

PRELIM 2

Kuwait: TEFL-K (TEFL Kuwait) with CEA (Celtic English Academy)

August 2022

Project background

Partnership overview		
Course overview	ETA partner-	TEFL Kuwait (TEFLK)
	UKI partner	Celtic English Academy (CEA)
	Course length	Cohort one: 10 weeks Cohort two: 6 weeks
	Number of groups/cohorts	2 cohorts
Participant profile	Total number of CPs	TOTAL: 30 Cohort one: 15 Cohort two: 15
	Language levels	CEFR B1 – C1
	CPs' teaching context	Cohort one: English teachers in state middle and high schools. Some participants taught at Indian Schools recognised by the Ministry of Education. Cohort two: Graduates from the Arab Open University
Mode of delivery	Synchronous platforms used	Zoom
	Synchronous session length	2 hours
	Synchronous session frequency	Once a week
	Asynchronous workload	Optional writing activities Presentation & micro teach preparation
Course content	Language development focus	Speaking and listening development with a topic- based syllabus
	Methodology focus	Using images, incorporating global citizenship, exploiting texts, using authentic materials, differentiation, teaching listening, technology, task-based learning, games
	Technology focus	Padlet, Google Docs, Mentimeter, Quizlet, Youtube, Bamboozle, Kahoot, TED Talks

Description of the partners

This project involved the collaboration of TEFL Kuwait (TEFLK) and Celtic English Academy, Cardiff, UK (CEA). CEA is a private language school which has been offering English language tuition for 18 years. TEFLK, created in 2021, has about 420 members from Kuwait and other countries mainly in the Middle

East and Gulf regions. Following consultation with TEFLK, CEA designed and delivered the online course to a group of practising teachers from Kuwait and a group of graduates from the Open Arab University.

Key features of the context

Course participants (CPs) were residents, but not citizens of Kuwait, living in Kuwait City. There were two cohorts.

Cohort one

In this cohort of 15, 13 were female and two were male. All CPs were subject teachers who had teaching experience ranging from a couple of years to several decades. Although they were from a range of countries including India, Morocco, and Egypt, most had lived in Kuwait for several years or decades and some saw Kuwait as their home. Initial testing identified a range of English levels from B1 to C1. CPs felt they lacked the opportunity to use and practise their linguistic communication skills in daily life and were keen to develop their pedagogical awareness to meet the demands of their role and the needs of their students.

Cohort two

CPs from cohort two also came from a range of countries. However, in contrast to cohort one, these CPs were not practising teachers. This cohort comprised 15 economically disadvantaged recent graduates from the Arab Open University who were hoping to become teachers. In this group, 11 CPs were female and four were male. The level of English in this cohort was between B1 and B2.

Outline of the course and rationale

A needs analysis administered using Google Forms, followed by an online face-to-face focus group, was carried out prior to the start of the course to identify:

- The CPs' levels of English
- Preferred areas of focus
- Familiarity with various online delivery tools

This was beneficial as it identified that the CPs were comfortable with Zoom and WhatsApp, and that their core aims were to:

- Improve speaking and listening skills
- Gain practical ideas which they could use in the classroom
- Engage with synchronous rather than asynchronous content

To meet these needs, CEA devised a topic-based syllabus with a different methodology focus being weaved into each week's session. Different forms of teaching technology were embedded throughout the course.

Course outline

Cohort one

Week	Topic	Methodology Focus
1	History of South Wales	Using images
2	World Englishes and customs around the world	Embedding global citizenship
3	Stories	Exploiting texts
4	Education	Using authentic materials
5	Environment	Differentiation
6	The natural world	Teaching listening
7	History makers	Using technology
8	The world of work	Task-based learning
9	Food and drink	Language learning games
10	Happiness	Methodology review & microteach
11	Closing ceremony	

During the first 1.5 hours of each 2-hour session, CPs took part in a lesson in which the communicative language teaching techniques and methods above were embedded. The last 30 minutes focussed on encouraging CPs to think critically about the techniques used and how these could be applied to their teaching context.

Cohort two

Cohort two followed a 6-week course, so they completed the first six weeks only. As cohort two were not practising teachers, explanation of these teaching techniques was more overt.

Materials for both cohorts were shared using Padlet and by email. In terms of asynchronous learning, CPs were given some pre- and post- lesson activities on Padlet to support synchronous learning.

Project findings

Working in partnership

Prior to the course commencing, CEA met with TEFLK to establish the basic needs of the group; mode of delivery and communication; timetabling and course content, which greatly aided the course design and delivery. During the project, both partners learned that showing flexibility and adapting to circumstances as they arose was crucial. Although 36 potential CPs initially signed up, only 15

completed the needs analysis and went on to form cohort one. One reason for this was difficulty in communicating with the potential CPs. In their initial application, CPs were asked to provide an email address as the only means of communication. However, 11 potential participants did not respond to the initial emails. Swift communication, however, between CEA and TEFLK meant that a WhatsApp group could be created quickly for the existing CPs to better facilitate communication. The decision was also taken at this stage to increase CP numbers by creating a second cohort. For this, TEFLK identified a group of 15 economically disadvantaged graduates from the Arab Open University who were hoping to become teachers. Communication was further improved when TEFLK identified a nominated individual to liaise with CEA and the CPs. TEFLK reported that working on this type of project encouraged the organisation to work more collaboratively in the long-term.

Learning points

- Flexibility on the part of both the ETA and UKI partners is a key to success on this type of project
- Identifying a key lead in the ETA country is paramount to deal with any issues in the ETA country

Working within the CoP

CPs from both cohorts were offered a choice of two days to attend. Due to other commitments, some CPs missed a few lessons at the start of the course so weekly catch-up sessions were offered. This flexible approach meant that by the end of the course all the 30 CPs from both cohorts had attended some or all of the sessions.

The CPs were engaged, keen to use their language skills and share their ideas. CPs reported that having the opportunity to participate and collaborate in sessions was a reason they decided to continue with the course. There were some internet issues but most of the CPs were very familiar with Zoom as they had taught using Zoom (cohort one) or taken university classes online (cohort two). Furthermore, the internet connection in Kuwait was usually good.

At the beginning of the course some of the CPs spoke Arabic to each other in breakout rooms and to say 'hello' at the beginning of the session. However, by the end of the course the same students were comfortable speaking in English to each other. This suggested that being in an environment where they were expected to speak English to each other encouraged the CPs to use English with their peer group.

Outside classes, WhatsApp was the most effective communication tool and in their WhatsApp group the CPs formed their own community of practice allowing CPs to create contacts and share ideas with peers from similar teaching contexts and continue to do this after the end of the course.

Learning points

- Providing flexible lesson times and offering catch up sessions encouraged more CPs to attend
- Communicating in English with their peers was a new experience for the CPs and the sessions helped develop their autonomy as English language users

Designing / delivering the course

The topics and teaching methodologies were selected based on their relevance to the CPs' teaching contexts and cultural context. CPs from both cohorts had good grammatical awareness. However, their vocabulary range, knowledge of collocation and idiomatic language was not as proficient, so the topic-based nature of the course helped address these areas.

In cohort one, the topics and methodologies that engaged the CPs the most were those that were less familiar or completely new, such as using stories. This was possibly because the CPs were experienced teachers and were keen to experience and discuss unfamiliar topics and new methodologies.

Despite enthusiasm for new techniques and methodologies, they were not always confident about applying them to their teaching context. The microteaching session at the end of the course was a good opportunity for the CPs to compare and discuss ways to use some of the methods modelled on the course.

Learning points

- If the course was to be repeated, additional asynchronous activities would be developed to support CPs with a lower level of English with their linguistic weaknesses
- Although it improved during the course, more explicit emphasis could have been given to turn-taking strategies during the planning stage, as it became apparent to the course tutors in the first few lessons that this was an area for development.

Course outcomes

At the end of the course, cohort one's CPs completed a micro-teaching session using an idea or technique from the course. CPs were successful in delivering these with confidence and fluency.

Informal feedback was gathered throughout the course via WhatsApp, allowing minor adjustments to be made as the course progressed. Mid- and end-of-course feedback forms were also sent to the 15 CPs from cohort one. As cohort two took part in a shorter course, this cohort only completed end-of-course feedback. These were administered using Google Forms. Around half of the CPs completed the mid-course and/or the end-of-course feedback form.

Key findings from feedback

- All the CPs who responded agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more confident interacting and listening to English
- The CPs agreed or strongly agreed that they had learnt some practical ideas that they could use in the classroom
- They also agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the course to their colleagues
- The most popular topic was 'telling stories' and teaching method was 'using authentic materials'
- Some of the CPs suggested that a longer course would be a good way to improve the course

CPs mentioned that the opportunity to discuss different topics with native speakers was particularly useful to them: *'We need discussion and communication with native speakers in a relaxing, friendly*

atmosphere'. The CPs also mentioned that sharing teaching ideas with their peers was useful: *'I think it is very useful and fruitful to exchange ideas together and discuss the best methods in teaching'*. When asked about their favourite topic up to that point in the course, many of the CPs mentioned topics related to culture: *'It allowed me to know more about the different cultures, customs & traditions around the world some of them were brand new for me.'* One CP said that she would have liked more writing. Although there were optional writing tasks for most sessions, perhaps negotiating writing tasks with the CPs would have encouraged them to write more.

TEFL Kuwait Board members also dropped into lessons and found the lessons to be: *'Extremely useful for participants and very skillfully delivered. Instructors never missed a beat, waiting patiently for students to join sessions at times. Always there, always poised and professional, staff were always encouraging and very helpful.'*

Learning points

- Conducting feedback synchronously could achieve a higher response rate
- Sharing ideas was one of the most enjoyable aspects of the course for the CPs
- Giving the CPs the opportunity to lead a micro-teaching session was motivating but a similar task at the start of the course could have better measured progress

Emergent learning

A key learning point from PRELIM 1 was that the project afforded an excellent CPD opportunity for teachers at CEA to become involved in the creation of resources and materials. This was built upon for PRELIM 2 with two teachers from CEA being given overall responsibility for all aspects of course design and delivery including initial needs assessment, lesson content and materials, monitoring, feedback and evaluation. The teachers involved reported that they found this sense of ownership to be motivating.

In addition, the CEA teachers on PRELIM 2 enjoyed the experience of collaborating with peers (the course participants) working in a different educational context. They reported that their role varied between trainer, facilitator and coach partly because CPs in cohort 2 were experienced teachers who were able to bring and share their own ideas and experiences.

The importance of establishing a safe space for discussion was also highlighted during the course. For example, even though the CPs had requested a focus on technology, it became apparent that they had the knowledge but were lacking confidence. By creating a safe space, CPs were able to open up about their concerns which led to an increase in confidence in a non-judgmental environment.

Learning points

- This type of project can be an excellent CPD opportunity not only for the CPs but also for teachers of the UKI
- It is important to create a safe space for participants from the outset