

## PRELIM 2

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# Latvia: LATE (Latvian Association of Teachers of English) with **West London English School**

August 2022

# Project background

Partnership overview		
<b>Course overview</b>	<b>ETA partner</b>	LATE (Latvian Association of Teachers of English)
	<b>UKI partner</b>	West London English School
	<b>Course length</b>	10 weeks
	<b>Number of groups/cohorts</b>	2 cohorts
<b>Participant profile</b>	<b>Total number of CPs</b>	41 teachers
	<b>Language level(s)</b>	B1 – C2
	<b>CPs' teaching context</b>	Mostly primary and secondary school teachers
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	<b>Synchronous platforms used</b>	Zoom
	<b>Synchronous session length</b>	90 minutes
	<b>Synchronous session frequency</b>	Once a week
	<b>Asynchronous workload</b>	2-3 hours self-study
<b>Course content</b>	<b>Language development focus</b>	General English: predominantly vocabulary, though also grammar
	<b>Methodology focus</b>	Different teaching approaches
	<b>Technology focus</b>	Teaching online using Zoom and Moodle

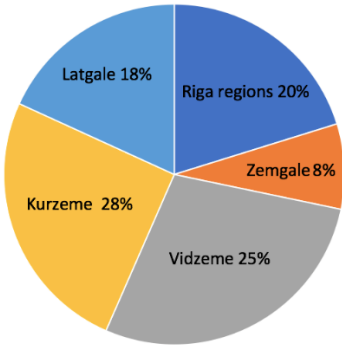
## Description of the partners

LATE is the professional association for English language teachers working in Latvia since it was established in 1992. Inga Linde is President of the association and Robert Buckmaster is the Vice President. LATE is an affiliate of IATEFL and works with numerous academic institutions. The main aim of the association is to provide professional development opportunities for teachers.

West London English School (WLES) is a private language school which delivers a wide range of General English and exam preparation courses, including IELTS, OET and the Cambridge exams. The teacher development programme offers In-Service Teacher Training, as well as CPD sessions. Since the pandemic, all WLES teachers are able to deliver online and hybrid classes.

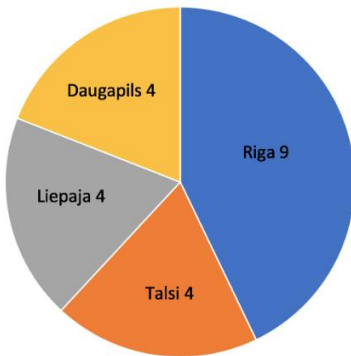
## Key features of the context

The participants on the course were all practising teachers who taught at either primary or secondary level. The participants were overwhelmingly female (39:2). The majority of teachers taught English as their main subject or as one of their main subjects. The majority of participants were experienced teachers, though some were relatively new. Just over half of the course applicants were members of LATE (54%). CPs were from various regions around Latvia, roughly evenly split through the regions, except for under-representation from Zemgale, a central region to the south and west of Riga – see table:



Riga and region	20%
Zemgale	8%
Kurzeme	28%
Vidzeme	25%
Latgale	18%

Four towns had more than one applicant for the course:



Riga	9
Daugavpils	4
Liepaja	4
Talsi	4

## Outline of the course and rationale

The primary aim of the project was to raise teachers' confidence in using English in their classroom environment. This was to be achieved through incorporating the following into sessions on:

- Language: grammar and vocabulary development
- Skills development: reading, writing, listening and speaking
- Online learning: teaching using Zoom and Moodle. This was done passively by virtue of the course participants taking part in a course using these platforms. No session was explicitly dedicated to explaining how to do this
- Methodology: awareness of different teaching approaches

The course involved a ratio of 2:1 asynchronous to synchronous content. A 90-minute session was delivered weekly on Zoom. This was followed by approximately three hours of self-study tasks on Moodle, which also included submission tasks. Submission tasks were sent to WLES trainers and then returned to CPs with feedback, allowing for interaction between CPs and trainers. Certification of the course was dependent on both attendance and completion of the submission tasks.

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# Project findings

## Working in partnership

A close working relationship between LATE and WLES was essential throughout the course for the project to work. Initial meetings helped to establish the framework of the course to be delivered. During the course, LATE requested feedback from participants after each session, which was forwarded on to us. This feedback was in the form of both a qualitative and quantitative questionnaire and proved invaluable in ensuring the effectiveness of the course as it impacted content and delivery of future sessions. There was a constant channel of communication between LATE and WLES throughout the course. Often, Inga Linde (President of LATE) would attend sessions and would stay on afterwards to discuss any issues and the content/delivery of the session itself. When Inga was unavailable, Robert Buckmaster (Vice-President of LATE) attended in her stead. Constant course evaluation was essential in creating an effective course.

At the end of the first cohort, a meeting was held between LATE and WLES to evaluate the course. The course was then slightly recalibrated to better fit the needs of the CP, based on lessons learnt from the first cohort.

The cooperation between the ETA and UKI cannot be understated. WLES did not know the course participants and their teaching context as well as LATE did, and were therefore dependent on them for this knowledge. This was essential in the initial stages of the project, especially until the needs analysis focus groups were conducted.

## Working with the CoP

WLES were able to liaise with other providers working on similar projects in varying contexts using Slack. This support network was important and beneficial, particularly in the initial stage of the project, when the course was being devised. A forum was available for sharing good practice and allowing for collaboration between different UKIs. A sense of community developed and it was useful to have this support network available throughout as points of concerns could be raised. Slack also made it possible to exchange ideas and it was useful to see how other schools were progressing, especially during the live CoP meetings on Zoom.

## Working with the CPs

CPs returned a needs analysis questionnaire on Google Docs providing background information about themselves. The first cohort of teachers were then interviewed on Zoom, allowing WLES to gain a better idea of their language level and their needs. While the second cohort of teachers also completed a needs analysis, they were not interviewed on Zoom as by this time we had a much better idea of CPs needs and how the course should be redesigned.

Communication between trainers CPs was mostly via email. There was little communication between CPs themselves and this is something which would need to be addressed for future courses.

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There were no technical issues as Latvia has good internet connectivity. However, it was beneficial spending time showing CPs how to navigate the online learning platform. CPs were both motivated and enthusiastic and showed a great desire to participate and learn. Their attitude made it a joy for WLES trainers to work with them and this proved a rewarding experience.

## Designing/delivering the course

WLES and LATE initially met to outline a number of factors of the course. This included agreeing to use Zoom for the synchronous lessons and Moodle for the asynchronous. We further discussed a needs analysis survey where Google Docs would be used, followed by Zoom meetings with small groups of CPs.

The needs of CPs ranged widely, including their language levels and confidence in using English. While some requested nothing more than language, others requested methodology, while some stated they had no preference about the course content. After meeting CPs, it became apparent that a course covering a range of areas would be required.

The language level of CPs was higher than expected. Initially, the course was designed for CPs around A1-B1. Following the needs analysis, however, it became apparent that the language level was much higher. Moreover, as language levels varied, it was clear that the course would have to cater for varying language levels.

It was agreed that rather than have a single course, two courses could be run consecutively, allowing a greater number of participants to attend, as not all teachers were able to attend from the first date (in January). Not only did this allow for a greater number of participants, but it also ensured that the quality of the course was at a higher standard, as we were able to go into much more depth in each session. That said, it may be worth considering whether a single cohort doing a longer course may have been more beneficial for CPs. A five-week course ended almost prematurely and many CPs requested that the course be extended. Another consideration is whether more focus should be given to the synchronous live classes and less time dedicated to the asynchronous self-study part of the course. This would have allowed for greater interaction between trainers and CPs.

To enable greater participation and greater learning, breakout rooms were fully exploited. Sessions would start in the main room, and then CPs would go into a break out room with a trainer. At the end of the session, all CPs and trainers would return to the main room.

A flexible approach was used in delivering sessions, though in combining practice and theory, demo lessons were used, after which they were analysed. For example, the first session had a focus on pronunciation and this was delivered using a Text-Based Approach. The second session focused on lexis, using Test Teach Test in the demo lesson. This satisfied both methodological and practical needs of CPs, as identified in the needs analysis. Moreover, demo lessons were hugely beneficial as CPs were able to put themselves in the position of the learner, while increasing their own language level; the post-lesson analysis allowed for understanding of a framework which CPs could transfer to their own teaching context.

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Following each live class, CPs were provided with access to asynchronous materials which included a number of self-study tasks. Tasks were varied and ranged from readings, language exercises, writing lesson plans, and so on. The feedback provided by trainers allowed for valuable interaction between teachers and CPs; this communication was most useful in aiding CPs' teaching practice.

While the course had an approximate outline, not planning too far in advance allowed for a greater degree of flexibility. Feedback was taken after each session by LATE and this was shared with WLES, allowing the course to be adapted to meet the emerging needs of CPs. Indeed, while it may have been better to have the entire course timetabled from the outset, a significant degree of flexibility and adaptability were required, making it impossible to rigidly plan an entire course from beginning to end. The evolution of the course was most dramatic within the first weeks, when still getting to know the CPs and their learning context.

## Course outcomes

Several positive outcomes were realised from the course:

- CPs had not previously had an opportunity to receive professional development in this context before. Many had never worked directly with a British Council accredited language school, and this kind of training was not familiar to many. In short, many benefited from the course and a number of CPs expressed an interest in attending further training sessions.
- In the first cohort, out of 16 CPs who attended the first session, 14 completed the course and received a participation certificate. In the second cohort, out of 25 initial attendees, 20 CPs completed the course. The overall percentage of CPs who saw the course through was 83%.
- Qualitative feedback was taken at the end of the course, in which most CPs expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the course. The following extracts are taken from the end-of-course evaluation completed by CPs:

*"I am a teacher and do my work every day, but, also for me it is of great value to find a place and pace of growth and perfection. I appreciated the opportunity to take part in the course. In my opinion, I have gained more confidence in what I do and how I perform in a class. During sessions, I wrote notes and have also downloaded all materials. So far, I have used already the lesson plan of the last session (dictogloss). After the lesson students said it was a compelling lesson! For sure I will re-read my notes and all materials again and again to find new angles to develop in my teaching practice."*

*"I have never made infographics and now I did it! I tried to use it in my classes. We liked it – my students and me too. To work with literature and use original texts isn't easy, but sometimes I did it with my grade 4 students. For me it wasn't easy to define the right tense and pronouncing features for me. I had to study hard for such a lesson. I understood that this course was tended for grades up to 8 mostly. I tried to adapt many rules from this course for primary students. I liked the manner of teaching and all themes were valuable. I will implement many things learnt on the course in my everyday teaching. Thank you. You are the great team."*

*"To tell the truth, I have learnt much, all activities were useful for me. Everything was educational and worth learning, revising and drilling. Thanks for your work, friendly atmosphere and support. Nowadays I wouldn't make any changes to the courses, everything was GREAT! I would be happy to attend these courses again with new workshops and same teachers."*

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*"I wouldn't make any changes of the course because it gave a lot of theoretical and practical knowledge that impacted on my teaching practice. I liked lesson analysis. The most useful for me were model lesson and ways of teaching vocabulary. The course fulfilled my speech with pedagogical and classroom terminology. Thank you very much for the online classes, everything was very detailed and clearly explained."*

*"The course has made me more aware about the new approaches in the teaching of foreign languages... the course has strengthened my confidence as a teacher. I think more about the tasks in the text books. I am not afraid of changing them for my needs. I pay more attention to the content of the topics. I mean, the words can be used for teaching pronunciation or finding the collocations. I am grateful for the skills I have acquired in the course."*

*"I have taken I learned a lot: how to plan Test-Teach-Test based lesson, PBL lesson, infographics, dictogloss based lessons. I started each week by reading the tasks, skimming through the notes and given materials. Then I did my homework. It wasn't easy, but I receive more individual attention from the teachers. This was a useful course, well taught and organized."*