific lexis – students must be taught how to personalize their learning.

Personalization. The aim of personalization is to relate the foreign language that one is learning directly to one's own life. It involves, first of all, setting personal goals. This is especially important for adult learners of global English. They have to define what their particular goals are in learning the language and how they intend to reach those goals in the time at their disposal. Do they need English for business trips? Do they need it for reading texts online? Do they need it for holidays abroad? Do they need it for their engineering studies? But whatever their goals are, students will require help in order to ensure that the goals they have defined are realistic and that the means they have chosen are effective. In some cases, of course, students are not able to set their own goals. Their goals are set for them by school curricula and/or examination systems. But in these cases, too, students of global English can personalize their learning – and do so, moreover, even at a very early stage – by learning to use the language to describe for themselves their own immediate environments and, more particularly, by learning to talk to themselves in English. This is something that speakers of global English will have to learn to do at some point anyway, so the sooner they start, the better. But students will not normally undertake this type of personalized learning on their own. They have to be shown how. One way to do this is to teach them to keep journals in which they regularly enter in English short descriptions of some of the things, people and events that they see around them every day – things like the weather, the way to school or work, what they ate for dinner last night, what they bought in a shop, parts of their daily routine, a holiday experience, a bit of f dialogue they have overheard, the steps for operating a common device – the list of possibilities is really endless. Finally, personalization involves structuring lessons, homework and classroom time in such a way as to maximize learner input and give students plenty of opportunities to practice and ultimately master the particular areas of language that are relevant to them. Examples of the tools useful for this purpose include task-based activities, project work, group work and student presentations in which the topics and the initiative come from the learners, and the teacher's role is one of guidance and correction.

Of course, the specific strategies for teaching English differ from situation to situation. What works for business people may not be effective for college students. What works for children may not be effective for adults. What works in the country where English is the native language may not be effective in the country where it is not. But whatever strategies are used, it seems advisable to keep in mind that the language they are designed to teach is now a global language, that it differs in some ways from other versions, and that the methods used to teach it – whether they involve those that I have found useful in Germany or not – should take that fact into consideration.

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**НАВЧАННЯ ГЛОБАЛЬНОЇ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ:
РЕПОРТАЖ З ПЕРЕДОВОЇ**

Англійська мова є наразі глобальною мовою, а це означає, що стандарти її нормативності мають дещо відрізнятися від офіційно прийнятих для її носіїв. Стратегії, що застосовуються у навчанні глобальної англійської мови, мають визначатися в залежності від реальних потреб студентів і не перевищувати їхні можливості. Досвід навчання глобальної англійської мови у Німеччині показує, що в цьому плані корисно визначити пріоритетні напрямки та надати навчанню мови особистісного спрямування.

Ключові слова: глобальна англійська мова, пріоритетні напрямки, особистісне спрямування.

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**ОБУЧЕНИЕ ГЛОБАЛЬНОМУ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ:
РЕПОРТАЖ С ПЕРЕДОВОЙ**

Английский язык в настоящее время является глобальным языком, а это означает, что стандарты его нормативности должны несколько отличаться от официально принятых для его носителей. Стратегии, используемые при обучении глобальному английскому языку, должны определяться в зависимости от реальных потребностей студентов и не превышать их возможностей. Опыт обучения глобальному английскому языку в Германии свидетельствует, что в этом плане полезно определить приоритетные направления и придать обучению языку личностную направленность.

Ключевые слова: глобальный английский язык, приоритетные направления, личностная направленность.