

## PRELIM 2

---

# **Bolivia: BETA (Bolivian English Language Teachers' Association) with Inlingua Cheltenham**

August 2022

# Project background

Partnership overview		
<b>Course overview</b>	<b>ETA partner</b>	Bolivian English Teachers' Association (BETA)
	<b>UKI partner</b>	inlingua Cheltenham
	<b>Course length</b>	10 weeks
	<b>Number of groups/cohorts</b>	6
<b>Participant profile</b>	<b>Total number of CPs</b>	68
	<b>Language level(s)</b>	A2 - C2
	<b>CPs' teaching context</b>	Mostly secondary, some primary, EFL, universities and adults
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	<b>Synchronous platforms used</b>	Zoom
	<b>Synchronous session length</b>	1 hour per week
	<b>Synchronous session frequency</b>	Weekly
	<b>Asynchronous workload</b>	1-2 hours per week
<b>Course content</b>	<b>Language development focus</b>	Skills (particularly speaking with an emphasis on pronunciation). Also, presentations, error correction and grammar including comparatives, modals and narrative tenses.
	<b>Methodology focus</b>	Classroom language, activities for skills lessons, games for kids, methods for error correction in classes.
	<b>Technology focus</b>	Ideas for video lessons, use of breakout rooms for Zoom.

## Description of the partners

BETA (Bolivian English Teachers' Association), is an independent and non-profit organization that has supported English teachers in Bolivia for over 27 years. Its main objectives are to: 'promote professional development opportunities for EFL teachers in Bolivia, strengthen the English language teaching and learning at all educational levels in Bolivia, promote and spread research works in the ELT area, and work collaboratively with other teacher organizations with the same interests.' There are eight directors and over 600 members, teaching all over Bolivia in a variety of different contexts. The PRELIM 2 main contact was Isela Coronado Melgar, an English teacher in a primary school in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and Regional President at BETA.

---

inlingua Cheltenham has been running General English, Business English, Summer Schools and Specialist Courses for over 30 years. It also has a teacher training department delivering the Trinity Cert TESOL, CLIL and TEFL refresher courses face-to-face and online. From a teaching team of 20, there were 7 experienced teachers working on PRELIM 2, five of whom are Diploma level qualified. Four have a background in teacher training. The project was managed by inlingua Cheltenham's Academic Director, Wendy Makise.

## Key features of the context

BETA has a long history of encouraging professional development, recently much of this has been online. They have a large membership stretching across the country, so directors hoped that this project would reach at least 200 of its members. After the first online meeting with BETA, this number was modified to a more realistic figure of around 100, and BETA worked with its regional leaders to sign up members for the course. Isela submitted a list of 94 possible CPs and an additional 14 were submitted by the BETA President Soledad Calle Pizarroso. Members were chosen to represent each of the nine Bolivian provinces, many living and working in the larger cities of Santa Cruz, La Paz and Cochabamba. Others came from rural areas such as Pando, located in the Amazon Rainforest.

From the 108 BETA members first contacted, 97 filled out the pre-course survey with some indicating they would not be able to join due to work commitments. The key data of the survey showed:

- 86% were female and 14% male
- ages ranged from 21 to 60
- 63% currently work in a secondary school environment, teaching pupils aged 11-18
- 13% work in primary education
- 24% teach a variety of ages including adults and university students.

From these 97, 86 teachers took the placement test online. Placement tests showed that levels of English widely varied across the CPs, so each was assigned a level appropriate group.

## Outline of the course and rationale

Using the results of the placements tests, five groups were formed. These ranged from Elementary to Advanced, with an additional Intermediate group formed one week later to accommodate CPs who were late to take the test. The initial surveys clearly indicated that speaking skills, particularly pronunciation, were a main priority for CPs to improve.

All potential CPs said they had access to a computer or smart phone and internet, so live Zoom sessions were planned as the main delivery method, with asynchronous activities to be used as preparation or follow-up to the live sessions. It is worth mentioning that once the course began, technology was an issue for some, as occasionally Wi-Fi would cut out mid-session, or there were time delays. In the case of one group, some CPs were located in the jungle, so connectivity was a problem. Better research into local Wi-Fi capabilities prior to delivery may have helped mitigate this issue. However, WhatsApp was fully functional for all CPs and became an invaluable tool for communication. For one group it was used simultaneously with Zoom during the live sessions to ensure all CPs were able to participate actively.

---

It took a couple of weeks of actual delivery to assess what session times would work best and which CPs would be able to attend live sessions and find time for the additional activities. During this time, inlingua Cheltenham worked closely with BETA to increase communication with CPs who were still yet to take the test or who didn't show up to the first live sessions. The final number of CPs who joined the course and regularly attended settled at 68, which it turned out was an optimum number for the project to be delivered in 6 groups.

## Project findings

### Working in partnership

Initial communications between BETA and inlingua Cheltenham were more effective using live meetings on Zoom rather than email, demonstrating the importance that live video conference-based communication has in a partnership across different countries. BETA gave clear guidelines on how to contact CPs and what delivery methods would suit busy teachers in Bolivia. Inlingua Cheltenham were invited to give a presentation at the BETA online annual teachers conference in January and this was a useful exercise to promote the project, assess the technical capabilities of BETA members and meet some of the potential CPs prior to the course starting.

Over the course of the partnership, BETA and inlingua Cheltenham worked together closely using email and WhatsApp to ensure that the initial 97 possible CPs were able to get the information they needed to join the training. As an institution, we learnt that email is becoming a less effective way of communicating with clients abroad and WhatsApp is quicker and easier for many.

The initial struggles with encouraging CPs to attend the live sessions showed both partners that this kind of remote learning project can be difficult to timetable and meeting the needs of so many working teachers across a whole country would be challenging. Setting up initial interviews or focus groups with CPs before the course began may have helped highlight any difficulties, but also would have given CPs an idea of how useful the course could be for them in terms of working on their speaking, thereby reducing the number of 'no shows'.

### Working with the CPs

The teachers in Bolivia were keen, friendly and enthusiastic in all the live sessions. Even the very high level CPs, and many were extremely proficient, were keen to improve their English as much as possible. Many CPs of all levels commented that they had never had opportunities to speak with native English speakers before, particularly speakers from the UK. CPs said that they valued this chance to communicate directly with teachers in the UK, one CP wrote in their feedback: *"By listening to native English teachers we have the opportunity to improve not only our teaching but also to develop professionally."*

Indeed, all the CPs were very receptive to sharing ideas for their own teaching and as they often came from different parts of the country, were able to use the live sessions and accompanying WhatsApp groups as a tool to do this. CPs also mentioned that the course books used in state schools in Bolivia

are often old editions, bought in bulk, and so the websites that we recommended were useful sources of more up-to-date material for them to access.

Recording sessions and having plenty of asynchronous materials worked well as a backup for CPs who couldn't attend live sessions. The most well attended sessions had around 70% attendance, but normally it was around 50-60%. While fewer CPs in the Zoom groups did have one advantage in that they were easier to manage, we wanted to improve attendance. WhatsApp reminders sent out an hour before going live helped to do this. In fact, communication between the live sessions using WhatsApp was the most important tool to keep CPs engaged. One CP said: *"Our trainer was always with the best attitude, willing to collaborate during the week. I felt really confident working with him."* This combination of using WhatsApp with live video conference sessions is something we now encourage across all online delivery.

## Designing/delivering the course

Using information from the initial survey, inlingua trainers found an online document very useful to brainstorm ideas for the course. Specific sessions were then allocated to different team members, and course material (lesson plans with accompanying worksheets, videos or PowerPoint presentations) created and shared for delivery on Zoom. The following scheme of work was used as a base for planning sessions:

Week	Dates: w/c	Lesson content
1	17.01.22	Introductions / syllabus negotiation
2	24.01.22	Classroom language
3	31.01.22	Pronunciation 1
4	07.02.22	Comparatives: cultural differences
5	14.02.22	Culture continued. Reading to speaking skills, tenses
6	21.02.22	Modals - useful language
7	28.02.22	Language improvement / error correction
8	07.03.22	Pronunciation 2
9	14.03.22	Storytelling / listening skills: narrative tenses
10	21.03.22	Global issues: presentations

The topics were well received, one CP wrote in feedback: *"All the topics were interesting and useful for practicing the language."*

Through delivery, we learnt that a common syllabus for all groups was a good starting point for planning purposes, but that materials and lesson plans needed to be adapted for lower levels. Trainers later commented that planning a course as a team, with each taking a part, was an incredibly useful way of sharing ideas, and they were able to build a bank of materials at different levels that could be used for other classes.

## Course outcomes

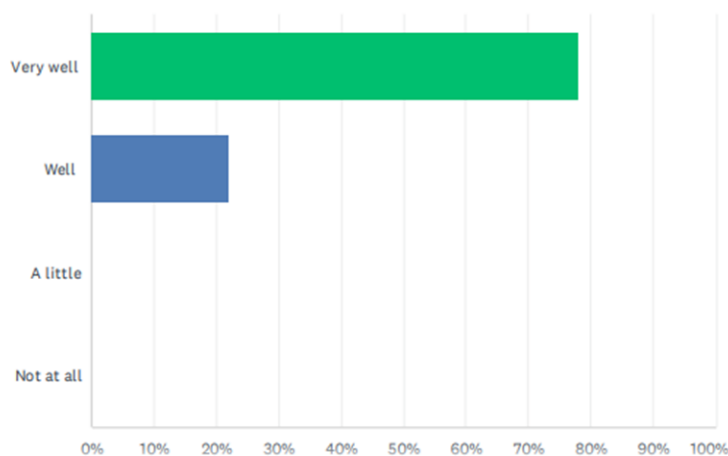
Feedback from the end of course survey and during the final closing ceremony was overwhelmingly positive. All of the 50 CPs who filled in the final questionnaire said that they had increased their confidence with English, 78% of them 'very much'.

In **Q6 How much did you increase your confidence with English?**

Answered: 50 Skipped: 1

**Q12 How well were you supported during the course:**

Answered: 50 Skipped: 1



addition,  
CPs said

that they felt well supported during the course:

The cultural aspect of the course was something the CPs valued, not realising for example how much we say please and thank you in the UK! As most of the CPs had been exposed to American English, they appreciated exploring differences in British English vocabulary and pronunciation.

One of the most popular sessions was on the topic of error correction. Many of the CPs said they did not correct errors in class, as they were not confident that they always knew the answer. Activities around delayed error correction were very well received, as they gave time for CPs to assess the error and correct with more confidence.

In terms of language improvement, survey answers and anecdotal evidence from inlingua trainers indicated that CPs improved fluency and confidence in speaking. From those 50 who took the exit test, over 80% showed an increase in their grammar score.

## Emergent learning

The PRELIM 2 project was one of the largest and most interesting online projects we have delivered. Through its delivery, inlingua trainers found that teaching English teachers was a good way of reflecting

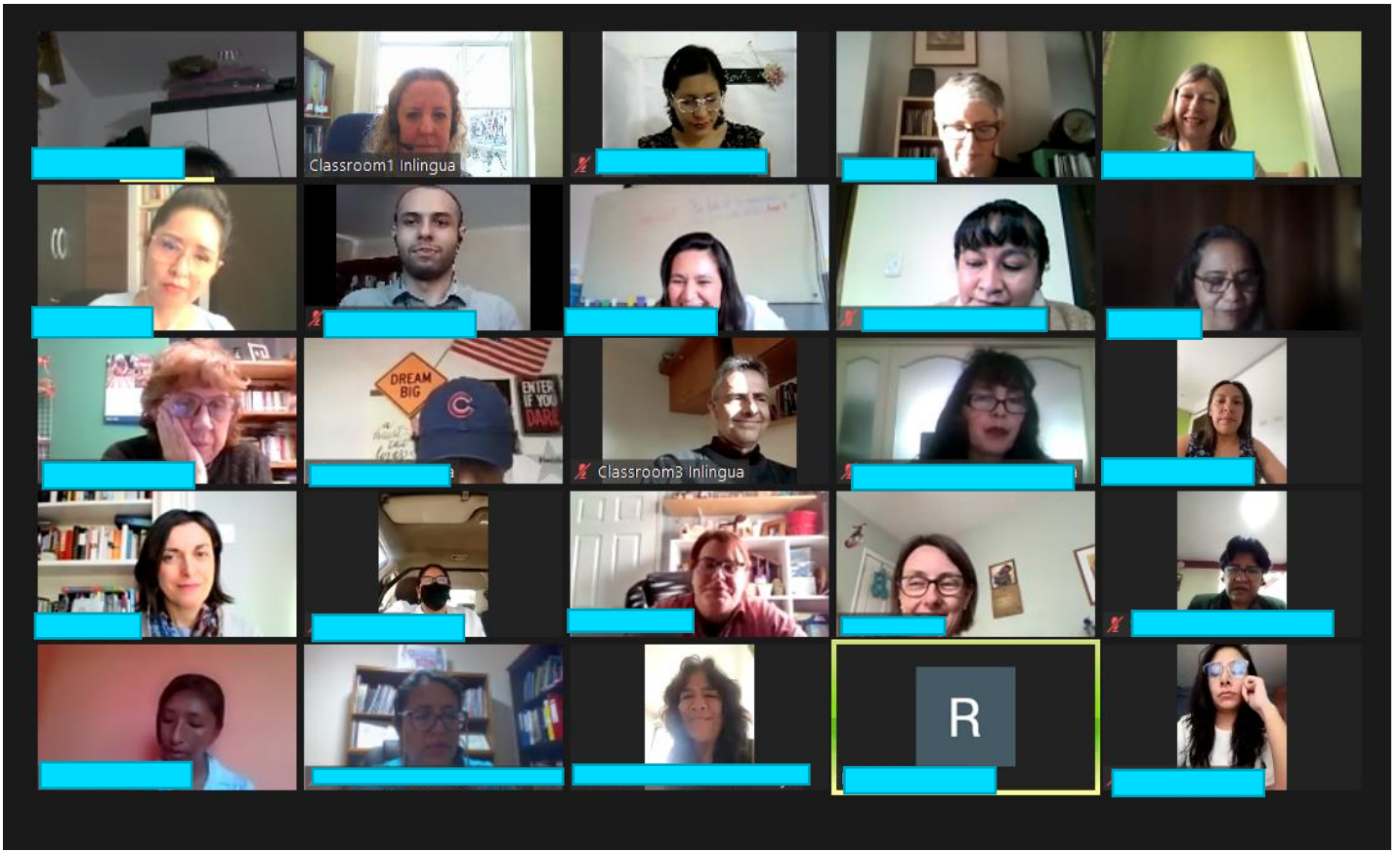
---

on their own teaching and they enjoyed discussions on methodology that came up during live sessions. They also liked being able to increase their skills in teaching online, particularly getting used to using Zoom. At first, some found teaching groups online difficult, but have now gained confidence with the platform. This has been a vital area for development for inlingua teachers as we are currently increasing the remote learning services we offer.

inlingua staff also enjoyed meeting CPs from a completely different culture, as we never see Bolivians in the main school. One inlingua teacher said *“I was impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm they showed”*. Another commented: *“It has helped me to appreciate some of the challenges that non-native English teachers deal with such as pronunciation issues and understanding the grammar sufficiently to teach higher levels.”*

From a project management point of view, working within the wider PRELIM CoP was a useful and rewarding experience. It was invaluable to hear from other project managers on their current and previous PRELIM projects and we were able to get ideas about how to set up the course and monitor its success. The project has highlighted the need for collaborative working outside of one’s own school as a way to ensure good quality and inspire business development.

Finally, the BETA representative Isela, who also took part in the training herself, was very pleased with the project and said: *“It was nice to meet all of you and have the opportunity to be trained by the Inlingua school. All of you are brilliant and very professional professors. Thank you for your knowledge and charismatic teaching. I strongly believe that we learned not only the language but also your amazing accent and interesting culture.”*



*Page 1 of 3 for the Prelim 2 Closing Ceremony.*