A Book Review: Using *Globe Trotters – Practical English with Video*

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Abstract

This paper reviews a new EFL textbook, *Globe Trotters – Practical English with Video*, both from a teacher and student perspective. Firstly, it provides background to the teaching situation in which the textbook was piloted. This is followed by a brief description of the textbook, the rationale for its usage and specific details of the class it was used in. The strengths and weaknesses of the textbook are then discussed along with the findings of the student questionnaire conducted at the end of each unit. Pre-existing material for the communicative English section of this course is also compared with the new textbook. Finally, I present my conclusion for other instructors who teach the same program. While I do not suggest that *Globe Trotters* should replace the existing material entirely, I recommend it as a valuable resource for supplementary material.
Background

All first year students at Asia University are required to study Freshman English (FE) in a 45 minute class four or five times a week with a native English speaker from the Center of English Language Education (CELE). In the first semester, the course work for International Relations (IR) students is equally divided into two components: preparation for the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) lessons and general English. The aim of this course is to improve students’ competence in TOIEC and to develop their communicative skills.

For the TOEIC component of the course, higher level students use *Successful Keys to the TOEIC Test 1* and lower level students use *Over the TOEIC Bridge Test*. This part of the course is critical since IR students are required to obtain a TOEIC score of 600 or higher in order to graduate from Asia University.

These students are also required to study abroad in their second year and therefore have a more immediate need to improve their oral communication in English as opposed to most of the other Freshman English students in other faculties. Thus, the complimentary General English lessons are a vital component of the course. The material for this part of the course in the first semester is flexible in terms of what teachers choose to utilize. There is a “*Survival English Curriculum*” folder of resources on the shared network drive of CELE which teachers can freely utilize or alternatively, they may opt for other textbooks. The “*Survival English*” material consists of practical English covering everyday situations that students might face abroad:

- at the airport
- in a bank
- in a restaurant
- at a hotel
- getting directions
• health problems and going to the doctor
• at the post office
• shopping

In this material, the students are introduced to a model conversation, which they then practice and extend through the use of role play cards containing new information to be conveyed.

**Description of *Globe Trotters- Practical English with Video***

Carmella Lieske’s *Globe Trotters- Practical English with Video* was published by National Geographic Learning, a part of Cengage Learning (2013). It aims to take students on “a trip around the globe” and so broaden their knowledge of different world cultures through National Geographic video extracts (p.3) and also to learn practical English language they could utilize abroad. Each unit of the book consists of the following: (a) a warm up/interest-generating activity where students are asked to look at, speculate about and describe the situation in two photos from the video section. This part also introduces five lexical items which are necessary for comprehension of the video, (b) watching the video clip and ordering photos from the video in sequential order, (c) a second task focusing in more detail on comprehension of the video, (d) language from the video is then consolidated through tasks such as unscrambling the words or question and answer matching, (e) a listening activity which repeats parts of the video, giving the students another opportunity to focus in more detail on the phrases, (f) a text box entitled “Real English” highlighting features of speech such as nonverbal communication or fillers, (g) a Language Lab section which gives bite-size chunks of authentic English, (h) a model conversation in an everyday travel situation and an opportunity for controlled practice, (i) an additional dialogue and (j) a section where students write an imaginary blog entry about their trip in that unit's featured country.
There is also a review section after the sixth and 13th unit.

Although there is no level assigned to the textbook, it is suggested that it is suitable for students with TOIEC scores of 300-550.

**Rationale for Pilot and Details of Class**

As parts (h) and (l) of *Globe Trotters* are similar to the existing “*Survival English Curriculum*”, I felt this textbook was suitable for the course. Moreover, the inclusion of National Geographic video clips in *Globe Trotters* brings to life the countries in a visually pleasing manner and is arguably more motivating for the students than the “*Survival English Curriculum*”. Given the argument that students will quickly lose interest if they find materials on a course uninteresting (Cunningsworth, 1995), it is imperative to constantly engage students with visually appealing content. Therefore, the purpose of this project was two-fold: to pilot and review a new textbook, *Globe Trotters*, in the everyday English section of the curriculum and where applicable, compare the new textbook to the existing CELE “*Survival English Curriculum*”. In reality, due to time restrictions as well as the weight of the TOIEC component of the course, it was only possible to teach two of the topics from the “*Survival English” materials that overlapped with the situational English covered in *Globe Trotters*. Namely, these were lessons covering situational English used at airports and hotels. Therefore, only these sections could be directly compared. Both of those topics were taught in May, a month before this pilot program began. Permission was granted from CENGAGE Learning to use six of the 13 units. The study took place between 1st June and 31st July 2015. Since more emphasis is placed on covering TOEIC skills, not all of the sections of the six units could be taught.

This project was carried out with my IR8 class. Their TOEIC scores pre-course were between 275 and 290 making them one of the lower level IR classes in the program. This level is also slightly lower than the suggested TOIEC scores given by CENGAGE as a guide for
student usage. However, as I had already been teaching the class for two months and witnessed their progress, I felt they would be able to cope with this textbook. The group consisted of 11 females and seven males, although a male and female student dropped out of the course relatively early on. Therefore, in terms of the feedback received, there were a maximum of 16 students. On average, one unit was covered over two or three 45-minute lessons. Students were given a questionnaire of Likert-scale questions at the end of each unit designed to assess two factors: enjoyment and usefulness. The scaled ranged from one to five, with five representing “very enjoyable/useful”, three signifying “ok” and one “not enjoyable/useful”. Since the first two units (Spain and Peru) included model dialogues which had previously been covered in the “Survival English Curriculum”, students were asked to choose which they felt was more enjoyable and useful. There was also space on the questionnaire for comments. A list of the positive and negative comments can be found in Appendix A, the table of results of the mean responses from the Likert scale questionnaire in Appendix B, the table of results of the comparison of the two sets of materials in Appendix C and a full-length copy of the questionnaire in Appendix D.

Discussion of the textbook performance and results of the student survey

Strengths of Globe Trotters

I found the video sections of this textbook to be of invaluable use in class. Even with a motivated class, it can be difficult for a teacher to maintain student interest when classes are held almost every day, often starting at an earlier time than students ideally wish to start studying. The video clips provided an opportunity for the students to escape the confines of the classroom for five minutes and virtually visit another country. The comments made by students in the feedback questionnaire show that they also appreciated the video component. Comments included “Now we want to go to Antarctica”, “I could feel overseas information for myself” and “[Because] this section introduced many [cities] and a lot of things about abroad” [sic] (See
Appendix A). In terms of a comparison of the existing material and *Globe Trotters*, this was a strong point in favour of the new textbook accepting the idea that if classroom material has 'impact', it increases the chances of the target language in the materials being acquired (Tomlinson, 1998, p.7). Tomlinson further describes how impact can be created by “novelty, variety, breaking up routine, attractive presentation and appealing content” (p.7). If this argument holds true, one can safely suggest that *Globe Trotters* contains all of these features.

In addition, the everyday travel sections (h and i) were more effective than the existing material in the sense that the dialogue was available in audio form and set within a clear context of the particular unit's country. Overall, the students also preferred *Globe Trotters* to the “*Survival English Curriculum*” when asked in the questionnaire. An overwhelming 83.3% replied that the second unit from *Globe Trotters* was more enjoyable and 81.8% suggested that it was more useful when asked: “*Compared with the “Survival English” Airport lesson we studied in May, I thought this section was more/less enjoyable*” and “*Compared with the “Survival English” Airport lesson we studied in May, I thought this section was more/less useful.*” (See Appendix C). However, as I will discuss later, the comparative feedback for the first unit studied was not as positive.

The feedback from the student questionnaire showed that the results for enjoyment steadily increased from a mean response of 3.9 in the first unit to 4.5 in the final unit studied (see Appendix B). The scores given for the usefulness of *Globe Trotters* also improved, starting from an initial 3.8 in the first unit and then varying between 4.2 and 4.4 for the remainder of the course. According to the student questionnaires, the most popular unit in terms of enjoyment was Cambodia with a mean score of 4.5. This came as no surprise given that this was the final unit of the course and so the learners had by then become used to the style of *Globe Trotters*. India and Peru obtained a joint highest mean response for usefulness with 4.4. Once the students had become used to the structure of the tasks, greater levels of class participation were observed.
Another likely reason for the improvement was that I also became more familiar with the textbook and anticipated potential problems more effectively.

Other sections of the textbook were also useful. The short information about natural features of conversation in parts (f) and (g) were generally appreciated by students and I was pleased to see a course book addressing such points as they are sometimes omitted from textbooks. In terms of the blog writing, (j), I observed that the learners did not particularly enjoy this section and found it difficult to imagine a trip without a great deal of input from myself. However, a higher level class may well enjoy this section.

Weaknesses of Globe Trotters

Overall, I noted three main areas of weakness in this textbook; the initial warm up activities in each unit, the lack of a chance to personalise language highlighted in parts (d) and (e), and the limited chance for students to extend the dialogues in parts (h) and (i).

During the initial lessons with Globe Trotters, I observed that the students generally appeared confused and unenthusiastic. Compared to previous class participation levels, fewer students responded to my eliciting with the whole class, for instance, only two strong students actively responded in the first unit I taught about Spain. The initial section of the unit was particularly confusing for learners and many could offer no opinion for the lead in questions of “Where do you think these pictures were taken? and “Which words would you use to describe the pictures? Why? (p8). I also found this part of the textbook to be the least satisfactory as the suggested adjectives provided to support the second question often were confusing. For example, in the unit about Spain, the adjectives are “amazing, interesting, expensive and difficult” to describe the Sagrada Familia Cathedral and a Flamenco dancer but it is difficult to see how these fit the photos they are to be applied to (p.8). In addition, these lexical items did not feature in the video and were thus unnecessary for general comprehension. I eventually
stopped using the text’s initial warm-up exercise and started appropriating web images associated with the target country or brainstormed students' initial impressions of that country on the blackboard in order to generate interest.

This observation of the initial problems with the textbook is supported by the results of the student questionnaire (Appendix B). The first unit on Spain received the lowest rating; a mean score of 3.9 for enjoyment and 3.8 for usefulness, although it should be noted that this in itself is not a bad score as on the Likert scale provided, a score of three represented “ok”. Moreover, as I already mentioned in the previous section, the results then improved steadily.

When comparing the two sets of materials, the initial difficulty with *Globe Trotters* was reflected in the student feedback for the first unit when students were asked to compare it to the “*Survival English Curriculum*”. Almost half of the students preferred the old version, with 45.5% reporting that the new textbook was “less enjoyable” and “less useful” (Appendix C).

The second major area I thought needed improvement was the lack of personalization of the phrases the students learnt and opportunity for extended practice. I felt this was particularly disappointing as a relatively large part of each unit is made up emphasizing those phrases. For instance, in the unit about India, useful language for describing famous sights is highlighted through an unscrambling activity and sentence-matching exercise. The listening section also presents a useful dialogue for commenting naturally about a country's facts and keeping the conversation going (pp52-53). It seemed a wasted opportunity for learners to not have an opportunity to use the target language in a personalized way. As Nunan suggests: “Learners learn best by actively using the language they are learning” (2004, p.36). In this regard and in order to compensate for the lack of a free practice activity, I supplemented this section with my own materials.

The third problematic factor was that the textbook only provided a substitution drill
practice for the students in parts (h) and (i) in which the dialogues were also comparatively shorter than those belonging to the “Survival English Curriculum”. There was no opportunity for students to reproduce the dialogue in a more personalized and freer fashion. In this regard, I felt the original “Survival English Curriculum” was more effective as this material had individual role play cards for the students to practice a freer version of the model dialogue. This point was also reinforced in the comments made by students who deemed Globe Trotters “less useful” than the original material. Of those who argued it was less useful, one student noted: “because it was shorter than Survival English”, while another believed that “Survival English was more detailed” (see Appendix A).

**Conclusion**

Overall, the student feedback for Globe Trotters was positive and I also found it an extremely useful resource. The video and audio material not only motivates students, but they also enjoy learning about different countries though this resource. I would recommend this textbook to instructors of most levels of IR classes as tasks to complement the video material can be designed by the teacher to match the class's level of ability. However, in terms of which set of material was preferred by students, it is difficult to draw conclusions from data limited to only a comparison of two units. Although only based on my observations and student feedback, the existing “Survival English Curriculum” is still an effective resource in respect to providing opportunities for extended and more personalized dialogue practice. I suggest that using a combination of existing material and original handouts, in conjunction with Globe Trotters, would provide learners with the optimum course.
References


## Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive comments</th>
<th>Negative comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>it's good for listening because speaker who explain about Spain is speaking fast. It became our training.</td>
<td>it was ok but a little fast</td>
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<tr>
<td>These videos could feel many things</td>
<td>it's a little difficult to listen to illness names</td>
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<tr>
<td>it's very useful phrase</td>
<td>bargaining is a little difficult</td>
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<tr>
<td>I studied this section so I can ask when I lost the way abroad</td>
<td>because it was shorter than survival English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it was fun to learn how to ask the way abroad</td>
<td>because feeling play a game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can know some countries</td>
<td>because I want to speak in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>now we want to go to Antarctica</td>
<td>survival English was more detailed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can enjoy studying video section</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can enjoy studying video section</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we can know about Cambodia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actually speaking English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{cuz} this section introduced many city and a lot of things about abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there are many useful phrase</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy studying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could feel Overseas information for myself</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>Mean response for enjoyment</th>
<th>Mean response for usefulness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antarctica</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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</table>
# Appendix C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>More enjoyable (than “Survival English”)</th>
<th>Less enjoyable (than “Survival English”)</th>
<th>More useful (than “Survival English”)</th>
<th>Less useful (than “Survival English”)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain airport</td>
<td>54.50%</td>
<td>45.50%</td>
<td>54.50%</td>
<td>45.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru (hotel)</td>
<td>83.30%</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
<td>81.80%</td>
<td>18.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

あなたの感覚によって境界線の上にXをマークして下さい。

Please mark an X on the line according to your feeling.

1. Video Section ビデオ セクション
このセクションは: This section was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>非常に楽しい</td>
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<tr>
<td>very enjoyable</td>
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<td>まままあ</td>
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<tr>
<td>ok</td>
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<td>楽しくない</td>
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<tr>
<td>not enjoyable</td>
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</table>

2. Listening/ Real English section/language lab リスニング/英語のセクション/

他のコメント: Any extra comments:

2. Listening/ Real English section/language lab リスニング/英語のセクション/

他のコメント: Any extra comments:

3. Travel Adventures -tasks and tips 旅行冒険-作業と先端

他のコメント: Any extra comments:

3. Travel Adventures -tasks and tips 旅行冒険-作業と先端

他のコメント: Any extra comments:
4. Engaging in conversation 会話への参加
このセクションは：This Section was:
a) 5 4 3 2 1
非常におもしろい まあまあ 楽しくない
very enjoyable まあまあ not enjoyable

b) 5 4 3 2 1
海外に行く準備をする ためには役に立つ 役に立たない
very useful to help prepare to go abroad

私達が5月に勉強した“サバイバル英語”空港のレッスンに比べ、このセクションの方がより面白かった／面白くなかったと思った。
Compared with the "Survival English" Airport lesson we studied in MAY, I thought this section
was more/less enjoyable

d) 私達が5月に勉強した“サバイバル英語”空港のレッスンに比べ、このセクションの方が海外に行うための準備により役に立った／役に立たなかったと思った。
Compared with the "Survival English" Airport lesson we studied in MAY, I thought this section
was more/less useful to help prepare to go abroad.

なぜですか？：why did you think so？:

5. Talking about it (posts) （インターネット・ブログなど）についての話
このセクションは：This Section was:
e) 5 4 3 2 1
非常におもしろい まあまあ 楽しくない
very enjoyable まあまあ not enjoyable

f) 5 4 3 2 1
海外に行く準備をする ためには役に立つ 役に立たない
very useful to help prepare to go abroad

お時間頂き、ありがとうございます。
Thank you for your time.