BRITISH COUNCIL

PRELIM 2

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Vietnam: VietTESOL and Vietnamese Association of English Language Teaching and Research with CELT (Centre for English Language Teaching), Cardiff

August 2022

Project background

Partnership overview		
Course overview	**ETA partner**	VietTESOL Vietnamese Association of English Language Teaching and Research
	UKI partner	CELT – Centre for English Language Teaching, Cardiff
	Course length	Primary: 5 weeks (07 February - 11 March 2022) Secondary: 5 weeks (07 March - 08 April 2022) The later start date was due to preparations for the important Tet Lunar Year Festival
	Number of groups/cohorts	2 (1 x Primary + 1 x Secondary)
Participant profile	**Total number of CPs**	Primary: 18 Secondary: 22 Total: 40
	Language level(s)	Primary and Secondary: A2-C1 (self-reported)
	CPs' teaching context	CPs teach in state primary or secondary schools (see key features of context for more information)
Mode of delivery	**Synchronous platforms used**	Zoom
	Synchronous session length	90 minutes (primary and secondary)
	Synchronous session frequency	Weekly
	Asynchronous workload	3 hours per week delivered via Google Classroom with additional support and discussion boards offered in a local WhatsApp equivalent (Zalo)
Course content	**Language development focus**	Functional Classroom Language (English for the Classroom)
	Methodology focus	Embedded through the demonstration of tasks relating to the weekly topics
	Technology focus	Effective and principled use of Edtech and Google Classrooms

Description of the partners

VietTESOL

The Vietnam Association for English Language Teaching and Research, (VietTESOL for short), is a non-profit socio-professional organization aimed to create a trusted platform for those who are interested in, and committed to, English Language Teaching and Research, headquartered in Hanoi, Vietnam. VietTESOL is committed to enhancing the quality of English language education in Vietnam through professional development, dissemination of teaching expertise and research and information to support and transform practice, policy in ELT, and community service.

CELT – Centre for English Language Teaching

CELT is a private language school (established in 1989) in Cardiff, Wales with a core team of around 8 full-time teacher/managers with a small administrative team, offering the following relevant provision both face-to-face and online:

- General, exam (IELTS, OET) and specialist English courses for adults;
- General and specialist English courses for young learners (age 13 to 17);

Teacher training (summer courses for teachers of English and bespoke courses, offered face-to-face and online)

Key features of the context

Profile of CPs:

- 9.5 % of the needs analysis respondents were male, 90.5% were female (primary: male 10%, female 90%; secondary: male 9%, female 91%)
- 73.5% of respondents work in rural areas, 26.5% work in urban areas (primary: rural 65%, urban 35%; secondary: rural 82%, urban 18%)
- The CPs all work in state sector schools
- Age range was mid-twenties to fifties
- The level of the CPs' learners ranged from A1 to C2 (primary A1-A2/B1; secondary A2-C2)
- Access to CPD varies, often based on the urban-rural divide, with teachers in rural areas much less likely to access CPD on a regular basis
- Most teachers were still working online during the primary and secondary courses with a number of the secondary teachers returning to face-to-face delivery in the second half of their course.
- Internet connectivity is generally good, although this decreases in very remote areas. The national move to online learning during the pandemic meant that both cohorts were familiar with Google Classrooms, making this the platform of choice for asynchronous delivery.

Outline of the course and rationale

Initial meetings were held with a dedicated PRELIM working party from within VietTESOL's K-12 Professional Development Special Interest Group team, during which methodology and classroom language were identified as the likely main focuses of each course. This was followed up with a CP application form, designed in partnership and administered by VietTESOL to select the CPs taking the

course. The application form asked potential CPs to self-rate their confidence in teaching, and provide information about their teaching context, their access to technology and their needs and wants.

Once the CPs had been selected, separate focus meetings were run by CELT for each course to meet the CPs, break the ice and refine further the course content; meetings were also held with the two facilitators for each course to agree roles and responsibilities. As a result, the CELT trainers had already started to build a rapport with their CPs before the first live lesson and had identified topics for the first two weeks of each course; the remaining three topics were negotiated directly with the CPs as the course was running. Working within the framework of developing teacher confidence, a course which met the specific needs of the CPs was therefore achieved. The dual focus on negotiated methodology and the teacher language required for each topic reinforced the overall PRELIM aims of developing teacher confidence and maximised CP motivation:

Primary

1. Starting and ending lessons
2. Organising the classroom
3. Presenting new language
4. Setting up pairs and groups
5. Praising and encouraging

Secondary

6. Introductions and instructions
7. Introducing new language
8. Dealing with mixed abilities and levels
9. Engaging and motivating learners
10. Teaching writing

The two courses, although following the same framework, were developed and delivered by two different CELT trainers with primary and secondary expertise, working with the local facilitators appointed by VietTESOL based on their primary or secondary expertise. Each course lasted 5 weeks, and both followed the same framework with a new topic for each week of delivery. The weekly topic started each Monday, with release of a discussion task on Zalo and activities released Monday-Thursday on Google Classrooms. Each Friday, the CPs attended a live lesson on Zoom, which reviewed and extended the topic. Following each live lesson, the CPs reflected on how more confident they felt overall relating to the week's topic presented as can-do statements and completed a simple quiz to check their own understanding of the key elements of learning from that week. Besides Google Classroom, extensive use was also made of a back channel called Zalo, a Vietnamese equivalent of WhatsApp. This enabled the facilitators to keep track of their group (two facilitators were appointed for each course, taking responsibility for one Zalo sub-group each), to help CPs if they had additional questions and to motivate them to complete their asynchronous study in a timely way.

Project findings

Working in partnership

CELT held regular meetings over Zoom with Viet TESOL's dedicated PRELIM working party at the early stages of course development and a couple of weeks before each course began with the local facilitators for each course. Clear communication was important for both partners and the use of a semi-fixed

agenda allowed both sides to discuss ideas and agree working methods and outputs in a very supportive manner. Both partners had worked on PRELIM I and this enabled the easy and fast development of an effective and supportive working relationship. Without VietTESOL's guidance and pro-active support throughout the project, the resultant course would have been much less successful.

Working within the CoP

Regular meetings with our allocated NILE PRELIM project manager were supportive and Slack was a useful tool for sharing ideas and best practice with other UK PRELIM providers. The larger number of UK providers in PRELIM II compared with PRELIM I might explain the uneven use of the CoP among providers and smaller sub-groups may allow for the very dynamic use of Slack which characterised PRELIM I.

Working with the CPs

The CPs selected by VietTESOL to participate were asked to complete a student agreement which specified the expectations of what the CPs could expect from CELT and what was expected of the CPs in terms of participation and engagement. Attendance at the live lessons was monitored by the local facilitators, who became supportive eyes and ears on the ground. The CPs were fully engaged in the live lessons (they very much appreciated working with a trainer from the UK); engagement and completion of the asynchronous content was uneven. Deadlines for completion of asynchronous activity were extended as it was clear that there were often genuine reasons for late completion, not least the return to face-to-face teaching for a number of the CPs in the secondary group. All CPs had completed all asynchronous study by the final deadline.

Designing and delivering the course

A key aspect of the course's philosophy was to work with the needs and wants of the CPs within their specific teaching contexts. As a result, the pre-course stage focused heavily on building rapport with our partner, VietTESOL, its facilitators and the CPs and understanding the specific teaching context locally in order to provide a course which was context-specific. This informed the choice of platforms, the way in which the CPs were selected, the design of the student agreement and the overall approach to course delivery. Course design in terms of the course framework was agreed pre-delivery as were the topics for Weeks 1 and 2 of the course; the topics for Weeks 3-5 were negotiated once the course delivery had begun to ensure maximum relevance. Access to the coursebooks used by the CPs with their students also meant that work on classroom activities were related directly to the CPs' own teaching reality, ensuring a bespoke experience which was highly relevant and hopefully motivating as a result. This was possible because of the relatively compact nature of the asynchronous material, as requested by VietTESOL, all of which was written from scratch, and because both CELT trainers had extensive experience of developing and delivering bespoke online courses with both synchronous and asynchronous elements.

Course outcomes

CPs were invited to provide feedback via at the end of each week and at the end of their course.

The feedback at the end of each week asked the CPs to complete a quiz relating to the week's content and to self-rate their confidence levels based on each week's learning outcomes on a four-point scale,

thereby enabling the CPs to gauge their own growth in confidence and the provider to establish what was working.
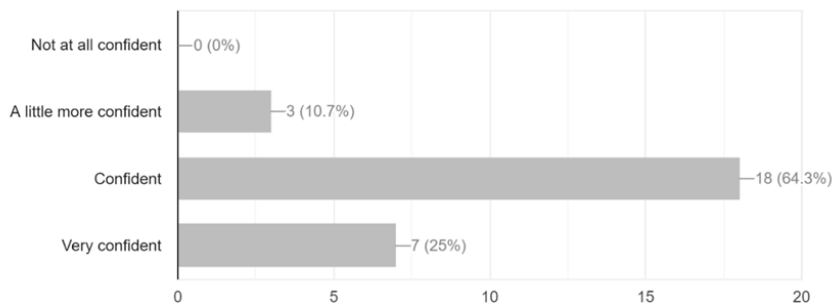
Classroom management solutions to working with mixed ability and mixed level classes often relate to how you pair students.
34 / 41 correct responses
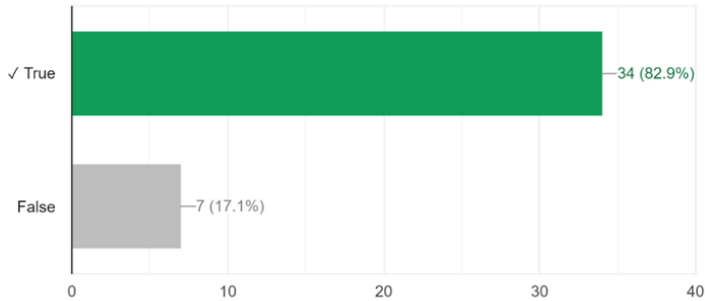
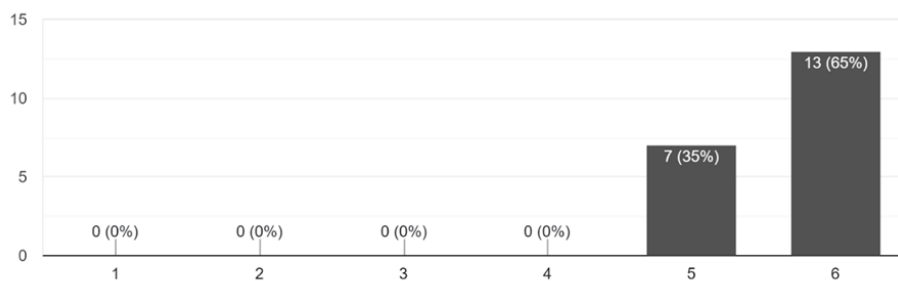Working with classroom management solutions
0 / 28 correct responses

Row 1: Row 1

End of course feedback included the following charts and comments:

Primary

1. The course has had a positive impact on my confidence using English in the classroom.
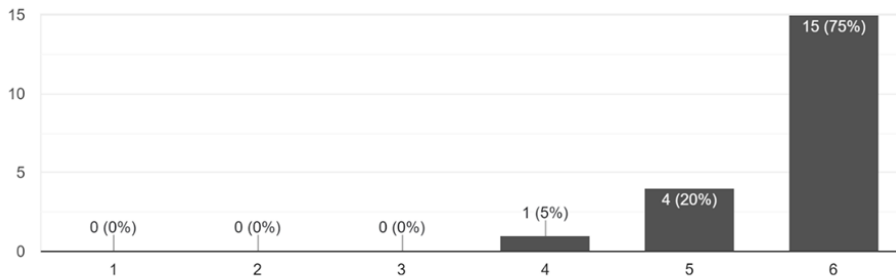20 responses

'I have learnt different ways using classroom language to encourage myself to speak English in the classroom more often.'

'The course give me so many ways to express myself and my skills in teaching English. It encourages me to try the new things in teaching and helps me a lot.'

6. Overall, I rate this course...
20 responses

'The most important thing is that I've learned a lot from other teachers, co-workers, …'

'The teacher of the course has worked very hard to help us more confidence in using language in the class, give us many ways in motivate our students to concentrate in learning English.'

Secondary (including feedback from the two facilitators)

1. The course has had a positive impact on my confidence using English in the classroom.
22 responses
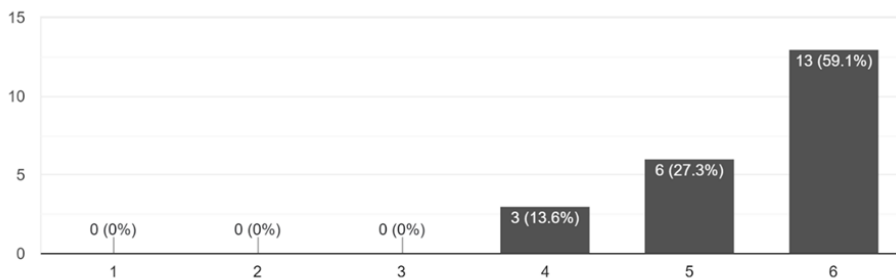
'The project provides me with an authentic environment to improve my language capabilities.'

'I'm more confident because I know what language I should use when teaching the lessons to different students with different English level.'

'I love the way Teacher encouraged us to work together in breakout zooms or assign us the homework after each class for my own knowledge acquisition.'

6. Overall, I rate this course...
22 responses
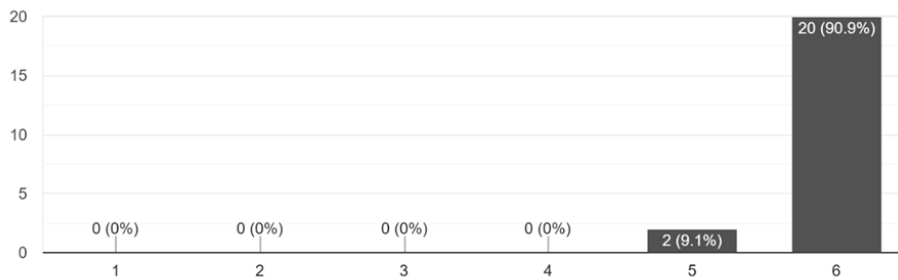
'I become more confident in using my English in classroom and can apply new effective teaching approaches.'

'The teacher prepared the lessons carefully. He is enthusiastic about teaching and meets the needs of participants. He provides the objectives at the beginning of the lesson and he instructs us to achieve the objectives step by step. The lessons are practical and easy to be applied in my teaching contexts. The other participants are active and cooperative.'

With 95% of primary CPs and 100% of secondary CPs rating the course as 5 or 6 out of 6, satisfaction with the programme was very high. In terms of the course having a positive impact on the CP's confidence using English in the classroom, 100% of primary and 86.4% of secondary teachers rated the course as 5 or 6 out of 6; there is clear data to support the claim that both courses were successful in achieving their main goal of increasing the CPs confidence in using English.

Emergent learning

PRELIM provided an opportunity for CELT to develop further its teacher training skills. The need to work with local contexts showed us how context-driven course development and delivery is key to success. One size does not fit all.

Both CELT and our ETA worked hard to understand each other as it was clear that strong partnership is key to PRELIM success. The addition of ETA recommended facilitators at both primary and secondary levels cemented this collaborative approach and paid huge dividends.

A grammar and vocabulary placement test is not appropriate for screening teachers for PRELIM and may in fact as a barrier to entry. Self-reporting of level provides sufficient data to enable decisions about grouping pre-course.

A soft launch of the course, in this case by providing focus group meetings for each group, enabled the CPs to ask any questions and to feel a sense of engagement with the course before the first lesson.

Viewing the CPs and their understanding of the local context as co-constructors of the course content will create a much better outcome than seeing the UKI trainers as the sole source of expertise.