

PRELIM 3

North Macedonia: ELTAM MK (English Language Teacher's Association of Republic of North Macedonia) with **inlingua Cheltenham**

July 2024

Project background

Partnership overview		
Partners	ETA partner	ELTAM MK, English Language Teacher's Association of Republic of North Macedonia
	UKI partner	Inlingua Cheltenham
User profile	Context overview	Secondary Schools across the whole of North Macedonia. Both public and private schools with average class sizes of 25-30. A good level of technology in most schools including computers, printers and some interactive whiteboards
	Learner age group(s)	11-14 years (known as 'primary education' in North Macedonia)
	Curriculum overview	Materials to support a new English curriculum recently issued by the National Ministry of Education. Focus on Grades 6, 7 and 8. Each grade follows four modules across the year
Teacher Support resource package	Resource format and organisation	A collection of 100 lessons and supporting notes in Word, PDF and PowerPoint. Organised under grades, then under each module
	Resource content	Worksheets, presentations, reading texts, audio recordings for listening tasks and supporting teacher notes
	Resource sustainability	A digital version of the resource pack available from the ELTAM MK website will enable teachers to download and use it well into the future
Dissemination	Methods	Email, inlingua's MS SharePoint, ELTAM MK's Google Drive and website, Zoom meetings, Three face-to-face workshops by ELTAM MK members across the country and two online workshops
	Timeframe	Stage 1: Materials to piloting teachers March 2023: Module 4 Sept to Dec 2023: Modules 1 and 2 Jan 2024: Module 3 Stage 2: ETA events to disseminate March 2024: workshops and printing
	Number of teachers reached	17 teachers in piloting phase 77 teachers in three ETA led workshops 88 teachers in two online ETA workshops 500 resource packs being printed: 375 for piloting schools and the remaining 125 for the teachers who participated in the face-to-face workshops

Description of the partners

ELTAM MK is the association for English teachers in the Republic of North Macedonia. They value the sharing of best ELT practice and offer professional development and networking opportunities through various workshops and events for English language teachers. They use a range of online platforms to reach their members such as their website, Facebook, MS Teams and Zoom. The PRELIM 3 main contact was Miroslava Pavlova Anevaska, the President.

inlingua Cheltenham is a private language school that has delivered a variety of General English, Business English and Specialist Courses for over 32 years. The last two years has seen an expansion in working with teenage groups and delivery of a residential Summer School. There is also a teacher training department delivering the Trinity Cert TESOL, CLIL and TEFL refresher courses face to face and online. From a teaching team of 20, there were six experienced teachers, including two teacher trainers, working on PRELIM 3. Everyone in the team has a particular interest in the creation and development of learning resources. The project was managed by inlingua Cheltenham's Vice-Principal, Wendy Makise.

Key features of the context

ELTAM MK entered the project under a unique set of circumstances. The North Macedonian Ministry of Education had recently changed the national curriculum for Primary Education and the English syllabi for all grades. However, the Ministry had not yet approved any textbooks, so teachers had been left to continue with the existing textbooks, which often did not correspond with the new syllabus. Teachers had begun searching for new materials themselves using whatever they could find on the internet.

Initially ELTAM MK anticipated they would need support with younger learners and a survey to assess what teachers needed from the project revealed that the majority of participating teachers were teaching Grades 6-8, ages 11-14. After several Zoom meetings with the President, we agreed to focus on these three grades and produce materials mapped to the syllabi we were sent.

Almost all English teachers were identified as having smart phones and used various apps for teaching and communication. Most teachers were familiar with MS Teams, and Zoom was a popular communication tool. In the surveys, teachers asked for a range of resources, most requested were worksheets and video/listening materials. They gave the following information about their learners:

- taught in classes of up to 30 students per class
- often quite mixed in level, but around A2-B1 for these grades
- study 2-3 hours of English per week in school
- have good access to technology in schools and at home
- some have more exposure to English than others via the Internet, music and TV.

Outline of the teacher support resource package, and rationale

The overriding influence in the creation of the teacher resource pack was the curriculum itself. ELTAM MK sent us Module 4 of the syllabus for each of the chosen grades, as this was the module being followed at the beginning of the project. Our timelines for piloting materials were agreed as follows:

- April to end May 2023: Module 4

- September to December 2023: Modules 1 and 2
- January to March 2024: Module 3.

Each module followed a similar basic format with the following components:

- language functions
- lexical units
- grammar structures
- intercultural content and media literacy.

The heaviest section was almost always the language functions, although it was more straightforward to look at lexical units as this often gave a ‘topic’ on which to hang lesson content. Each syllabus also had suggestions of what activities could be used with a particular unit of language.

Materials for the teacher resource package were set up on Google Drive using the following structure:

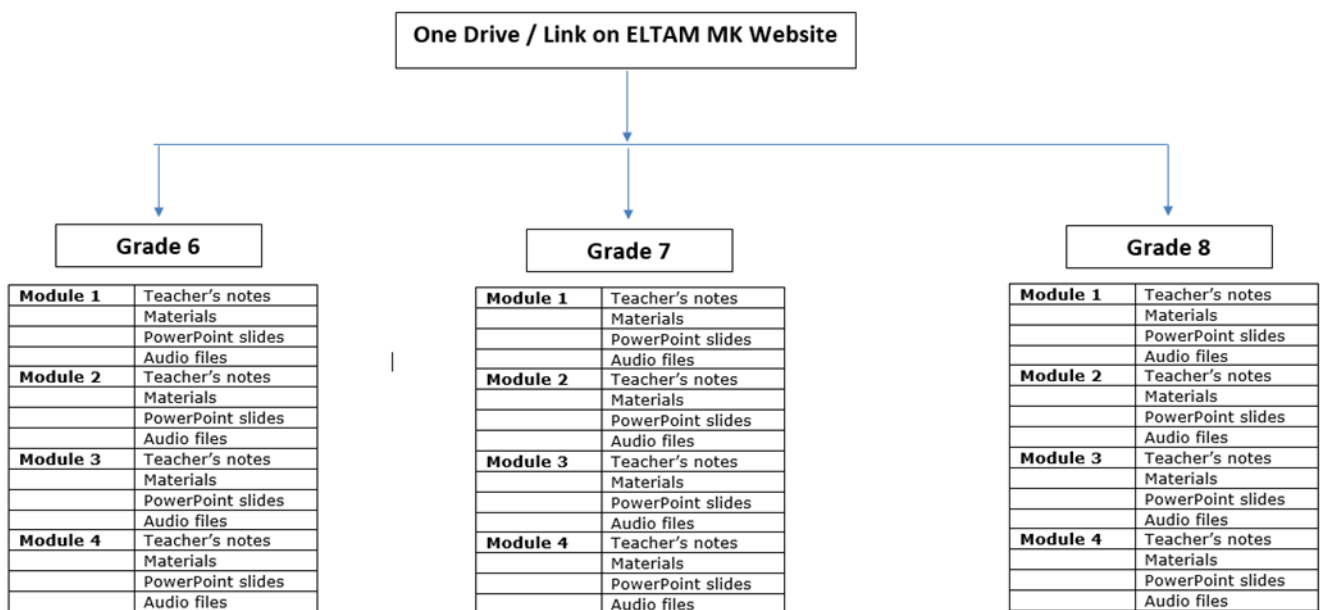


Figure 1: Structure of the Google Drive of materials

For the final resource pack, ELTAM MK chose to separate the resources into a ‘student’s pack’ for each grade and one ‘teacher’s pack’ for all three grades. This also made the resources easier for them to print.

Project findings

Working in partnership

Miroslava was an enthusiastic project lead who is herself a teacher, so could give us valuable insights into the context. We met with some of the other teachers early in the process using Zoom, which helped us clarify what materials would be most useful. With hindsight, more of those meetings would have helped to give our team more focus, ideas and confidence.

Designing the teacher support resources

Our project team of six teachers worked in pairs, one pair per grade. We quickly discovered that all teachers create resources at different speeds, some taking longer than anticipated to produce learning resources and teachers have very different styles of lesson design. We learnt that by setting clearer targets as to the number of lessons to create each term and standardising output, we were able to steer the production of materials more smoothly. It also helped us to consult ELTAM MK in the standardisation process, particularly when we were choosing a style for the teacher notes. They completed the final cover art themselves.

In the initial zoom meeting with ELTAM MK members, teachers mentioned that reading and listening tasks were the priority, they also said their learners wanted to hear about children in Britain. So, from the start our teachers found that although it was time consuming, they really enjoyed creating original texts and audios. Here is an example of one audio task created for the target age group with actors of the same age.

Adapting the curriculum was also a challenge, but enjoyable. We noticed a strong emphasis on health and the environment which provided a lot of scope and this topic occurs at each grade in various forms.

3d. Listening for specific information. Listen to the children speaking again and listen to them list their badges. Circle the badges you hear.

Evie's badges



Jack's badges



Speaking Which activities do you like? Which activities are you interested in? If you were a member of scouts, which badges would you like to achieve?

Figure 2: Screenshot of an audio task

...and can you be more eco-friendly?

6. Our shopping habits

Claire is British. She has bought some fruit and vegetables for her family. The photographs have labels showing where the food has come from.

1. Draw a line from each food item to the country it came from.
2. Which country is the closest to the UK? Which country is the farthest?
3. Is Claire climate-friendly?
4. How can Claire improve her shopping habits?



Figure 3: Sample exercise from Grade 8

Disseminating the teacher support resources

The ETA were very active in dissemination of the materials towards the end of the project. While they are still in the process of distributing the packs, ELTAM MK have reported that a total of 17 teachers from 11 schools actively participated in the piloting phase. Three were selected to disseminate resources at three face-to-face workshops held in different parts of the country. They expected ten teachers at each workshop, but actually 77 teachers attended the workshops from 27 different schools, which was a great success. They also held two online workshops, which were attended by 88 teachers in total. There may have been some cross-over of teachers in the workshops, but the numbers are very encouraging and from this, we learned that live interaction is so important for any project engagement.

There have been 271 visits to the page and 731 downloads of the materials from the ELTAM MK website in a month. The resource package can be accessed here:

<https://www.eltam.org.mk/page/teaching-resources>

Monitoring and evaluating resource use

During the piloting phase, distribution of resources was by email to participating teachers, who were asked to send back an evaluation form to comment on materials provided. We relied on teachers responding directly, filling out our feedback forms or answering follow up questions. Feedback was always returned with gratitude and thanks for our work, however, there was little communication outside this structure, which made it difficult for our teachers to improve or edit materials moving between modules. We learnt that in a project of this length, involving teachers with busy jobs, that scheduled face to face meetings with the ETA were crucial to keep to timelines and monitor design and dissemination of materials.

Amongst the positive feedback there were some suggestions to improve. When we were asked to change materials, we adjusted materials accordingly. For example, we were asked to add more pronunciation exercises and another teacher requested that we increase the level of challenge for some tasks. Another example of a requested change was with a reading text about Christmas. One teacher preferred their learners read about a more unknown festival. However, another teacher really liked the Christmas text. This showed us that resource choice can be very personal to each teacher.

In terms of materials being used, we came to understand that many teachers in North Macedonia had access to technical resources such as computers and could present the colour versions on a screen and teach from that. However, we learnt that colour printers were more scarcely available, so it became important to ensure that all materials could be photocopied in black and white for learners and still maintain quality.

Project outcomes and emergent learning

If we look at the number of teachers we were in contact with through the piloting phase and ELTAM MK's dissemination events, we can estimate how many students were reached. The majority of teachers taught around 60 students a week, so we estimated the figures as follows:

Piloting Phase	17 teachers	1020 students
Dissemination Phase	77 teachers attended the face to face workshops	4620 students
	88 teachers attended online workshops	5280 students

Our project team found the experience largely enjoyable. They valued having paid time to create new materials and often improved both their teamwork and technical skills. One teacher wrote:

'I have learned so much during this process, and I value the opportunity I have had to develop my own skills as a teacher. It is often too easy to use course books and follow their topics, but I have found it exciting to create materials that ask students to think about their behaviour, habits and ideas.'

The teachers in North Macedonia were, on the whole, very appreciative. One Grade 8 teacher wrote in feedback:

'I would like to thank you so much for helping us out. Creating materials and resources is a huge thing, but it's time-consuming and not knowing the students you are creating these resources for doesn't help. I am really out of words. Well done!'

This kind of positive feedback made us believe we were on the right track in terms of design, despite not knowing the learners more personally.

As with the previous PRELIM projects we have taken part in, the chance to learn new skills and work with teachers in another country was an invaluable experience. Also considering inlingua Cheltenham's current expansion into the teenage market, this gave us an opportunity to focus our attentions on developing materials for this important learner demographic. From a project management point of view, the most important lesson learnt was how to set much stricter parameters on the amount of content to create for such materials.

Finally, ELTAM MK President, Miroslava Pavlova Anevska wrote:

'We are indescribably happy to have had an opportunity to be a part of the PRELIM 3 project. It allowed us, as a teaching association, to assist our state-school teachers with providing content for their lessons, a challenge they have been struggling with for quite some time. We could participate in the design and piloting of the resources and make them appropriate and relevant for the teaching context in our country. You can only imagine how exhilarated we were to hold the resource packs in our hands. Many teachers were excited to receive their printed version and thrilled to feel that new book scent. A lot of them feel delighted to have the opportunity to use the digital version of the resource pack from our website.'

'We also benefited as a teaching association. The PRELIM 3 project gave us an opportunity to examine our project management skills. It is our first project on material design and we were learning on the go. It helped us discover our strengths and also our weaknesses and now we can work to improve them.'