

## PRELIM 3

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# Bolivia: BELTA (Bolivian English Teachers Association)

with

# Eurospeak Language School

August 2024

## Project background

Partnership overview		
Partners	ETA partner	Bolivian English Teachers Association
	UKI partner	Eurospeak Language School
User Profile	Context overview	BETA Bolivia in collaboration with teachers working in private and public schools of various sizes
	Learner age group(s)	12-14
	Curriculum overview	45-minute classes twice a week using an eclectic mix of teaching materials including Ministry of Education-mandated resources in classes of 30-40 CERF A2 to B2 students with computer resources and projectors, but limited IWBs in class
Teacher support resource package	Resource format and organisation	There is one PDF document with 177 pages. The materials are divided into five units and include a range of audio-visual materials. There are approximately 90, 20-30-minute activities
	Resource content	Oral Communicative, cultural awareness, and pronunciation activities including features such as connected speech, rhythm, and intonation
	Resource sustainability	Resources will be updated and adapted by Eurospeak every 12 months beyond the end of the project in consultation with BETA
Dissemination	Methods	The Eurospeak Website was the main source of dissemination with links provided to participants in the focus groups. We also disseminated through BETA's annual conference in January 2024 by advertising the PRELIM project and the workshop in February BETA's Facebook posted the material link as well as the audio
	Timeframe	Jan 2023-Oct 2023: The materials were delivered and piloted Jan 2024: Disseminate the materials at BETA's meeting March-April 2024: BETA teachers received the material and they will post the materials on BETA Facebook

	<b>Number of teachers reached</b>	60-70 teachers
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## Description of the partners

**BETA the Bolivian English Teachers Association** is an independent and non-profit association founded in 1996. BETA's mission is to 'develop expertise and enhance professionalism in English Language Teaching and Learning'. Its objectives are to promote professional development for EFL teachers working in Bolivia, and to strengthen English language teaching and learning at all educational levels. BETA runs teacher development conventions, workshops, and courses throughout the year.

**Eurospeak** is a British Council and ISI-accredited language school and Edutech venture based in Reading with schools and offices in Southampton and Dublin. The school has been in operation since 1991. Eurospeak's teaching operations provide morning, afternoon, and evening classes instructing General English from CEFR A1 to C1, specialised IELTS courses, and one-to-one tuition. Eurospeak's students come from all over the world. Eurospeak also runs a successful projects department specialising in Edutech and language learning. The school's faculty is composed of a highly experienced and efficient administrative team and highly qualified and experienced teachers who have taught around the world.

## Key features of the context and resource design rationale

We reached an agreement with our ETA to produce materials for teachers focused on spoken interactive communication and pronunciation, with a theme of Bolivian culture underlying the materials as was one of the requirements of the PRELIM3 project. The teachers we interviewed were mostly experienced professionals working in state and private schools in cities around Bolivia. Most of the teachers had some form of teaching qualification, the majority from an English teaching qualification from a Bolivian university. Only seven had an internationally accredited certificate, e.g. CertTESOL, CELTA, or TKT. Several teachers had no formal language teaching qualification but taught CEFR A2 students in classes of around 30-40 students aged 12-14 years old.

The needs analysis and focus group meetings indicated that teachers were using a diverse set of materials, including published ESOL teaching texts, Ministerio de Educación de Bolivia mandated materials; materials produced by the teaching institution, and teachers' materials. Teachers also wanted activities with a short duration because of the time limits placed on them. Most had classes of 45 minutes twice a week. So, we wrote a resources package to include short 10- to 20-minute speaking and pronunciation activities.

The teachers' main concern was how to encourage students to speak in English using materials that would motivate them and where they could practice pronunciation; they also wanted plenty of visuals. Consequently, we developed materials that would appeal to many different learning preferences such as visual, kinaesthetic auditory, and reading and writing learners.

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## Outline of the teacher support resource package and rationale

Several key methodological principles informed the materials in our resource package. This was based upon the coursebook Editorial Aces, which BETA supported. These included:

- The creation of a non-threatening teaching environment
- an emphasis on developing creativity by encouraging teachers and students to acquire new skills using their imaginations
- to plan situations in which learners can peer assist or teach in pairs or small groups.

Additionally, along with the above-mentioned pedagogical focus of BETA, the teachers wanted:

- stand-alone activities to encourage communication, pronunciation, and confidence in speaking English in class
- communication and pronunciation activities because most respondents said they rarely conducted communicative activities in class where students could practice speaking English
- focused 'bite-sized' activities because of the lack of teaching hours
- culturally appropriate materials acknowledging the language, culture, and history of Bolivia and the country's people.

## Project findings

### Working in partnership

A strong partnership, facilitated by continuous communication, has been built between BETA and Eurospeak during PRELIM 3. A key takeaway from this experience is the importance of continual adjustments throughout the project. Despite the establishment of effective communication channels at the project's outset, some practical challenges persisted. Issues such as timing constraints for contacting teachers, the feasibility of incorporating their feedback within tight deadlines during the piloting phase, and last-minute requests from partners required both partners to adapt their approach at times. Constant communications and rapid responses to immediate queries were considered valuable during the whole project, particularly in the piloting stage to avoid the above issues.

It was important when collaborating with our partner on PRELIM 3 not to make assumptions. For instance, while partnership communications are conducted online, it is important not to assume that internet connectivity is always reliable. In our project, some Bolivian teachers faced challenges accessing a stable internet connection, especially when traveling between campuses. When disseminating materials to a larger audience, it is also crucial to discuss the most suitable channels for dissemination. Rather than assuming that everyone relies solely on emails and websites, prioritizing informal platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, or Instagram could prove more effective.

### Working within the CoP

The PRELIM CoP gave us an insight into the working practices of other PRELIM partners. This included workarounds to mitigate problems in the execution of their projects. This was valuable and we felt ourselves not alone but members of a community.

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After meeting with other UKIs some partners suggested that it would be a promising idea for UKIs to meet more regularly to swap ideas and generally establish a forum to share ideas and experiences. This we agreed would be beneficial.

## **Designing the teacher support resources**

We were very aware that the classroom situations that the Bolivian teachers operated in were distinct from those found in UK schools. At the beginning of the project, we asked our partners if they could provide us with photos of their classroom environment to give us some visual insight into their teaching context; Unfortunately, we were unable to secure any photos, so we relied on the experience of the materials writers who have worked in South America to use their experience of the teaching contexts in Bolivia together with our conversations with BETA and the teachers who attended the focus group sessions. We found it challenging to write materials for a learning context that we could not see because descriptions often do not reflect reality. For example, although respondents to our needs analysis said computers were in the classroom, they were not connected to a TV or projector or were older slower models; also, the size of the classroom mattered for some of the activities as well as the type of desk the students were using would have restricted more collaborative group work if they were in a poor state of repair.

## **Disseminating the teacher support resources**

BETA chose not to pursue the British Council funding for dissemination because they can access the materials readily. And all schools can support the teacher with hard copies. From an early stage, we encouraged BETA to create a PRELIM 3 presence on their website so local teachers would be fully informed about the project aims and access materials; however, we were advised by our BETA liaison that there were technical difficulties preventing this, in addition to ownership issues surrounding the BETA site (the BETA website at BETA is currently defunct). BETA informed us their official media has switched to Facebook as it provides more instant information and can reach teachers easily. Initially, as the materials were available solely via our BETA partners proved limiting. To mitigate this, Eurospeak created a PRELIM project page on the Eurospeak school website on the Eurospeak website that could be accessed for dissemination purposes by Bolivian teachers. Our address was given at meetings and focus group events. On this page, we place our regular PRELIM 3 blogs to provide an overview of our work on the PRELIM 3 project and our partnership with BETA and provide links to the materials.

## **Monitoring and evaluating resource use**

We had regular meetings with BETA, and we had questionnaire feedback forms available to teachers to regularly feedback the results of their experiences with the materials whenever they used the activities in class. We had three focus groups with BETA teachers. Attendance was not always constant. We decided to allow the teachers to send feedback anytime because we could not predict when the teachers would be able to use the materials because of their workload and curriculum commitments, so when they used the materials, they sent feedback.

Feedback from these activities we received at the end of 2023 was positive, especially the materials that required students to discuss amongst themselves their feelings, attitudes, and opinions;

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however, it was suggested there be more focus on Bolivian culture which we endeavoured to do in subsequent materials.

## Project outcomes

The project outcomes were largely positive and instructional. Of the fifty teachers, who over the project lifecycle provided feedback, most explained that students' confidence in using English in class, albeit imperfectly, improved. A third of teachers who responded to our focus group discussions said that students' motivation in using English was also boosted during speaking and communication activities and that collaborative activities and group discussions encouraged a sense of solidarity and belonging between students.

Overall, the teachers using the materials found them to be useful. And teachers found that materials, where students could express their opinions and emotions, were the most motivational and productive in terms of speaking English. Some feedback has been given by the students, who commented,

*'the topic is interesting, and we wanted to talk more.'*

Teachers shared their feedback in Zoom meetings and mentioned that

*'the activity is relative to their everyday life and engaging.'*

One teacher emphasized that, in one food activity, her students were excited while talking about their local cuisine.

*'I have never seen my students get more excited than that. They talked to each other and contributed a lot in class.'*

## Emergent learning

During PRELIM 3, we have also become very aware of the impact of lingua francas such as English and Spanish have on indigenous languages in Bolivia. A few teachers expressed their desire for Quechua, Aymara, and Guarani to be acknowledged at least in the activities and teaching materials as a vehicle for their appreciation by Bolivian children. They felt this was important because in Bolivia the younger generations are seeing less use for their indigenous languages and more use for English in today's globalised world. We see a need and an opportunity to develop the teaching of indigenous and minority languages through English to disseminate their cultural importance, their usefulness in comparative linguistics, and for health and wellbeing.