

# globish<sup>®</sup>



*The World Over*

*Jean-Paul Nerrière*

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## **Globish The World Over**

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Institute

# **Globish**

# **The World Over**

By Jean Paul Nerrière and David Hon

A book written IN Globish

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## **Chapter 4**

# **The Native English Speakers' Edge is Their Problem**

Speaking an extra language is always good. It makes it easier to admit that there are different ways of doing things. It also helps to understand other cultures, to see why they are valued and what they have produced. You can discover a foreign culture through traveling and translation. But truly understanding is another thing: that requires some mastery of its language to talk with people of the culture, and to read their most important books. The “not created here” idea comes from fear and dislike of foreign things and culture. It makes people avoid important ideas and new ways of working.

Native English speakers, of course, speak English most of the time - with their families, the people they work with, their neighbors, and their personal friends. Sometimes they talk to non-native speakers in English, but most English speakers do not do this often. On the other hand, a Portuguese man speaks English most often with non-native English speakers. They all have strange accents. His ears become sympathetic. He learns

to listen and understand and not be confused by the accent. He learns to understand a Korean, a Scotsman or a New Zealander with strong local accents. And he learns to understand the pronunciations of others learning English. Often, he understands accents much better than a native English speaker.

It is a general observation that the person who already speaks five languages has very little difficulty learning the sixth one. Even the person who masters two languages is in a much better position to learn a third one than his countryman/countrywoman who sticks only to the mother tongue. That is why it is too bad people no longer speak their local patois. The practice almost disappeared during the 20th century.

Scientists tell us that having a second language seems to enable some mysterious brain connections which are otherwise not used at all. Like muscles with regular exercise, these active connections allow people to learn additional foreign languages more easily.

Now that so many people **migrate** to English-speaking countries, many of the young people in those families quickly learn English. It is estimated, for example, that 10% of all younger persons in the UK still keep another language after they learn English. Probably similar figures are available in the

US. Those children have an extra set of skills when speaking to other new English language learners.

The British Council is the highest authority on English learning and speaking. It agrees with us in its findings. David Graddol of the British Council is the writer of English Next, which is a major study from the British Council. Graddol said (as *translated into Globish*):

*“(Current findings)... should end any sureness among those people who believe that the global position of English is completely firm and protected. We should not have the feeling that young people of the United Kingdom do not need abilities in additional languages besides English.”*

Graddol confirms:

*“Young people who finish school with only English will face poor job possibilities compared to able young people from other countries who also speak other languages. Global companies and organizations will not want young people who have only English.*

*Anyone who believes that native speakers of English remain in control of these developments will be very troubled. This book suggests that it is native speakers who, perhaps, should be the most worried. But the fact is that the future development of English is now a global concern and should be troubling us all.*

*English speakers who have only English may not get very good jobs in a global environment, and barriers preventing them from learning other languages are rising quickly. The competitive edge (personally, organizationally, and nationally) that English historically provided people who learn it, will go away as English becomes a near-universal basic skill.*

*English-speaking ability will no longer be a mark of membership in a select, educated, group. Instead, the lack of English now threatens to leave out a minority in most countries rather than the majority of their population, as it was before.*

*Native speakers were thought to be the “gold standard” (**idioms remain in this section**); as final judges of quality and authority. In the new, quickly-appearing environment, native speakers may increasingly be indentified as part of the problem rather than being the basic solution. Non-native speakers will feel these “golden” native speakers are bringing along “cultural baggage” of little interest, or as teachers are “gold-plating” the teaching process.*

*Traditionally, native speakers of English have been thought of as providing the authoritative standard and as being the best teachers. Now, they may be seen as presenting barriers to the free development of global English.*

*We are now nearing the end of the period where native speakers can shine in their special knowledge of the global "lingua franca."*

Now David Graddol is an expert on this subject. But he is also an Englishman. It would be difficult for him - or any native English speaker - to see all that non-native speakers see... and see differently.

For example, non-native speakers see how native English speakers believe that their pronunciation is the only valid one. Pronunciation is not easy in English. There are versions of English with traditional or old colonial accents. Many different British accents were mixed in the past with local languages in colonies such as America, India, South Africa, Hong Kong, Australia, or New Zealand. Today more accents are becoming common as English gets mixed with the accents from other languages. Learners of English often have to struggle to hear "native" English and then to manage the different accents. Learners often learn English with the older colonial accents or newer accents. Not many people now speak English like the Queen of England.

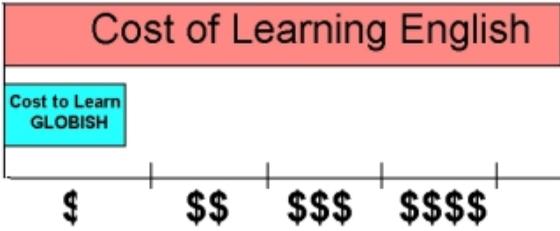
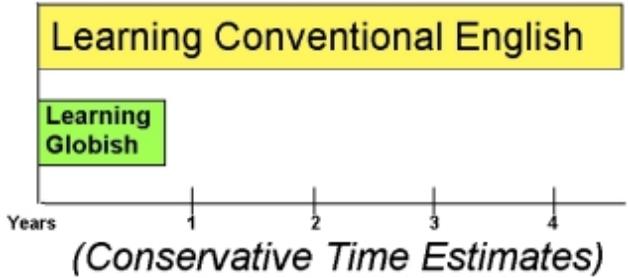
Also, native speakers often use their local idioms as if they are universal. (Like saying that someone who dies is "biting the dust". How long does it take to explain what these really

mean? The modern global citizen does not need language like that.)

Non-native speakers also observe this: that most native speakers believe they are English experts because they can speak English so easily.

Language schools in non-English-speaking countries often have native English speakers as teachers. They are said to be the “gold standard” (an *idiom!*) in English. But these native speakers

are not always trained teachers. Often all they have is their ability to pronounce words. They do not know what it is like to learn English. In the end result, a teacher needs to know how to teach. So sometimes non-native English speakers become better teachers of English than people with the perfect UK, or US, or South African English pronunciation.



In the past, English schools have made a lot of money using native speakers to teach English. Thus the students always work towards a goal that is always out of reach. Probably none of these students will ever speak the Queen's English. To achieve that you must be born not far from Oxford or Cambridge. Or, at a minimum, you must have learned English when your voice muscles were still young. That means very early in your life, before 12 years old. Learning to speak without an accent is almost impossible. You will always need more **lessons**, says the English teacher who wants more work.

But here is the good news: Your accent just needs to be "understandable"...not perfect. Learners of English often need to stop and think about what they are doing. It is wise to remember to ask: how much English do I *need*? Do I need *all* the fine words and perfect pronunciation? Perhaps not....

### **Technical**

Idiom - a term for the use of colorful words which may not be understood by non-native speakers.

Lesson - one section of a larger course of study

### **International**

Migrate - to move your home from one country to another. Also: an immigrant is a person who migrates.

## Chapter 7

# The Beginnings of Globish

The *most* important thing about Globish is that it started with non-native English speakers. Some English professor could have said “I will now create Globish to make English easy for these adults who are really children.” Then Globish would not be global, but just some English professor’s plaything. But the true Globish idea started in international meetings with British, Americans, continental Europeans, and Japanese, and then Koreans. The communication was close to excellent between the British and the Americans. But it was not good between those two and the other people. Then there was a big surprise: the communication between the last three groups, continental Europeans, Japanese, and Koreans, was among the best. There seemed to be one good reason: they were saying things with each other that they would have been afraid to try with the native English speakers – for fear of losing respect. So all of these non-native speakers felt comfortable and safe in what sounded like English, but was far from it.

But those non-native English speakers were all *talking* to each other. Yes, there were many mistakes. And yes, the

pronunciation was strange. The words were used in unusual ways. Many native English speakers think English like this is horrible. However, the non-native speakers were enjoying their communication.

But as soon as one of the English or Americans started speaking, everything changed in one second. The non-native speakers stopped talking; most were afraid of speaking to the native English speakers. None of them wanted to say a word that was incorrect.

It is often that way across the world. Non-native English speakers have many problems with English. Some native English speakers say non-natives speak “broken English.” In truth, non-native English speakers talk to each other effectively *because* they respect and share the same limitations.

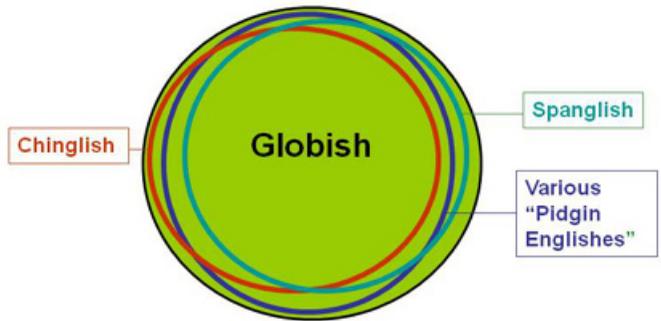
The Frenchman and the Korean know they have similar limitations. They do not use rare, difficult-to-understand English words. They choose words that are “acceptable” because they are the easiest words they both know. Of course, these are not always those of the native speakers, who have so many more words to choose from.

The idea of Globish came from this observation: limitations are not always a problem. In fact, they can be useful, if you understand them. Jean-Paul Nerrière could see that *“if we can make the limitations exactly the same, it will be as if there are no*

*limitations at all*". He decided to record a limited set of words and language that he observed in most non-English speakers. He then suggested that people from various mother tongues can communicate better if they use these carefully chosen limitations. Globish is that "common ground."

This theory of limitations is not as strange as it might seem at first. Most human activities have some limitations.

### Nearly-Identical Limitations Worldwide



The World Cup

### Globish Combines Limitations

is one of the most-watched competitions in the world, because its set of "limitations" makes it a great game for everyone. In this game of foot-ball, players must use their feet most of the time to control the ball, so tall people and people with big arms do not always win. Some people say it is dancing with the ball; the limitations make it beautiful.

Ballet, of course, has limitations too; it is what you say with your body. And people of every language enjoy both of these. The beauty happens when the limitations are the same. Globish is about having the same limitations, so there is no

limit to what can be communicated between people speaking or writing or reading Globish.

We hope the dancers will not start singing in ballets. But what happens when you can use your hands in “foot-ball?” Then – mostly in the English-speaking cultures – we see their American football and Rugby football. These do not have the limitations of playing only with their feet. Not as many people in the world can sit together and enjoy watching. It is not something they all can share, all knowing the same limitations.

The limitations of Globish also make it easier to learn, easier to find a word to use. Native English speakers seem to have too many words that say the same thing and too many ways to say it.

So communication between non-native speakers can be much more effective when they are using Globish. And if non-native and native speakers use Globish between themselves, both of them will understand. Most people would think that native English speakers could know how to speak Globish in one second. But that is not true. Native English speakers who use too many words in too many ways are, in fact, missing a huge opportunity to communicate with the world.

The British Council tells us (here in Globish):

*“People have wondered for years whether English is so solid in international communication that even the rise of China could not move it from its high position. The answer is that there is already a new language, which was being spoken quietly while native-speakers of English were looking the other way. These native-speakers of English were too happy when they thought their language was the best of all. The new language that is pushing out the language of Shakespeare as the world’s Lingua Franca is English itself – English in its new global form. As this book (English Next) shows, this is not English as we have known it, and have taught it in the past as a foreign language. It is a new happening, and if it represents any kind of winning, it will probably not be the cause of celebration by native English speakers.”*

The British Council continues (in our Globish):

*“In organizations where English has become the business language, meetings sometimes go more smoothly when no native speakers are present. Globally, the same kind of thing may be happening, on a larger scale. This is not just because non-native speakers fear to talk to a native speaker. The change is that soon the problem may be that few native speakers will be accepted in the community of lingua franca users. The presence of native English speakers gets in the way of communication.”*

Strangely, many native English speakers still believe they can do all things better than non-native speakers just because they speak better English. How long will it take for them to understand that they are wrong? They have a problem that *they are not able* to understand. They do not see that many non-native speakers simply cannot understand them. This does not mean the native speaker's English is bad. It means that their *communication* is bad; sometimes they do not even attempt to make their communication useful to everyone. Often they don't know how.

We want everyone to be able to speak to and understand everyone. There is a middle ground, but the native English speakers are not the ones drawing the borders. And because you may not be able to say this to a native speaker, who might not be able to understand – we will say it here.

To belong to the international community, a native English speaker must:

- **understand....** what is explained in this book,
- **accept....** that it is the fact of a new world which has many new powers that will be as strong as the English-speaking countries,
- decide **to change** with this new reality, in order to still be a member.

Whenever a native English speaker acts as if *you* are the stupid one, **please give them this book**. If they choose to take no notice of their problem, they will be left out of communication. They will be left out of activities with others – worldwide – if they do not learn to “limit” the way they use their language. English speakers need to limit both spoken and written English for communication with non-native English speakers. In short, they too need to “learn” Globish. It is not an easy exercise, but it can be done. Some of this book will help them.

## **Globish has a special name**

It is very important that the Globish name is *not* “English for the World” or even “Simple English.” If its name were *any kind* of English, the native English speakers would say. “OK, we won. Now all you have to do is speak better English.” Without the name Globish, they will not understand it is a special kind of English, and it is no longer “their” English. Most native English speakers who understand this should decide they like it. Hopefully they will say: “Now I understand that I am very lucky. Now my language will be changed a little for the rest of the world. Let me do my best, and they can do their best, and we will meet in the middle.”

So *Globish* is a word that tells native English speakers – and non-native speakers – that Globish has a different meaning.

Globish is the global language, the language people everywhere can speak. Globish is a name to say that there are limits which everyone can learn. There is a clear set of things they need to learn. And when they learn them, they are done.

Language is equal on this Globish middle ground. No one has an edge. No one can be above anyone else because of language. This is the land where everybody can offer the best ideas with all of his or her professional and personal abilities. Globish will be a foreign language to everyone, without exception. It is not “broken English.” It is another version of English to which no native English speaker was born.

**We all come together here.**