

PRELIM 3

College of Foreign Languages Gazi University with English Language Teaching Centre Sheffield University

August 2024

Project background

Partnership overview		
Partners	ETA partner	College of Foreign Languages, Gazi University
	UKI partner	English Language Teaching Centre, University of Sheffield
User Profile	Context overview	MoNE in-service secondary school EFL teachers from rural areas in Turkiye
	Learner age group(s)	Secondary years 5-7 (11-13 years old)
	Curriculum overview	Turkish EFL Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Grades (Ankara, 2018)
Teacher support resource package	Resource format and organisation	Interactive digital content is organised into virtual books for each year (5-7) to be used on smartboards in class
	Resource content	Interactive digital content focussing on grammar, listening and speaking. Supplements the national curriculum grammar syllabus for years 5-7
	Resource sustainability	Hosted on the internal platform at Gazi University
Dissemination	Methods	1.5 month-long webinars/in-service training on materials design, adaptation, and use in EFL classes Project Dissemination Conference at Gazi University
	Timeframe	December 2023 to February 2024
	Number of teachers reached	Direct: 110, Indirect: 50

Description of the partners

The English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC) at the University of Sheffield is a large language centre offering various academic, professional and general language courses and services. It offers courses for students preparing to study or already studying at university, as well as teacher training courses, professional development services and English language testing. It has been involved in several British Council projects, including Prelim 1 and 2.

Gazi University is a public university located in Ankara. It is a comprehensive university with 12 faculties, three vocational schools, one college of foreign languages, four institutes and numerous research centres spread throughout the city. It has a total enrolment of around 42000 students. The College of Foreign Languages offers four foreign language programmes, such as Arabic, French, German, and English, at the preparatory level to prepare students for their faculties. It is internationally accredited by EAQUALS in 2023. It offers General English, English for Specific and Academic Purposes programmes. Annually, it reaches around 1500 students coming from Turkiye and other countries. Gazi University team consisted of one project national coordinator, one project national manager, five teacher trainers, and three reviewers.

Key features of the context and resource design rationale

Turkish secondary schools are generally well-equipped, and most classrooms have internet access and smartboards. English teachers can display digital versions of the core student textbooks on the smartboards. With this in mind, creating digital content rather than physical materials made sense.

Outline of the teacher support resource package and rationale

Based on an initial teacher questionnaire to secondary school teachers in the Eastern Region of Turkiye plus a follow-up focus group interview, we identified a need for more engaging grammar-based content to supplement what was available through the core textbook.

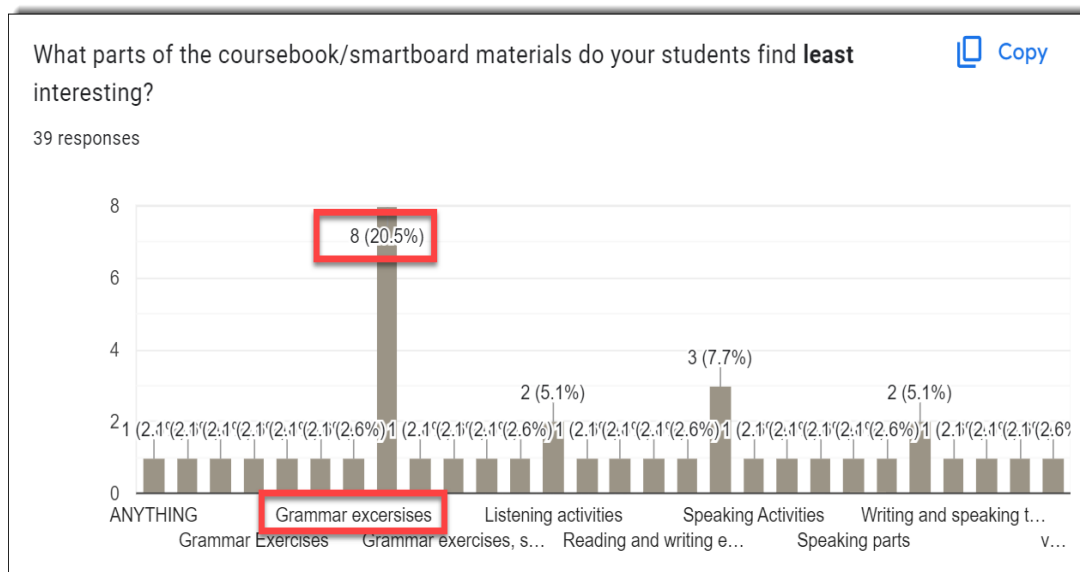


Figure 1: Graph to show the need for more engaging grammar-based content

In addition, teachers requested more listening content and suggestions for speaking activities in class to practise grammar in daily spoken and written communication. With this in mind, we created digital grammar content that included animated videos, interactive quizzes and games and suggestions for possible speaking tasks in class to practise the grammar structure. You can see some example screenshots below, and you can access one of the digital books we created from [this link](#).

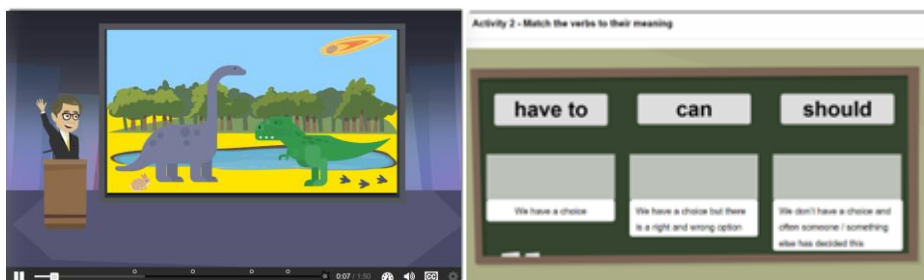


Figure 2: Screenshot of a digital book

The initial plan was to create content for every grammar point in the national curriculum/core textbooks for grades 5-7. This would have been around 30 separate pieces of content. However, the time available to the development team at the ELTC was reduced by several months due to an administrative issue in the middle of the project that needed to be resolved before continuing. This meant we had to cut down the content created to around 12-13 pieces. This was done with the help of three MA students from the ELT Programme at Gazi University, who reviewed the initial notes and helped prioritise certain key grammar areas.

Project findings

Working in partnership

The key factor that enabled the project to be completed successfully was the role of our partner, Gazi University, in helping to identify the local context, needs of teachers and students, and expertise that could assist us at every stage of the process.

Initially, we prepared a needs-analysis survey parallel to our research and project aims. For our needs analysis research, project partners at Gazi University obtained ethical committee permission from the Gazi University Ethical Committee. Next, they contacted the Districts of National Education to invite secondary school EFL teachers to participate voluntarily in our needs-analysis survey. Then, the university distributed the survey to a wide variety of teachers across the region to get the feedback we needed to decide on the content focus. They also found teachers to participate in the focus group interviews to give us more nuanced information about the needs of English teachers in Turkiye.

Later, during the content development phase, the team at Sheffield were helped by the feedback that the three MA students from the Faculty of Education at Gazi University could give on the content design notes. They were particularly helpful in advising on the difficulty level of the material and the cultural appropriacy of some of the video content, such as clothing conventions and names. In retrospect, we should have asked for their involvement much earlier in the design process to avoid having to go back and redo some of the content.

At the dissemination stage, Gazi University was in a position to draw on local experts who completed their PhD in Second Language Acquisition, Materials Development and Adaptation, and Curriculum Studies to provide 1.5 month-long online training to a small group of highly motivated

secondary school EFL teachers on how to prepare, adapt, and use materials in EFL classes, how to use the grammar content effectively in class, and cascade that knowledge to their colleagues. Each training lasted 1,5 hours and was conducted on Zoom.

This was an unusual situation in that we were working with a higher education institution rather than a teachers' association, and there were some concerns that they wouldn't have the grassroots knowledge to connect teachers locally. However, these proved unfounded as most of the teachers in the region had come through that faculty, and they respected them for what they had learnt there and were perhaps more willing to help because of it. So, we benefited from this partnership more than we expected.

Working within the CoP

There were two main ways that the various institutions in the UK could share ideas and experiences: the messaging service Slack and the semi-regular Zoom meetings organised by the project management team at NILE. We rarely used Slack, possibly because it sat outside our institutional tools (in our case, Google), and we needed to remember to go there, but also because our collaboration - with a focus on digital content - was very different from many of the others happening around the world. Most of these projects were quite individual and localised - as they should be - but it meant there was less to share and compare through the platform.

The Zoom meetings were more valuable and more personal, which made them more motivating, but also, the fact that they had a specific topic focus (dissemination, gathering data, etc.) helped generate discussion. I suggest having these on a more regular basis.

Disseminating the teacher support resources

The conference we organised in Ankara in February 2024 was successful because the presenters were mainly teachers who had actually used the materials and could give concrete and practical reports on how to use them in class and provide an honest assessment of how well they worked with students. For many of them it was also their first chance to present at a conference, so it was not only informative for the teachers attending but also part of the presenters own professional development. We feel that this kind of 'bottom up' event has a lot more impact than external speakers or experts coming in and not fully understanding the context in which most teachers are working.



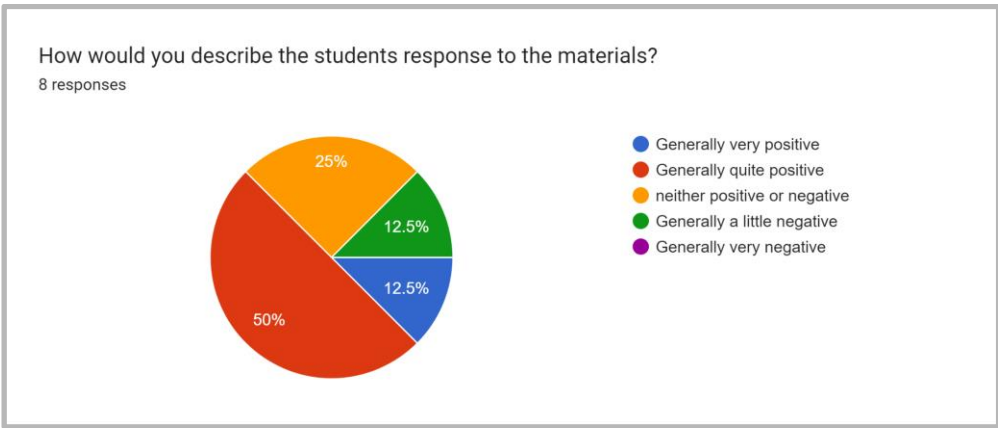
Figure 1: One of the presentations from the dissemination conference in Ankara

Monitoring and Evaluation resource use

We had a relatively short period to monitor the use of the materials from December 2023 to February 2024 by the selected cohort of teachers. We used a questionnaire to gather more quantitative data (link to form) as well as a Google Doc to gather qualitative quotes from teachers and students about the content. We received responses from 8 of the 12 teachers involved in the pilot.

Some quantitative and qualitative data we collected

How would you describe the students' response to the materials? (8 responses)



Can you briefly describe how you and the students interacted with the materials in class? (selected responses)

'We used the materials for revision on the smartboard and my students attended. They answered the questions on the board. They were quite eager to join the activity.'

'I used the materials both as for revision, and as an introduction to new unit. I wanted students to come and do on the smartboard. They love it as it looks also as a fun for students to come to the board and do the activities. We also played in as a speed test within groups which took their motivation up till the end.'

Did any of the students comment or say anything about the materials? If yes, can you add their comments below (it doesn't need to be their exact words) (selected responses)

'They said they learn some new things and had fun with them. Both entertainment and learning are important for them. They got pleased to learn New things although they got bored.'

'They say it should be better if the language was better, audios were recorded by real human.'

'They liked the videos very much. They also loved matching activities. In writing activities many of them couldn't write anything.'

As this feedback was still available to us during the project window, we were in a position to make some small changes to the content based on it, particularly in relation to some smaller technical errors and cultural issues that could be resolved quite quickly.

The dissemination conference was also another opportunity to gather feedback as the presentations by the teachers all provided evaluation of what worked and what could be improved about the materials. You can see from the pictures below they incorporated reflection and feedback into their presentations that was very helpful for us.

However, because the conference came at the end of the project cycle, we had little opportunity to make significant changes based on the feedback. On reflection, we should have organised the conference earlier, but for logistical reasons that just was not possible.



Figure 1: Training sessions

Project outcomes

The goal of the project was to design engaging and interactive grammar content that would provide additional support for teachers and students at grades 5-7 in rural parts of Eastern Turkey. We were able to do that with a reasonable amount of content, though not as much as originally planned at the beginning of the project for reasons beyond our control.

The initial feedback from the content has been positive with teachers identifying its positive features for the students in comments such as:

'They liked the videos very much. They also loved matching activities. In writing activities many of them couldn't write anything.'

and

'They did. Their feedback were mostly positive about the activities because of having fun and feeling comfortable in class.'

There were some aspects of the content - such as the speed of speech, case sensitivity in writing answers - that were identified as issues and we managed to address some, though not all of them, before the end of the project. However, we feel that the dissemination conference at the end of the project was an excellent way to reach out to a wider group of teachers and we feel that the 12 teachers involved in the pilot will actively promote their use in their schools and the wider teacher community in their area.