

PRELIM 2

Mongolia: ELTAM (English Language Teachers' Association of Mongolia) with International House London

August 2022

Project background

Partnership overview		
Course overview	ETA partner	English Language Teachers' Association of Mongolia (ELTAM)
	UKI partner	International House London (IH London)
	Course length	10 weeks
	Number of groups/cohorts	4
Participant profile	Total number of CPs	80
	Language level(s)	A2 - C1
	CPs' teaching context	Primary and secondary schools across the country (including Ulaanbaatar/Chingeltei district, Arkhangai/Ulziit, Bayanhongor/ Bayanhongor)
Mode of delivery	Synchronous platforms used	Zoom
	Synchronous session length	90 mins
	Synchronous session frequency	1 x week
	Asynchronous workload	1 x set homework or reflective task on Padlet
Course content	Language development focus	10-week course in A2-B2 general English on everyday topics, such as food, with a low resource, communicative focus
	Methodology focus	Applying materials to the teacher's context, adapting materials, micro teaching and peer evaluation, teaching beliefs and challenges
	Technology focus	Lesson delivery on Zoom, accompanying Padlet for hosting materials, collaboration/discussion and homework library

Description of the partners

The English Language Teachers' Association of Mongolia (ELTAM), established in 1997, is the first and only professional non-governmental, non-profit organization that has been working on development of an English language teachers' network in the country to facilitate coordination and collaboration between English language programs and advocate for English language teachers' interests at different levels. ELTAM works at national level, initiates and organizes annual ELT conferences, carries out research projects, curriculum and materials development and in-service teacher training courses in order to

stimulate professional development of Mongolian teachers of English. In 2011, ELTAM joined TESOL, and now it is officially recognized as its affiliate, Mongolia TESOL.

International House London (IH London) is a teaching and training institution, established in 1953, based in Central London. IH London delivers a wide range of General English and exam preparation courses, online and face-to-face including IELTS, OET, Cambridge Mainsuite exams. The training department offers pre-service and in-service teacher training qualifications such as CELTA, Delta as well as short CPD courses for practising teachers and bespoke training programmes. There is also a Modern Languages, Younger Learner and Executive English department.

Key features of the context

- The course participants came from a mixture of primary and secondary schools across the country with the majority of CPs having between 5-17 years' teaching experience. The stress of their own workloads and teaching schedules meant that some CPs found they did not have enough time to dedicate to the course. Despite their demanding schedules, most attended the course after or during their working day. The blend of asynchronous and synchronous training was appropriate for this context and to reduce their workload. However, some saw PRELIM 2 as more 'homework' for them.
- The Mongolian government has recently adopted a new national programme on raising the standards of English education which may have positively impacted course attendance levels but had some impact on teachers seeing the relevance of looking at different teaching methodologies. The restrictions and mandatory curriculum targets in their schools potentially made it harder for some CPs to relate to a more communicative approach. This was a potential challenge for our trainers and the CPs in making the training relevant to their context.
- Most CPs accessed the course individually through laptops; some of them joined the sessions while in class or at school. Many logged on from home and some used mobile phones if they were on-the-go. Many of the CPs, while familiar with Zoom, crucially had not participated in online classes before and access to technology was variable. Training on using Padlet was required.
- Not all teachers had been exposed to British English before.
- Their class sizes were typically around 25 to 30 students with some as low as 5.

Outline of the course and rationale

The course was delivered both synchronously and asynchronously. This allowed the CPs opportunities to experience a live session where they could interact with their IH trainer and peers, pose questions and watch IH trainers perform activities. The asynchronous tasks allowed more time for reflection and analysis on how they could adapt the materials to the context and what issues they may have. This was not only effective from a pedagogical point of view, but was also practical, as those who either had connectivity issues or were unable to attend the live lesson could still take part in asynchronous tasks.

Bearing in mind the key features of the context (outlined above), IH trainers found that running some of the sessions as workshops and working on the creation and adaptation of materials helped to reduce the

CPs' stress by making the time in class as relevant as possible to their own context. Reflection and practice became a key component of the course.

Based on the feedback from the trainers at IH London, we would recommend that the first week is an introductory session, outlining the course 'rules', methodology and expectations along with any required technology training. It is also valuable for the trainers to get a greater insight into the teachers' curriculum demands.

Synchronous learning

The General English language course materials were targeted at A2/B1, and were suitable for both primary and secondary age groups. A key course outcome for lower-level CPs in Cohort 1 was to improve language competency and fluency to increase confidence in their English classroom.

In Cohorts 2-4, CPs were at a much higher language level ranging from B1-C1, and this meant that there was a much greater demand for pedagogical training. IH trainers therefore used the course material as a springboard for discussion and, while still delivering the class material, they then spent more time on analysing the activities and approaches that they had used.

The CPs were able to discuss and explore how they could use the materials and key concepts in their own context and were encouraged to think about their teaching beliefs and approaches. This culminated in microteaching sessions, where CPs were encouraged to play the role of both teacher and student, and offer constructive feedback to their peers.

Asynchronous tasks

In terms of asynchronous tasks, Cohort 1 CPs were given homework which would comprise of further practice of the language point. CPs would either email or upload their contributions to a [Padlet](#) (see Fig. 1). In Cohorts 2 – 4, CPs were given the materials followed by reflective tasks to help the teachers think about how they could use and adapt the materials for their classes. CPs were encouraged to leave comments on a [Padlet](#) and IH trainers would respond and help facilitate discussion (see Fig. 2).

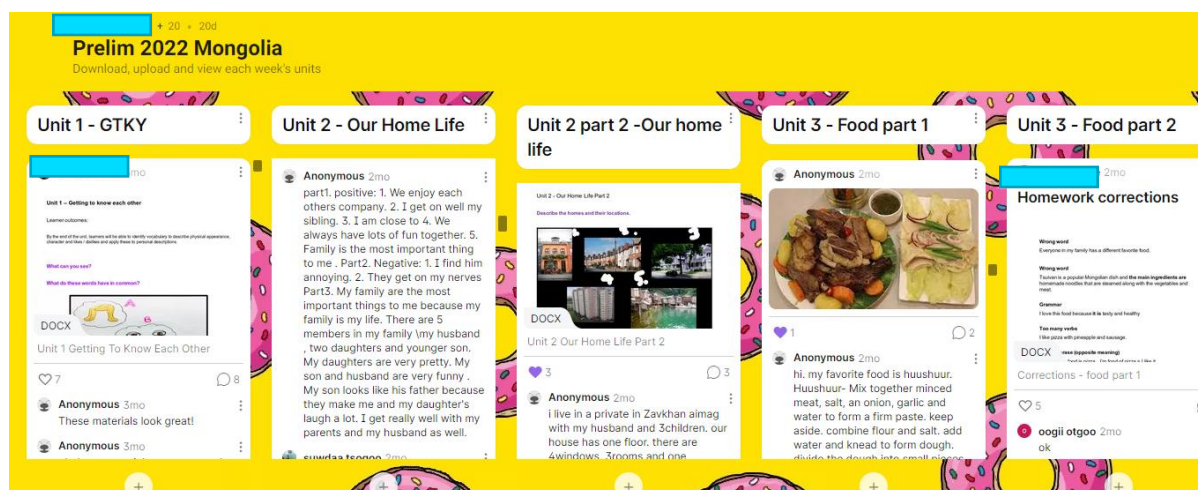


Fig. 1. Cohort 1 Padlet.

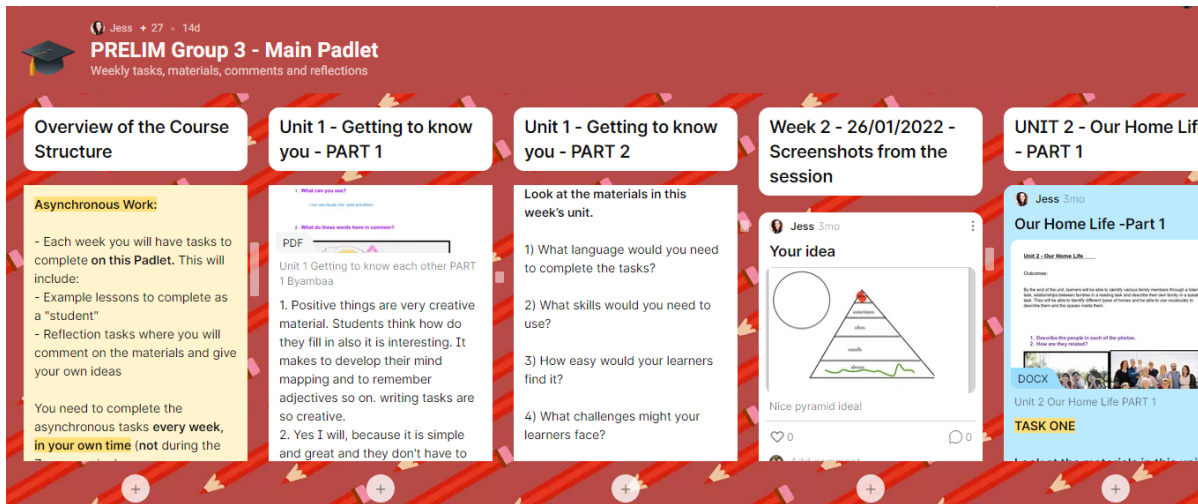


Fig. 2. Cohort 3 Padlet.

Project findings

Working in partnership

Project Manager at IH London, Pauline Loriggio, and Project Manager for ELTAM, Mira Namsrai, liaised regularly via email after an initial Zoom meeting to establish the learning goals and ideal course outcomes as well as identifying the context and agreeing on the mode of delivery. Each of the four groups were assigned a co-ordinator who liaised with the IH London trainers and the CPs whilst taking part in the lessons. They were the main point of contact for the groups and could help iron out any issues. They helped attendance and encouraged motivation when needed and helped send and collate feedback and certificates. The co-ordinators were chosen because they had the most teaching experience and having them in place helped with the smooth running of the courses.

ELTAM are a professional network for English teachers in Mongolia and provide a wide range of development opportunities for their members. ELTAM selected and pre-tested the CPs (using our [IH online test](#)) and we liaised on dividing the groups. We established that the lower-level groups were keen to develop their language skills while the higher levels were keener on learning more methodology. Once we established the groups, IH trainers sent out a pre-course questionnaire. We also sent out mid-course and end of course feedback.

Mira summed up the partnership: *“Working with a partner provided an opportunity to learn from each other. We learned how to conduct an online course. The majority of teachers who were enrolled in the course have been exposed to British English for the first time. So, they all were very happy learning the language and gaining more interesting experiences of classroom teaching. Our government adopted a new national program on supporting English education. This project significantly contributed to the implementation of that program. We were asked to enroll and train more teachers. If we continue the project a lot of teachers can benefit from it.”*

Working with the CPs

The groups were mostly female and attendance was high. CPs participated professionally and with enthusiasm, taking part in all the activities and class discussions. The majority of CPs seemed to be familiar with the communicative approach and were keen to learn and apply new approaches. Some, however, seemed constrained by their school curriculum.

Designing/delivering the course

The course was designed for primary and secondary teachers across Mongolia, particularly those who do not normally have access to training. For most of the groups, a key principle of the course was teaching methodology rather than English language development. The IH trainer would encourage teachers to view the materials with a critical eye, demonstrate new lesson types (a dictogloss, for example) and encourage teachers to try new techniques. This approach was well received by teachers and they were able to apply techniques to their classes during the course. In Cohort 1, the teachers' pre-course questionnaire and diagnostic lesson highlighted a need for language development, therefore there was less emphasis on methodology and reflection.

The English language course materials used by each group were taken from the first PRELIM project but repurposed for the new context. The teachers were positive about the topics and lessons and many said their students would enjoy them.

For Cohort 1, many of the CPs had not experienced an online learning environment but embraced the communicative classroom. Full class participation was frequent, however some classroom management training was required, e.g. not to talk over each other. Pair and group work was encouraged in breakout rooms throughout. This was a challenge for some participants who were more used to lecture-style classrooms. There was also a tendency to slip back into L1.

For Cohorts 2-4, breakout rooms were generally successful and IH trainers received very positive feedback from trainees on this feature. The 'camera off' function did inhibit this at times, however. Many CPs responded better to the reflection tasks once they had observed the trainer demo-ing the lesson or section of it first, rather giving the teachers units to read as an asynchronous task.

Padlet was a new tool for many of the CPs and there was some reluctance to use it in the first instance. However, CPs soon adjusted and many embraced the platform. The CPs were encouraged to keep the Padlet 'alive', using it as a resource to continue sharing and discussing post course.

Course outcomes

Delivery of this project by IH teachers has increased their confidence and skillset in providing meaningful training in a very different context. IH teachers were supported and mentored throughout the process by their peers and project leader(s). The sharing of ideas, activities, materials, and expertise in our formal and informal meetings successfully feeds into their own continued professional development.

The project has gone some way in achieving some of ELTAM's key learning aims as outlined in their strategic plan. That is to: consolidate communication and relations between English language teachers all over the country. One teacher said: *"I will apply all the takeaways to my teaching practices and share my experience with my colleagues. I will get in touch with this PRELIM course community and keep developing myself as a teacher"* – Nomintuul Byambatsogt, teacher in Cohort 4.

One other aim of ELTAM is to establish networks and cooperation with Mongolian and international organizations to raise the professional competence and confidence of English teachers. One CP said what they liked most was: *"context appropriate methodology, sharing and expressing [their] own ideas in English, listening to a native speaker"* – Anonymous, Cohort 3.

Learning and course outcomes varied between groups depending on their own language level and needs. For the higher level group (B2), the progress of the CPs was visible and they often commented to the teacher on how they had been able to incorporate some of the lesson plans that had been built into the course. One IH trainer said: *"For me the course felt like a great success as during the sessions I could see that many of them were very engaged, and their progress was also observable in the final weeks when I asked them to create productive tasks and I could see how they were beginning to incorporate a more communicative approach to their planning."*

CPs unfamiliar with training of this kind responded much better when they could first experience the lesson as a student, which helped them better identify the challenges with language. Demonstration lessons, unpacking and the follow-up discussions on how the materials could be adapted for their own classes provided the key to motivating the CPs. One IH trainer said: *"The most fruitful reflections came after some of them had managed to use the materials with their own classes and had the opportunity to deliver the materials themselves. The more practical the sessions, the more enthusiastic the participants were."*

CPs expressed to their teachers on how much they liked working in breakout rooms as many of the participants were particularly keen to improve their speaking confidence. One trainer said: *"It was clear that the participants used a similar communicative approach to me, so we were able to share ideas on teaching beliefs and practice, and they had plenty to share between them. The participants seemed to be happy with the hybrid of language/methodology focus."* One CP said: *"I talked to my colleagues and they said the methodology was very good. The lesson was unique in that it taught very simple but very important rules in an easy way, and gave students the opportunity to learn a lot from the example"* – Anonymous, Cohort 1.

One of our key learning outcomes would be to realise that the CPs will have little or no experience in attending online classes on Zoom and therefore there was a need to provide some basic classroom training. Some did not know the basics such as muting their microphones, using the raised hand icon and not using L1 in breakout rooms. An introductory session on using the technology would be advisable for any future course.

As the course progressed, many CPs felt more restricted by their own mandatory school targets, which made them less able to experiment and break away from established lesson structures even though their experience of teaching and reflection showed them that certain things weren't working. One trainer said: *"many of them voiced issues around teaching reading, yet were reluctant to steer away from or adapt set texts in books, or even to give agency to students in choosing texts that they might like to read."*

Final reflections

From a group co-ordinator: *“I can clearly see that the teachers are very satisfied with your tutoring during the course and get the professional needs they seek from professionals. I’m sure they will apply every tiny thing that they have learned into what they are doing in the field. They were inspired and motivated at the same time by you. Indeed this is a huge amount of work. Thank you for your persistence and sincere tutoring to Mongolian teachers.”*

Cohort 2 produced a [video thank you](#) with feedback from CPs.

From Mira Namsrai: *“Through this partnership we made new connections and therefore expanded relationships that we had before. We got good relations with the British Council, IATEFL and International House. We joined a community of practice and hope it will help us share ELT experiences and best practices. It seems all ETAs have the same concerns and challenges, so together we can be strong and can successfully overcome obstacles and solve problems. In addition, we can share success and achievements. Building strong networks with other ETAs is the main standout point. It will greatly support the capacity building within ETA as well.”*