

PRELIM 2

Russia: SPELTA (St Petersburg English Language Teachers' Association) and KOMELTA (Komi Republic English Language Teachers' Association) with Anglia Ruskin University

August 2022

Project background

Partnership overview		
Course overview	ETA partner	SPELTA (St Petersburg English Language Teachers' Association) and KOMELTA (Komi Republic English Language Teachers' Association)
	UKI partner	Anglia Ruskin University
	Course length	6 weeks + 1 induction week and 1 consolidation week (8 total)
	Number of groups/cohorts	One cohort split into 4 groups for synchronous teaching
Participant profile	Total number of CPs	104
	Language level(s)	B2 - C1
	CPs' teaching context	
Mode of delivery	Synchronous platforms used	Microsoft Teams (for delivery and planning), Zoom (for planning only)
	Synchronous session length	90 minutes
	Synchronous session frequency	1 per group per week (4 groups)
	Asynchronous workload	Core content: 3 hours per week (up to 6-8 hours with optional elements). Largely delivered on Canvas (VLE) Additional communication between participants using Facebook initially
Course content	Language development focus	Focus on language and language skills
	Methodology focus	Reflection on and consideration of classroom practice in relation to the new language elements
	Technology focus	Use of technology and resources for development of language both a) for participants b) for their students

Description of the partners

The partner organisations were two English Language Teachers' Associations of republics of the Federal District of North-western Russia: **SPELTA** (the St Petersburg association, whose members are based in the Federal City of St Petersburg and its environs), and KOMELTA (whose members are based in the Komi Republic).

SPELTA aims to bring together English Language specialists at all levels and in all areas: junior and secondary school, college and university, adult education and ESP. Based in St. Petersburg, there is also a substantial network of SPELTA friends in many Russian regions and abroad, and KOMELTA is one of these. One of our primary objectives is to encourage specialists in EFL methodology and communication, teachers and textbook writers, as well as interpreters and translators to share experiences and discuss ideas with colleagues both from Russia and the English-speaking world.

SPELTA is a member of the National Association of Teachers of English (NATE), an Associate of IATEFL, the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (Great Britain) and an Affiliate of TESOL, the US-based organization of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

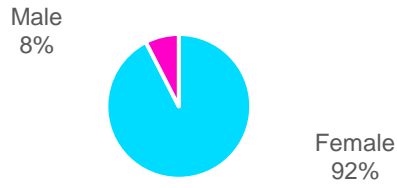
Anglia Ruskin University is a public University in the East of England. Its Language Centre is based primarily in Cambridge. Since March 2020 until PRELIM 2022 ARU Language Centre has operated its teaching entirely online. ARU took part in the first PRELIM project in 2021, partnering with ANPI in Nicaragua to provide an online Language Development and Methodology course for a group of around 420 teachers.

Key features of the context

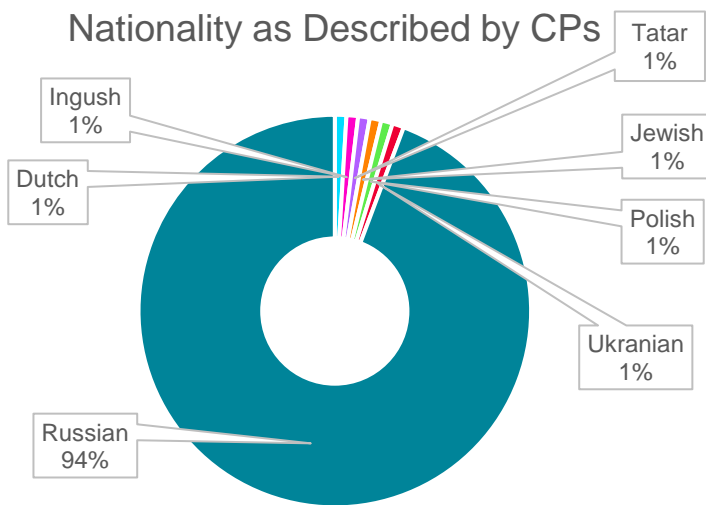
100 CPs registered to do the course and they had levels of B2-C1 with a few highly proficient users of English. 3 people didn't participate as they had various reasons for dropping out of the programme before it commenced fully.

Participants were mostly female:

Course Participants Gender Split

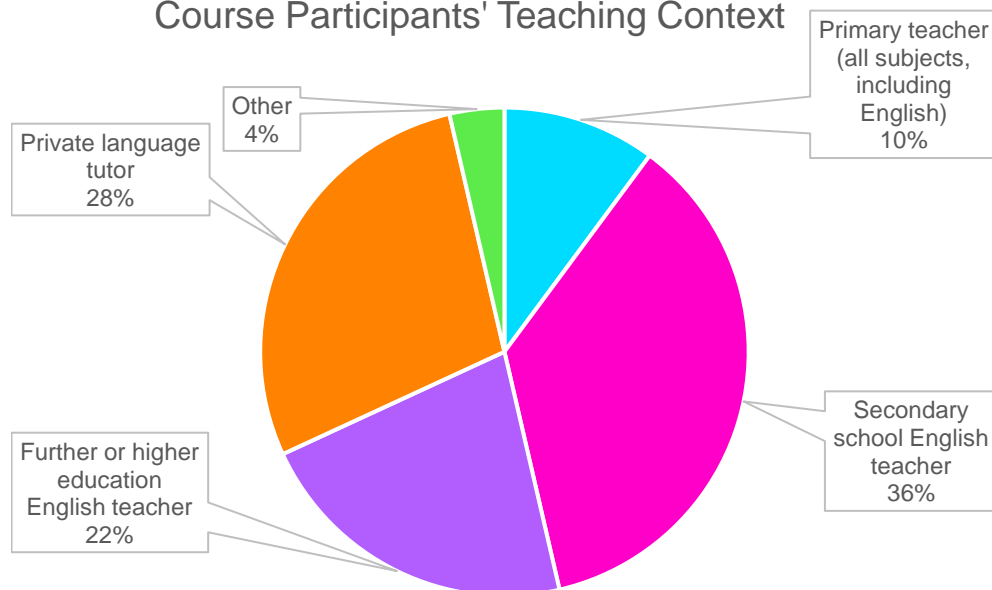


94% were Russian nationals, with a handful of other nationalities/identities self-selected by participants as follows:



A little over half of the CPs were school teachers but there was a broad range of teaching contexts, with a mixture of primary, secondary, Higher Education and private tuition:

Course Participants' Teaching Context

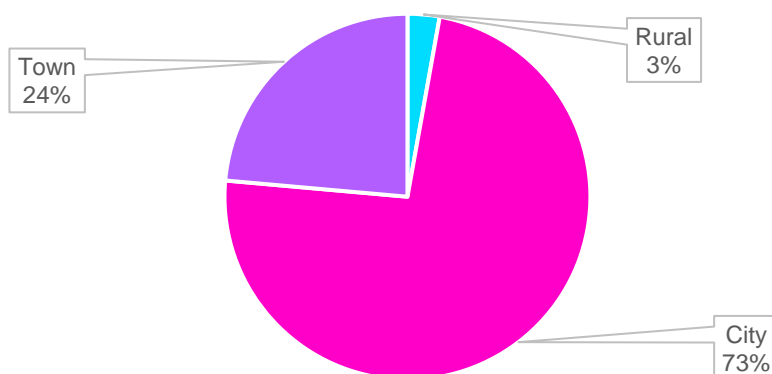


Laptops and mobile phones were readily available for participants, and there were relatively few connectivity issues throughout, which enabled plenty of synchronous activities.

The majority of those who began the programme (and 100% of SPELTA respondents) were based in the major city of St Petersburg (population 5 million +). KOMELTA participants were split between smaller towns and provincial cities and the Komi Republic's capital, Syktyvkar (population 200,000 approximately), with a small number of participants based in rural environments.

100% of participants who completed the end of course survey were based in towns and cities, which suggests that those in rural areas were less likely to engage with the course. This could be because they felt less integrated with the CoP, or because a rural setting led to connectivity issues.

Location of Course Participants



Outline of the course and rationale

The course comprised of:

- 1 hour per week online synchronous delivery in 'live' webinar format: the participants were divided into four groups and selected a preferred day to attend; the sessions were repeated four times (once on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday) with participants attending the same slot each week with the option to request a change if unable to attend on their regular day.
- 3 hours per week asynchronous delivery: the materials for this were on the VLE Canvas and comprised texts, audio visual content, audio texts, written and audio discussion boards, interactive quizzes and polls. There were additional materials for those who wished to spend extra time on the programme beyond the required hours.
- Course materials were in six modules and developed language and language skills through a teaching and learning context.
- A final module suggested ways to maintain connections with other CPs, information on CPD and many accessible resources for further study/exploration.

Module	Live session
Induction and welcome (introductory module on Canvas plus introductory webinar)	Establishing expectations & communication lines Supporting with technical and course content issues Preparing for the programme
Module 1: The contemporary communicative classroom: language and learning	Overview of communicative teaching and student needs Review/extension of educational language and classroom language
Module 2: Motivation and learning for different ages and contexts	Exploring terminology, collocation and language related to motivation Techniques for engaging learners

Module 3: Lexis and contemporary English	Developing awareness of contemporary language use; understanding the causes of language change. Techniques for teaching vocabulary
Module 4: Language structure and language change	Developing awareness of contemporary language use (structure); understanding typical patterns of change. Techniques for teaching grammar
Module 5: ELF or EFL and the nature of error	Identifying terms and technical language related to ELF and EFL; Exploring the implications of teaching in an ELF context; Focus on pronunciation Techniques for teaching pronunciation
Module 6: challenging areas of teaching and continuing professional development	Reviewing new language and language structures; Focus on working with students with special needs; Developing writing skills; Exploring modes of CPD and sustainable, self-driven development.
Final thoughts: planning for CPD beyond the course – sustainable development	Final ceremony (whole group); review of CPD and action plans. Consolidation.

Course platform:

Course provision was made using Canvas, which allowed for asynchronous interactive delivery and Microsoft Teams which allowed for live webinar sessions. Initially zoom, whatsapp and facebook were considered but logistical restraints caused by access resulted in the decision to use Canvas with Teams which provided all the tools and facilities of these alternative resources.

Recommendation: Flexibility was built into the programme to allow additional materials or focus to be included in response to emerging learning and interest. This worked well as it allowed us to respond effectively to arising need or questions.

Project findings

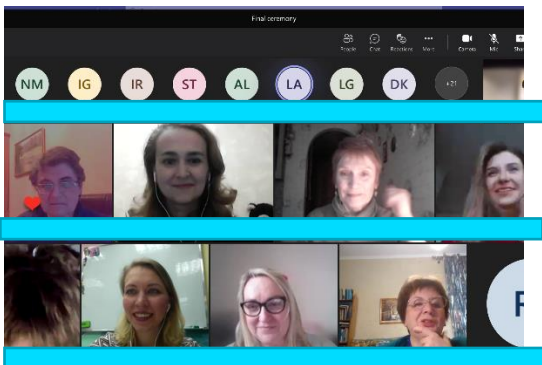
Working in partnership

The partnership was very efficient.

- Regular meetings were held online with the ETA leads. They organised the initial onboarding of suitable candidates and were able to select and group applicants in order to ensure those attending were appropriate participants and would benefit from their participation.
- Four co-ordinators were assigned, one for each group, after two meetings. They were able to communicate directly with participants, answer questions and support with the smooth operations of the course.
- Regular meetings and correspondence with the coordinators and ETA leads continued throughout the course to identify any issues/feedback or adaptations required.

Decisions were made quickly and effectively. There were very few issues, and it was felt that the project was hugely successful. The ETA leads and coordinators were keen to maintain links with a hope that, political situation allowing, future collaboration will continue. The ETA lead said that the course had been 'inspiring' and had allowed them to rejuvenate the activity and focus of the ETA whilst establishing a real community of practice. Further evidence is in [the letter of gratitude from the ETA leads](#).

Recommendation: Regular meetings with leads and coordinators to set out expectations and complete initial scoping are essential. It is useful to send summaries of these in order to ensure all participants in meetings have understood the outcomes of decisions made. Doing this in online meetings provided better levels of communication and a sense of community not achievable in written correspondence.



Working with the CPs

CPs were engaged from the start of course with attendance at live sessions at approximately 85% or higher for each session and some participants joining online from trains or in cars (as passengers!) so that they didn't miss sessions when commuting. Engagement was similar for the asynchronous elements of the course.

Developing language

A key aim of the project was to develop the confidence of CPs in their own use of English and ability to facilitate this in their students. This objective was generally successful.

- Several participants asked if they could adapt some of the language content for their own students and told us in session that this had worked well and, additionally, had captured the interest of students who were generally not always engaged during language lessons. For example:



Kudriavtseva, Daria (Student) 24/03/2022 16:38

We're soooo grateful!! Thanks a lot. Awesome stuff!

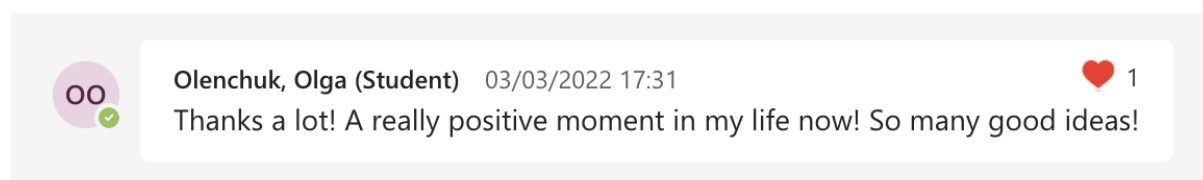
I understand that difference between short and long vowels is much more important than the difference between th and s sounds. In fact, that is really a problem for Russian students and now I have a list of resources to work with pronunciation. Secondly, during the course I made a list of activities for recycling vocabulary. I'm always searching for new ideas and now I have a whole list. Thanks a lot. Now I understand grammar changes better and I think I can tell my students about that.

- Some commented on the fact that the course content had provided them with reassurance and confidence:

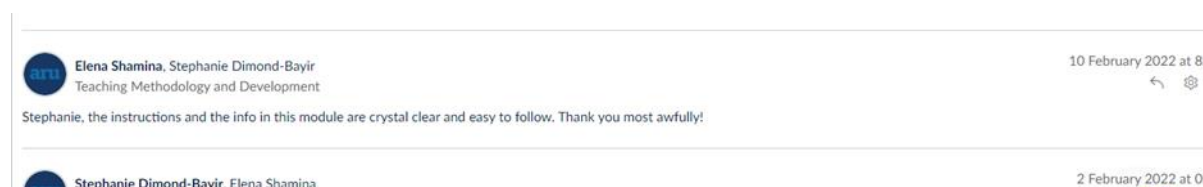
1) Thanks to the discussion of the language models and ELF now I definitely have the new perspective of what English that I teach is. 2) I normally try to give my students a lot of speaking practice during the lessons but I used to have doubts about this approach, as working in groups and pairs they make mistakes and listen to each others' mistakes, that I don't always spot and correct. Now I am quite confident that I'm doing the right thing and also know how to prove it, be there any criticism. 3) It was very reassuring to see all the educational videos with teachers working really fast but not being in a hurry. Sometimes it feels that all the attempts to meticulously fulfil our rigorous curriculum are at the expense of students' real benefit and progress. Now I feel that I'm right to sometimes slow down.

Developing practice

We also wanted to inspire motivation and creative practice that participants would find practical and applicable in their own contexts. Many of them confirmed that this was a clear outcome for them both in live sessions and from the asynchronous materials:



A screenshot of a feedback message from a student. On the left is a circular profile icon with the letters 'OO' and a green checkmark. The message text reads: "Olenchuk, Olga (Student) 03/03/2022 17:31 Thanks a lot! A really positive moment in my life now! So many good ideas!". To the right of the text is a red heart icon followed by the number "1".



A screenshot of a feedback message from two participants. The header shows "Elena Shamina, Stephanie Dimond-Bayir Teaching Methodology and Development" on the left and "10 February 2022 at 8:5" with icons on the right. The message text reads: "Stephanie, the instructions and the info in this module are crystal clear and easy to follow. Thank you most awfully!". A second header at the bottom shows "Stephanie Dimond-Bayir, Elena Shamina" on the left and "2 February 2022 at 0:1" on the right.

Emergent learning

In course feedback we asked participants to identify things they would do differently as a direct result of their participation in the course and we received a flood of interesting responses. These are all included in **their feedback**, [a selection of which you can see here](#), identifying specific language, activities or approaches that they intended to adopt.

Community of practice

Participants also shared their own ideas in discussion boards and shared materials and lesson plans with each other. The following screenshot indicates the number of interactions on various chat forums which vary from 92 to 43 for each thread with most well above 50.

21st century tools for teaching grammar	8	43	🟢	🟢	⋮
All sections					
Last post at 30 Mar at 1:18					
Warmers- sharing ideas	5	79	🟢	🟢	⋮
All sections					
Last post at 29 Mar at 13:54					
Module 3- new vocabulary	5	55	🟢	🟢	⋮
All sections					
Last post at 29 Mar at 13:31					
Module 2- motivation discussion	4	85	🟢	🟢	⋮
All sections					
Last post at 29 Mar at 12:43					
Using appropriate tasks	0	92	🟢	🟢	⋮
All sections					
Last post at 27 Mar at 21:34					
Module 4- selecting items to teach	5	55	🟢	🟢	⋮
All sections					
Last post at 27 Mar at 17:46					
Module 4- language change	5	62	🟢	🟢	⋮
All sections					
Last post at 27 Mar at 15:54					
External motivation: bringine the world into the classroom	0	61	🟢	🟢	⋮
All sections					
Last post at 25 Mar at 20:20					
Module 1- CLT	0	57	🟢	🟢	⋮

Designing/delivering the course

Course design was a process.

- We used information from the ETA to establish key areas for inclusion and reviewed this regularly in Teams meetings to adjust content as we proceeded. They looked at a suggested syllabus and initial module before commencement to hone this.
- Adaptations were also made during the course, in response to feedback at the end of each module and requests or questions raised during the live sessions. This included, for example, adding in more work on idiomatic and colloquial English and additional ideas for fillers and writing tasks for use in classroom practice.

One of our most popular language tasks was the exercise on idioms related to animals. So here are some bonus idioms for you to review (and use with your own students where suitable!) Answers are at the bottom.



- Some participants had very specific requests not suitable for the whole group e.g. a request for ESP: work on language and activities for English in an Engineering context. Where requests were made, we provided, via discussion boards, materials, links and research information on the topic of interest which were well received.

Recommendation: It is useful to utilise the knowledge of the ETA leads when embarking on initial designs but leave space for adaptation during delivery in order to meet emerging needs. Clarifying what the scope of the course is or can be at commencement allows flexibility but avoids unrealistic expectations.

Dealing with issues

We had very few issues during the programme other than technical ones.

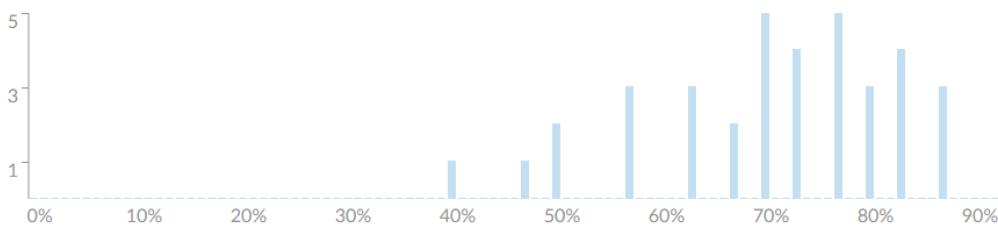
- Some participants had issues understanding the systems for registration and logging into the VLE at the very start of the programme, although we had provided a 'how to' video. We resolved this by sending more detailed step by step screenshots using their first language to help them select appropriate options when logging in. We also identified a participant with excellent digital skills who spoke to other participants individually if they were still struggling.
- We had initially planned to use Facebook for informal collaboration between CPs and coordinators. Midway through the course, the decision was made by Facebook (the platform which CPs were using to communicate informally on tasks) to close operations in the CoP's country.

Recommendation: Although the specific challenges of the political context were unusual, future iterations may benefit from partners developing contingency plans in terms of platforms. It is also useful to provide excess instruction for participants for those who are more able to ignore if necessary!

Course outcomes

In the final assessment, which was designed to test CPs on any **new** language and methodologies explored, and which they had been unfamiliar with, participants scored an average of **71%**.

Ⓜ Average score	Ⓜ High score	Ⓜ Low score	Ⓜ Standard deviation	(
71%	87%	40%	3.55	(

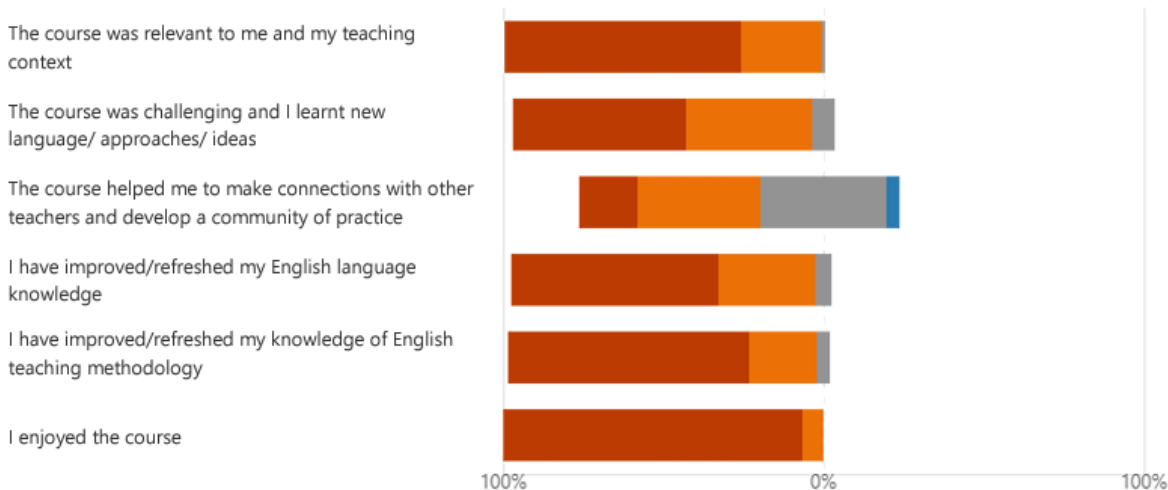


We also assessed their sense of gain/progress qualitatively, [as well as trying to map participants' new knowledge of both language and methodology](#):

Summary table of CP reviews:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



Overall responses were positive both from participants and ETA management, with only one disagreeing that connections with other teachers were made. This development of a community of practice was the area that received most neutral responses at just under 50%. This should not necessarily be seen as a weak area however, since progress was made in a context where we understand there had been almost no activity at all and a cultural tendency to see training and development as top down, with very little 'horizontal' peer interaction:

- There was space for discussion which occurred regularly, as did sharing of materials and ideas
- Group activities were encouraged and developed
- A session and materials on peer observation, action research and bottom-up development were included at the end of the programme
- Importantly, the ETA commented that they had been able to expand their membership as a result of the course, and felt this would allow them to improve their community practice after a very fallow period.
- Those who chose to engage fully with this aspect of the course were positive in their feedback and discussions with each other.

Recommendation: It may be useful to have a specific session on the benefits of collegiate practice, communities of practitioners and peer support early in the course to ensure that this activity is approached positively.

A screenshot of the participants 'turning the tables' on tutors with a quiz in the farewell session!



Meeting interface showing a video player with a dog and a poll, and a meeting chat window.

Video Player:

I said "Чолөм!", but he ignored me.

Poll:

- A I love you
- B Hello ✓
- C I want to eat
- D Goodbye

Meeting chat:

wishes to you and all those who made this communication possible.

- Tatyana Ivanova (Guest) 17:06 C
- Diamond-Bayir, Stephanie 17:08 hello?
- Kerr, Chris 17:08 AI
- Reiner Peter Jans (Guest) 17:08 hello

Type a new message