

PRELIM 2

Argentina: FAAPI (Federación Argentina de Asociaciones de Profesores de Inglés), **APPI** (Asociación Pampeana de Profesores de Inglés), **AJPI** (Asociación Jujeña de Profesores de Inglés) and **APIZALS** (Asociación de Profesores de Inglés Zona Andina y Línea Sur) with **Language Within Ltd**

August 2022

Project background

Partnership overview		
Course overview	ETA partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAAPI - Federación Argentina de Asociaciones de Profesores de Inglés • APPI - Asociación Pampeana de Profesores de Inglés • AJPI - Asociación Jujeña de Profesores de Inglés APIZALS - Asociación de Profesores de Inglés Zona Andina y Línea Sur
	UKI partner	Language Within Ltd
	Course length	5 weeks
	Number of groups/cohorts	4
Participant profile	Total number of CPs	80 + a waiting list
	Language level(s)	B2 and above
	CPs' teaching context	CPs are from different geographical regions within Argentina (La Pampa, Jujuy, Chubut, Rio Negro, Patagonia, Santa Fe, San Juan, and beyond). They are a mix of Primary and Secondary school teachers, as well as teachers of adult learners on evening courses.
Mode of delivery	Synchronous platforms used	Zoom
	Synchronous session length	1.25 hour lessons
	Synchronous session frequency	4 times per week (total of 5 hours per week)
	Asynchronous workload	Google classrooms was available for CPs to extend discussions beyond the class, but not directly part of the course
Course content	Language development focus	review and practice centred around language areas chosen by the CPs to improve their confidence in the classroom, while introducing a range of methodologies to provide them with ideas to incorporate into their own classes, aimed at a high B2 level.
	Methodology focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building rapport • project based learning • using authentic materials & videos • using video

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adapting materials & lesson planning developing discussions
	Technology focus	<p>The aim was to utilise online platforms to facilitate the delivery of the course, rather than to introduce CPs to new platforms.</p> <p>The course was delivered using Zoom, with Padlet & Google classrooms used for the management of the delivery of the course.</p>

Description of the partners

Language Within is an independent language school located in Glasgow, Scotland. It provides face-to-face English courses for adult learners (18+). PRELIM II was the first time Language Within has had the opportunity to collaborate with international teaching associations to deliver courses for the professional development of English Teachers.

website: <https://www.languagewithin.com>

FAAPI (Federación Argentina de Asociaciones de Profesores de Inglés) is the umbrella association which is comprised of 22 ETAs across Argentina. They have been operating for 50 years supporting English Teachers in Primary and Secondary schools, as well as in adult learning centres.

website: <https://www.faapi.org.ar>

APPI (Asociación Pampeana de Profesores de Inglés) is from the La Pampa region.

AJPI (Asociación Jujeña de Profesores de Inglés) is from Jujuy.

APIZALS (Asociación de Profesores de Inglés Zona Andina y Línea Sur) covers the provinces of Patagonia, which includes Rio Negro and Chubut.

Key features of the context

When the first meetings were taking place with the ETAs, the school year in Argentina was coming to an end and it was understood that the PRELIM course would be being run during their summer and into the start of their new school year in February 2022.

CPs were generally considered to be well connected online, and have a good working knowledge of platforms familiar to those used by Language Within. They were still teaching online, but optimistic at a return soon after the start of the new academic year.

The ETAs expected a lot of interest in this course, and this was informed by a very quick uptake once it had been announced. With registrations passing 100 people, the decision was taken to cap the number of CPs at 80, and to create a waiting list.

In a discussion about the ratio of synchronous sessions to asynchronous sessions in relation to the delivery of the course, AJPI made the point that teachers have attended a lot of asynchronous over the last two years, and that they would enjoy having all sessions of the course delivered synchronously.

Outline of the course and rationale

The main aims of the course were to:

- improve the English fluency and confidence of the CPs
- provide a range of methodologies and ideas that could be adapted and used by the CPs in their own classes.
- to provide the ETAs with an opportunity to meet with and work alongside their members

Discussions with the ETAs around how the course could best help their members took place around supporting their pedagogical knowledge, or supporting their language skills.

Given that the teaching backgrounds of the CPs were quite varied, ranging from Primary to Secondary as well as adult learning, and that they were all qualified teachers, we felt that it would best to focus on the language skills of the CPs, while also aiming to incorporate different methodologies across the course to introduce new ideas, activities and approaches. This was helped by the fact that the entire groups of CPs were stated as being firmly in the B2 level.

Once a general timeframe for registration was agreed, the ETAs devised a registration form based on one that was used by other FAAPI members in PRELIM I. One question was included in the registration form which provided an opportunity for CPs to convey what they would like to improve, and what they felt their own strengths and weaknesses were.

Their responses provided a basic framework of ideas which were then created as a Padlet identifying categories (discussion topics, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, etc.) as well as potential content (idioms, phrasal verbs, accent reduction, proportions, etc.) in an effort to focus the enthusiasm of the course into specific learning points, and by giving CPs an opportunity to rate the importance to them of what was being compiled.

There would be a single course designed to be delivered to 4 groups of 20 CPs in each. The ETAs ensured that the groups were mixed to maximise the opportunity for CPs to meet and collaborate with teachers from different regions of Argentina.

A syllabus was created with weekly themes taken from the suggested discussion topics. The content for each week was then devised to cover different linguistic areas as informed by comments made in the Padlet.

Each lesson was comprised of a 1 hour language lesson, with a 15 minute 'reflect and report' segment to allow for teachers to discuss how they could adapt the materials and methodologies used into their own classes. The final class of each week would focus on the content from each week and provide an opportunity for the teacher collaborate.

Project findings

Working in partnership

The role of the ETAs was fundamental in terms of the success of the project. They worked together to register CPs from their associations, assign CPs into groups, and ensure that those on the waiting list could take up a space on the course if one came available, while having one ETA representative present in each class to provide assistance.

Once the course groups had been assigned, a spreadsheet was used to manage attendance, and this was regularly updated. Any unannounced absences were followed up, with any free spaces being offered to those on the waiting list.

In the case of APIZALS, they had been practically inactive as an association for the duration of the pandemic, which was in fact an excellent reason for them joining the PRELIM initiative.

Learning point: the ETAs having a presence, and even participating, in the classes was critical in providing them with an opportunity to meet and support their members, and in some sense, reconnecting with their members.

Working within the CoP

Working within the CoP was really helpful with Slack providing a functional platform to share ideas and gain support from the wider network of schools. NILE's management of content and stages was key to staying on track. Regular CoP meetings provided insight into the expectations of the project, which was invaluable as Language Within was able to learn from those who had participated in PRELIM I.

Working with the CPs

With registrations quickly eclipsing the 100 participant mark, it was felt that a firm cap had to be applied, which established a limit of 4 groups with 20 CPs in each. The remainder were placed on a waiting list. This proved important in terms of maximising participation on the course as the summer impacted the plans of many CPs who had signed up.

Groups were formed by mixing CPs across regions and or their academic teaching context to broaden the range of their experience on the course.

"Teachers found this as an excellent opportunity for interaction in the L2, and getting in contact with colleagues from the school and from other regions in our country." (APIZALS)

Initial contact with the CPs was made on Padlet to find out what areas and skills they wanted to cover in the sessions and also to introduce ourselves. Many of the participants responded well to this and some included videos and pictures introducing themselves too.

Teaching the course was a very rewarding experience. The CPs were extremely enthusiastic from the beginning and often expressed their gratitude. After week one, we were able to adapt and reconfigure material for the following weeks as the teachers noticed other needs that hadn't been mentioned in Padlet.

As the course was completely synchronous, we didn't feel the need to create a WhatsApp group, however, towards the end of the course, some of the CPs decided to create their own WhatsApp group to continue the class discussion and also to share more ideas and resources.

One of the things we noticed was how much the CPs enjoyed sharing their experiences and teaching tips with each other. Many of them had never done this before so they found it extremely valuable.

Designing/delivering the course

The general course outline was derived from an initial question asked to the prospective CPs when they registered. The course was designed by one of the teachers delivering the course.

As part of the registration, they were asked by the ETAs to respond to the following question:

“Write around 80-100 words describing how you feel in the classroom using English, what your strengths and weaknesses in English are and what you would like to improve.”

The responses, although fairly general, allowed us to create a Padlet organised around the main suggestions given by the CPs. This was then used to ask them to make more specific suggestions, or to grade the information that had been identified as being their main areas of need. The response to this was extremely enthusiastic.

Learning point: we discussed the possibility of using WhatsApp for this purpose, but Padlet allowed for a better organisation of information, as well as providing ways for the CPs to rate, or grade, the suggestions.

The course was comprised of 4 classes per week, each with a duration of 1.25 hours, with the entire course delivered synchronously. Google Classroom were set up where the class materials had been posted before each class. Each week had a defined topic context, with individual classes including a linguistic focus within the weekly topic, and the final 15 minutes of each class provided CPs with the opportunity to reflect and report on the methods used to teach them.

Course outcomes

Feedback was taken after three weeks, and again at the end of the course. On the whole the feedback was extremely positive. We had identified that when asked if they found the course challenging, the scores given generated the lowest average (3.73), and the only average below a score of 4.0. The objective for the final two weeks was to increase the complexity of the material being used to try to positively impact the end-of-course feedback. This resulted in an average score of 4.20, with all of the other feedback remaining consistent.

“Thanks for letting us have this quite nice opportunity!!” – CP from group 1

“It has been an amazing opportunity to meet new people with different ideas, experiences, realities. Best wishes to you all.” – CP from group 2

Emergent learning

Quite a lot was learnt from participating, which included the teacher designing the course bringing a range of skills together to generate content that was well structured and well received as a course.

Language Within has now been able to successfully try new applications that can be incorporated into the day to day running of the school. From applications such as Padlet, Canva, and Google classrooms, as well as being able to see the benefits of using SurveyMonkey to allow for course feedback to become paperless, while at the same time providing more dynamic, professional approach.