

Globe English Online: From Ideas to Implementation

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To: Laurence Danielson, CEO, Globe English

Subject: Considering program goals, stakeholders, and critical factors for Globe English online

Program Goals for Globe English Online

In order to move to the next phase of implementing Globe English Online, McGeorge Educational Services has considered important, fundamental program goals, all of which should center on the facilitation of a successful student experience at Globe English. Keeping this in mind, the following goals outline the expectations for a Globe English Online learner, both at a lesson and program level, synchronously and asynchronously.

Globe English Online learners will be able to:

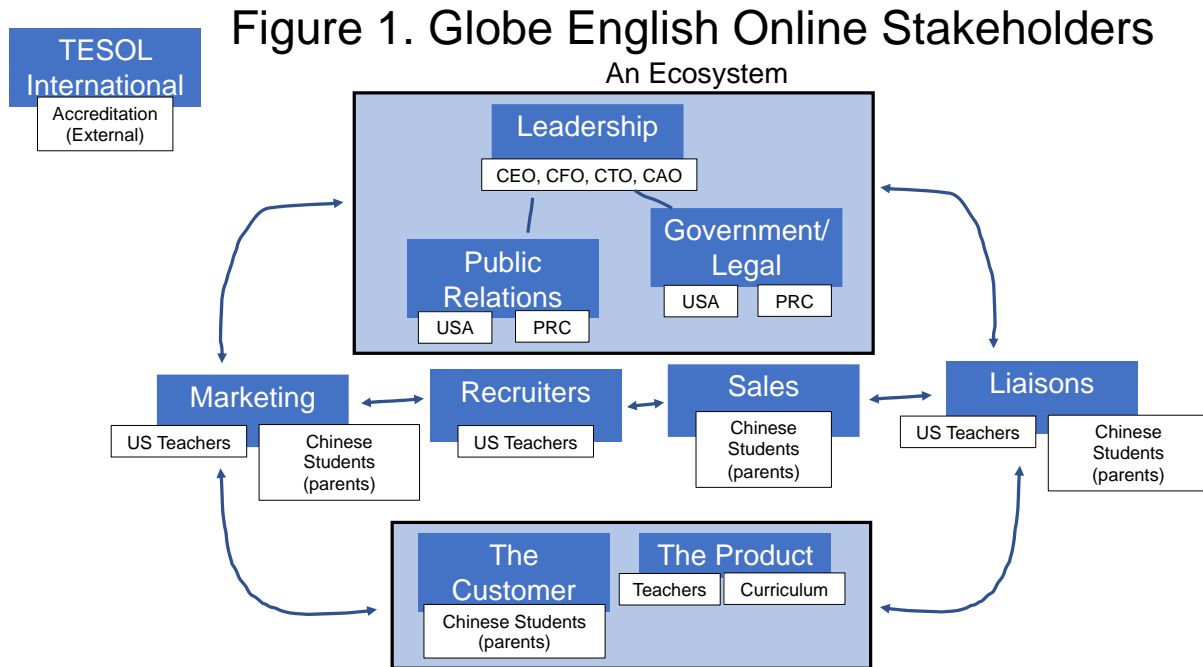
- use an online platform to practice English with a fluent speaker;
- access supplementary online materials to boost language exposure and practice;
- practice English online as a supplement to face-to-face classes; and
- interact with other learners located throughout China.

More specific objectives (e.g., program, band, level, unit, lesson) are further outlined depending on a learner's placement within the program, which is in accordance with language levels established by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), ranging from A1-C2.

Stakeholders for Globe English Online

In order to set Globe English Online up for success, it is important to consider the existing ecosystem and fill in any gaps. Figure 1 shows a broad overview of stakeholders; any one of these listed stakeholders could be parsed out into several, more detailed ecosystems, and McGeorge Educational Services looks forward to future collaboration while considering and drafting these smaller, yet vital, ecosystems.

Following Figure 1, the role and interplay of stakeholders is explained in more detail.



Leadership Team

The team that is most critical to ensuring the success and overall mission in support of program goals is the leadership team at Globe English, which makes most of the decisions regarding the vision and direction of the organization. This includes the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Technology Officer (CTO), and Chief Academic Officer (CAO). The CEO is the final word on all major decisions. The CFO will have a significant role in making sure that the online course offering offers a return on investment and suggests KPIs/OKRs for each quarter. It is up to the other teams to decide how their own targeted KPIs/OKRs fit into the overall vision of the organization (leadership will need to justify how their decisions lead to profitability for the company). The CTO is another important member of any start-up team and makes decisions that ensure the technology of the platform remains cutting edge and competitive. This is especially important considering technology

limitations between different countries and continents (e.g. China's Great Firewall). The CTO will need to ensure that technology helps online teachers and learners, rather than hindering them. The scope of the CTO's work and reach is an example of where program vision would benefit from an additional, detailed ecosystem (as technology is what Globe English Online will rely on to provide a first-rate language learning experience). Finally, the CAO makes decisions related to the *content* and *quality of content* with which learners and teachers actually interact. This content must rely on technology as a critical asset (the content cannot seem like it's simply been moved from a traditional classroom to an online, *in the meantime*, version of it). Depending on how much the organization wants to partner with existing curriculum products—versus creating materials in-house—there may need to be another team that navigates third-party partnerships (i.e. if Globe English Online wants to purchase and use an existing scope and sequence or images and adapt that material to suit their needs). An executive position for that team may need to be created and would need to be folded into the stakeholder ecosystem.

Legal/Government

There are many different players in this group of stakeholders as different countries are represented on both the teacher and student side. Different states in the US may have different rules for independent contractors, for example, which means a legal team works round-the-clock to confirm compliance (and these decisions can trickle all the way down to the wording on a lesson slide). There are also rules and laws that apply in a regular classroom interaction that need to be considered and modified for an online classroom. Globe English Online also needs to consider the differences between teachers as foreign experts in traditional classrooms (licensed as such through the local foreign expert bureau in major cities) and what this looks like for online teachers who are not physically located in China. This may mean a special relationship

needs to be forged; this also presents an opportunity for Globe English Online to potentially create a new set of criteria or standards that tackle the requirements and expectations for online teachers of Chinese learners. Finally, a strong government and legal team can help navigate any online privacy laws or rules regarding how students and teachers interact with each other to ensure a safe online environment.

Public Relations

A PR team is important for messaging and making sure that nothing gets lost in translation. A team that is well-versed in the cultural and social differences between the UK/USA and China is critical. Especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need for representatives on both sides of the aisle to be careful and intentional with any messaging, either geared towards Chinese learners and parents or towards existing and prospective teachers.

Marketing

In order for teachers and learners to know about the opportunity and the course offerings, there needs to be proper online marketing, both in China and throughout the world (primarily in English-speaking countries, though English-speaking teachers can conduct lessons from anywhere in the world). Marketing efforts need to be able to shift focus depending on a surge in teachers and students; marketing efforts are critical for times when Globe English Online may have a surplus of teachers or a surplus of students. Marketing efforts in China may revolve around the quality of curriculum, the quality of (and access to) expert English teachers, and the affordability of the Globe English Online product. Marketing efforts in the United States may revolve around gaining more teachers by touting flexible schedules, promotional offers, bonuses, and opportunities to learn more about another culture from the comfort of home.

Recruiters (teachers)

Globe English will need to change their recruitment efforts for teachers who will no longer need to look to schools that offer the most competitive apartment/salary/airfare package. They will likely work very closely with the marketing team to ensure consistent messaging in China and abroad.

Sales (students)

Nearly all students who take online English classes do so to supplement existing English classes at school or to improve their chances professionally. This means that sales should focus on how Globe English Online classes can improve school scores (including specific tests and certifications) and build fluency (the value of working with a native or near-native speaker). Since Globe English Online will continue to offer face-to-face classes in its existing centers, sales will be able to offer different packages to learners who want a hybrid, fully online, or fully face-to-face learning experience. See Figure 2 for more details.

Liaisons

There need to be bilingual liaisons on the China side to interact with teachers and students/parents, as teachers cannot be expected to speak Chinese and communicate directly with parents about things like scheduling or learners chronically forgetting to do homework. Similarly, there needs to be someone on the USA/UK (other countries) side to act as a bridge between teachers and Globe English Online leadership (with regard to things like curriculum, technology, trips to visit students, etc.).

Learners/Parents (The Customer)

In order for a new online program to be successful, learners have to want the product being offered, and the product needs to have demonstrable results. Because of the coronavirus outbreak, many Chinese learners have already had to move to online classes; this means that

more learners come out on the other side of the outbreak with a familiarity with online lessons and may be more eager to take supplemental courses this way. Parents have been included here because many of the learners are minors, and parents will make decisions based on their child's needs and the costs of the program (among many other considerations).

Teachers and Curriculum (The Product)

In order for the online course offering to work, Globe English needs to have teachers who want to work online. Because the move to an online course offering means that teachers can be located anywhere in the world, they will need to be properly vetted and compensated fairly. Also, the company needs to be ready for a surge of teachers whose jobs may have been furloughed or eliminated due to the ongoing coronavirus.

TESOL International (accreditation)

TESOL international is listed as an example of an outside organization whose recommendation would go a long way toward putting Globe English Online on the map, because a stamp of approval or any sort of accreditation helps legitimize the online offerings of the organization.

Exploring Systems Components

Though students are listed near the end of the hierarchy in Figure 1, it is safe to assume that even with leadership at the top, if students are not purchasing and enrolling in courses, it is likely a reflection of poor leadership or a product offering that does not satisfy the needs of its learners (customers). Figure 2 (below) outlines how the content of Globe English Online can accommodate the needs of a diverse group of learners. Typically, Chinese students look for English training programs that help them do well on tests or international certification programs (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL), or they look for more communication opportunities to build global

awareness and prepare them to get ahead in a rapidly-changing world where English is still very much the lingua franca.

THE STUDENT'S ENVIRONMENT

Figure 2 illustrates the relationships and information exchange that exist in a Globe English student's environment. The environment must be in balance in terms of preparing Globe English learners for both social and academic or professional purposes and using Globe English online to support this learning. This figure accommodates a diverse range of learners in terms of age (early learner to adult learner), ability (pre-A1-B2+), and reason for learning English (school/work, life).

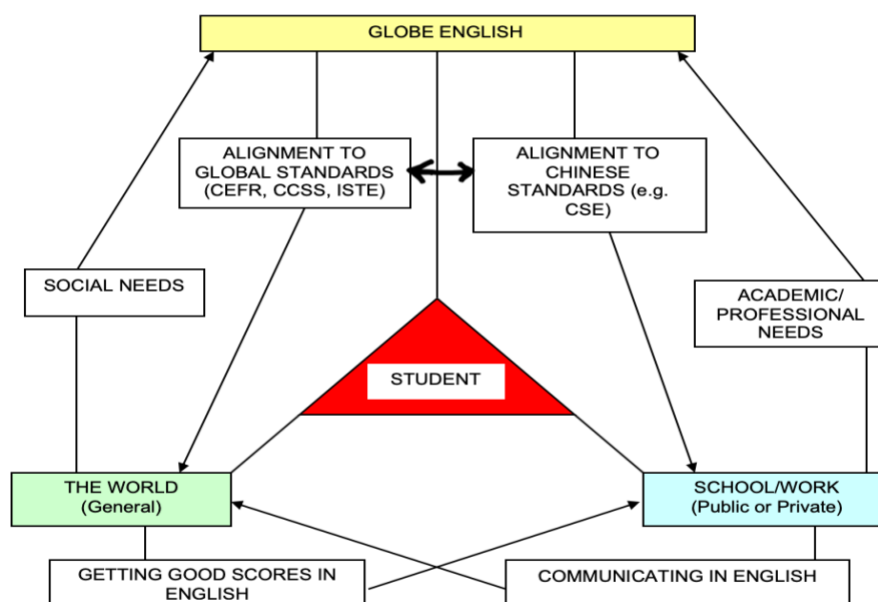


FIGURE 2

RELATIONSHIPS AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE IN A STUDENT-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT

Critical Factors: Turning Challenges into Opportunities

Language training centers throughout China—Globe English included—were forced to transition to online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. While this created plenty of disruptions for educational institutions, it also shed light on the potential to tap into a new market. While there was little time to implement a practical and successful transition for many of the impacted organizations, now that China is starting to open back up, it is important to critically evaluate this new opportunity, an emerging industry post-Covid-19. Minaar (2013)

outlines how “[d]espite many good intentions, education institutions are still failing to recognise particular key planning and implementing steps which could make the difference in successful and sustainable distance education initiatives.” (p. 82). Organizations recently thrust into online learning as a contingency plan were part of a pretty grand experiment, lacking these planning and phases of implementation. Now, though, they are in a very unique position; an incredible opportunity arose out of crisis.

Interaction is critical to a communicative language learning experience, where participants need to engage in turn-taking and both initiation and response. It is also a critical component of a successful distance education (Simpson & Anderson, 2012). Because language learning involves quite a bit of interaction, moving to a distance learning program might seem—on the face of it—to take these opportunities away or limit them. That being said, it is important to think of how a distance learning program could provide more of these opportunities with native or near-native speakers from around the world. In a sense, an online option allows learners access to more expert teachers, beyond just the expert teachers who might live within a certain zip code. By opening up Globe English to include online lessons, learners have more chances to interact with experts.

As Moore and Fetzner (2009) suggest, “institutions work hard to make sure courses are available when online students can take them” (p. 10). Because of different time zones in which online Globe English teachers could operate, an online offering would create even more opportunities for a synchronous classroom experience, catering to the schedules of both students and teachers. If Globe’s distance learning program is coupled with the already offered face-to-face learning experience, too, learners are provided with even more opportunities, not less.

Another potential challenge could come from training and ongoing professional development. After all, teachers in traditional classrooms and online classrooms have different experiences already, according to class size, age of learners, and level of English, and learners, parents, administrators, and even other instructors likely have their own opinions or preconceived notions about what it means to be an effective teacher (putting online teaching and learning at odds with face-to-face teaching and learning). However, instead of thinking of face to face and online classrooms as fully disparate, it might be useful to think of how both modes of learning benefit from knowledge about the other, in the service of “learners and a teacher, content organized around a set of learning objectives, some designed learning experiences, and some form of evaluation” (Moore & Kearsley, 2012, p. 6).

In addition to thinking about how students benefit from open access to the best teachers in the industry, it is important to think about how the teacher network of face-to-face and online instructors could benefit from ongoing online professional development as well (Vu et al., 2014). Professional development opportunities can be provided synchronously or asynchronously, offering different advantages (and more importantly, options) for both, and allowing the face-to-face instructors an opportunity to interact with the online instructors (to determine which successful elements of each teaching experience can be adapted for online or face to face delivery). If traditional instructors and online instructors are encouraged to think about how *the other side* is teaching and interacting with students and content, it can only lead to a more holistic understanding of what a student needs to be a successful language learner.

Considering the challenges that may face Globe English as they consider a formal online product offering, McGeorge Educational Services is eager and prepared to move into the next phase of development. We look forward to moving online with Globe English.

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