

**PRELIM 3**

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**Kuwait: TEFLKuwait**

with

**International House  
London**

August 2024

## Project background

Partnership overview		
Partners	ETA partner	TeflKuwait
	UKI partner	International House London
User Profile	Context overview	Foundation year (between high school and university)
	Learner age group(s)	18-20 years old
	Curriculum overview	General English: approximately 20 hours per week, from A2 to B2, focusing on developing communicative and academic competency before they enter university undergraduate or diploma courses. Students study from set textbooks and build towards end-of-semester summative examinations
Teacher support resource package	Resource format and organisation	<p>Padlet</p> <p>A resource package of adaptable classroom activities presented as Teacher's Notes</p> <p>Between six and ten activities per focus – 30 hours of core activities with additional hours made from the adaptations – up to around 90 hours on application.</p>
	Resource content	Sets of teachers' notes describing ways of adapting and exploiting textbook material, focusing on specific skills and systems requested by participant teachers
	Resource sustainability	<p>Padlet – permanent digital resource that can be accessed for as long as necessary by the teachers</p> <p>The activities described on the padlet can be applied to any textbook at any level</p>
Dissemination	Methods	By email to participant teachers
	Timeframe	May 2023-March 2024
	Number of teachers reached	11 teachers across 4 institutions (initially)

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## Description of the partners

**TeflKuwait** has over 1000 members and allows/encourages teachers to join from both inside and outside Kuwait. They hold regular conferences and events, and have been involved in previous Prelim iterations.

**International House London (IHL)** is renowned for both teaching and teacher training, mainly focused on general English to adults who wish to integrate into English-speaking environments or further their careers by acquiring high level English-language skills.

## Key features of the context and resource design rationale

Pupils in the primary and secondary school system in Kuwait learn English as a compulsory foreign language, but this amounts to 1-2 lessons per week. When they finish high school they are usually around A2 level. According to TeflKuwait, the primary/secondary school system has a government free of charge option and a private school option for which families pay. There are about 200 private K-12 schools in Kuwait, many of them English medium. Students entering university from private English medium schools normally bypass the foundation course. Those entering from government schools normally require the foundation course in order to proceed at university, as they have not had the benefit of the EMI approach available in the private schools. For these students, a key source of learning is social media, and so speaking and listening skills are relatively stronger than reading and writing.

This is a key focus at higher education levels as the undergraduate degree or diploma level courses require a higher level of English (B2), in order for students to access texts and content from academic sources. Of interest, however, is that as many lecturers explain concepts etc in L1, EMI competences are not required but students need English for the texts that they are interacting with.

TeflKuwait requested that the project be focused on the foundation year, which aims to bridge the linguistic gap between high school and higher education. In short, to get the students from A2 to B2, as this is where the challenge lies and where the resources are most lacking. Currently, in the Foundation year, the students have 20 hours of general English (not CLIL or subject-focused) per week.

In terms of gender, classes are mixed.

## Outline of the teacher support resource package and rationale

The resources are designed to support Kuwaiti teachers with engagement and motivation on their Foundation year programme. The focus of the resource is to help teachers adapt coursebook materials in order to generate interest, excite and enliven students, and to make learning more fun, so that they are motivated to study and invest in their English studies. As the teachers (and students) have prescribed textbooks, we consulted these in our designs.

ACTIVITY TWO – EXAMPLE

Text from ESAP Unit 1 (Level 2 Foundation) Module 1 page 13

**Board the following words:**

coordinate                      runs                      raise                      auditing                      degree  
plans

Students find the collocations in texts A and B (you can do the same for words from texts C and D, these are just examples)

**Elicit and board answers:**

coordinate *resources*                      run a sports *club*                      raise *money*  
do auditing                      has a master's *degree*                      ambitious *plans*

The words in bold are the key words. The words in *italics* can change depending on the collocation.

To extend this into Activity Three, students can find further collocations:

Example: run a *business/ club / clinic / school / company/ shop*

Figure 1: An example of how coursebooks were consulted

The padlet was divided into sections addressing for example vocabulary exercises, speaking activities, reading activities – areas that the Kuwaiti teachers had identified in the needs analysis. In each section, approximately 10 sets of teachers' notes were produced, to help the teachers adapt and exploit the material in their existing coursebook, with the aim of the section focus in mind. The above example exploits a set-coursebook page for lexical extension and vocabulary training.

Almost all the activities described on the padlet are paper-free, or at the very least paper-light, so as to reduce the need for teachers to do additional printing or even that much additional planning. In the needs analysis, most teachers already seemed familiar with Padlet as a tool for learning and sharing information, so this was chosen as the most effective format:

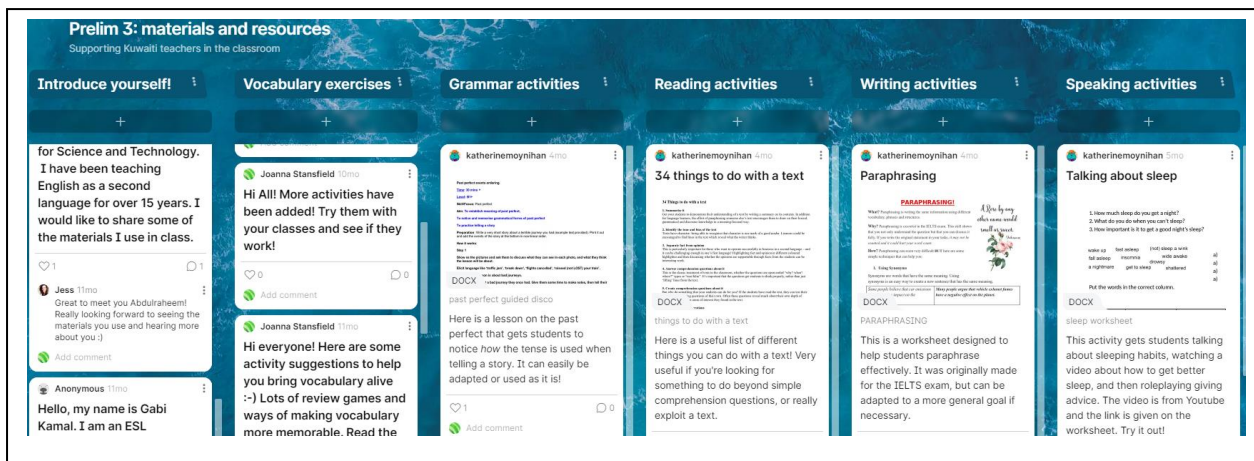


Figure 2: Example of the Padlet

## Project findings

### Working in partnership

The partnership got off to a really good start and there was a lot of enthusiasm in the beginning, with several very constructive online meetings and even a face-to-face encounter at IATEFL 2023! However, as the project unfolded and the months went by, the enthusiasm and involvement waned somewhat in the face of holidays and exam periods. In this time, the situation of all 3 leads on the project changed significantly, via promotion or movement to another department, personal issues that led to an extended period of leave, and even emigration to another country. This meant that the Prelim 3 project became less aligned with our daily roles and responsibilities and other pressures took over. This could be a feature of such a long-term project, that personnel and situations can change – which is much less likely if the duration is for example 3-6 months. With hindsight, perhaps handing the project on to other better-placed, designated representatives; however, as we had to some extent bonded, and invested time, in both the partnership and the project development itself, we were all reluctant to do so. The consistency of attention to the project may have been affected as a result.

### Working within the CoP

It being a 15-month project, it was a challenge to build relationships within the Co P itself, as any momentum created by meeting online with other institutions was then lost as the meet-ups were quite infrequent. By nature, attendance was never 100% as people take holiday at different times. It would have been good to have had a calendar of events from the outset, to know when each meeting would be from the very start, the better to organise leave around these. When we did meet as a CoP, the sessions were invaluable. With many of us having also worked on previous iterations of Prelim, it was great to be able to share experiences of how we were adapting to a much longer project, the challenges we were encountering and to find out the different stages we were all at. This was very reassuring – sometimes, on a long project such as this, it can feel quite isolating and difficult to gauge where we were against where we were supposed to be. One proposal is to have a predictable, scheduled set of monthly meetings (e.g. the 3rd Thursday of every month), to really

capitalise on the learning of our peers and create a genuinely workable CoP that would have been much stronger and of much greater benefit: motivation and encouragement would have been much higher.

## Designing the teacher support resources

The needs analysis sent to the members of TeflKuwait asked the teachers directly which skills or systems they particularly wanted support or new ideas for.

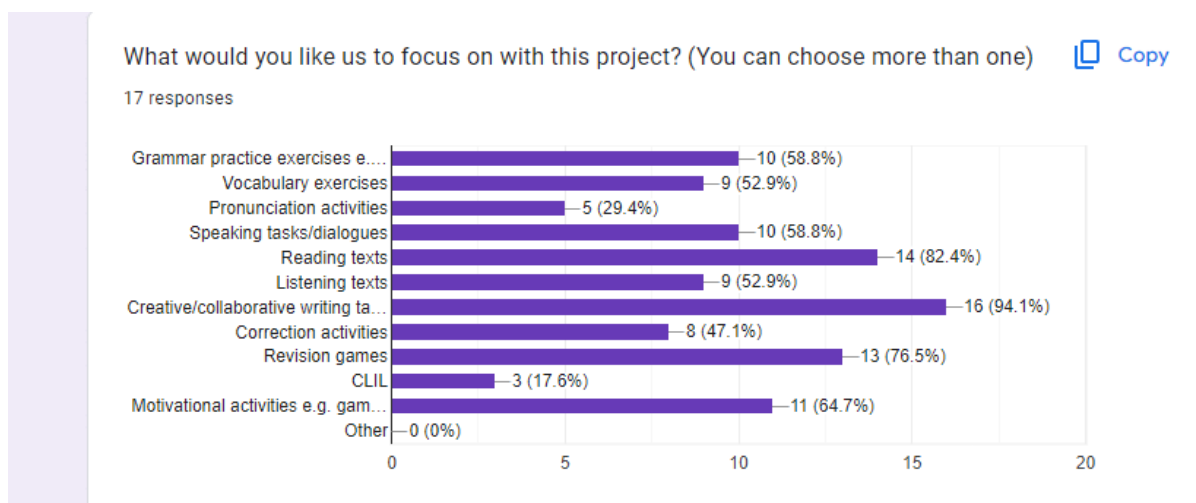


Figure 3: Results of the needs analysis

These results corroborated what the representatives of TeflKuwait had told us about the general ability of students on the Foundation programme, and it is interesting to note the heavy emphasis on skills i.e. writing, reading, listening and speaking. IHL trainers used these results to prioritise the focus of the resource, for example producing 10 activities related to collaborative writing, with a further five homing in on typical exam tasks.

IHL trainers designing the materials felt challenged by the process of producing the materials, which surprised them. As very experienced teachers and trainers, coming up with activities/tasks that can help other teachers adapt and exploit teaching material to be more engaging is second nature to them in the classroom. However, here the challenge lay in writing very clear, step-by-step instructions that can be applied to any piece of material within the chosen skill or system, while also thinking about potential differentiation according to language proficiency and class size. The example below includes suggested adaptation for large classes:

## ACTIVITY 7

### Noughts and Crosses

**Time:** 30+

**Level:** Any

**Skill/Focus:** Grammar

**Aim:** To review/ consolidate existing language forms.

**Preparation:** Draw up the grid for tic-tac-toe on the board. Fill in each square of the grid with a part of speech you want students to practise. What exactly you choose to include here is totally flexible, and depends on what language you'd like to review, for example, conditionals.

**How it works:**

**Step 1 (Game):** Students will be divided into two teams for this game. The first team goes by choosing a square from the tic-tac-toe grid. They then have to figure out, as a group, the answer to the question/ missing word/ how to form the sentence. If they get the answer right, then they claim that square of the grid. If they

get the answer wrong, then they lose their turn. Can be done in rounds of three to review more than one language point.

*FOR LARGER GROUPS, DIVIDE THE CLASSES INTO GROUPS, WHICH ARE THEN SPLIT INTO TEAMS. THE TEAMS WRITE DOWN THEIR ANSWERS BEFORE THE TEACHER GETS FEEDBACK FOR THE QUESTION, SO THAT EACH TEAM HAS TO COMMIT TO ANSWER (AND CAN'T COPY OFF ANOTHER!).*

Figure 4: Suggested adaptations for large classes

## Disseminating the teacher support resources

The padlet itself was the dissemination: once the teachers had elected to take part in the project, the live link was sent to them. The majority of participant-teachers indicated in the needs analysis that they were very technology-competent. The padlet was designed to be interactive and encourage constant review and dialogue between the Kuwaiti participant teachers and the IHL trainers. This worked very well in the beginning.

Every 3 months, reminder-emails were sent to the participant teachers to re-prompt them to engage with the resource. These reminder emails were sent at what seemed like opportune moments i.e. the start of each new semester, when both IHL and TeflKuwait felt the teachers would be most open and willing to experiment with new ideas. Unfortunately, these emails did not result in improved engagement with the resource. At the start of the new academic year in September 2023, IHL and TeflKuwait discussed the possibility of the TeflKuwait representatives delivering some workshops on the materials as part of in-service teacher training sessions during this planning period for the teachers, with further support in the form of webinars also mooted. However, it was during this time that roles and responsibilities changed, and the suggestions were put on hold.

Hello, my name is Gabi Kamal. I am an ESL Instructor for adults. I have 20+ years of experience in teaching different levels. I like Padlet a lot, especially in teaching writing skills.



Jess 11mo



Hi Gabi, lovely to meet you! Great to hear that you're a fan of Padlet - I love it too! It would be wonderful to hear about some of the ways you use Padlet when teaching writing skills - please feel free to share!

Figure 5: How the padlet was interactive

## Project outcomes

The project started really well with some very enthusiastic responses and some two-way sharing of teaching ideas and materials.

Uptake and use of the resource was disappointingly low overall. The resource launched in May after Ramadan had finished and Kuwaiti teachers had returned to school. Initially there was some enthusiasm from the teachers in Kuwait, with 6-8 teachers actively contributing, and a further five viewing the resource. New activities were posted monthly/every other month, and reminder emails were sent directly to the teachers who had elected to participate in the project; however, over time, enthusiasm waned. We can put this down to timing issues as soon after launch, the teachers (and their students) entered the exam period, then the end of the academic year and the long summer holidays. Despite a further push in September, November and February, there was not much interaction forthcoming. The academic year in Kuwait has several interruptions: Ramadan, the summer and winter holidays, end-of-semester exam periods. Therefore, within the twelve-month period, there were at least five months when the teachers did not have teaching opportunities and were unable to use the resource even if they wanted to.

Teachers regularly indicate that they already have too much to cover in their syllabus and with their coursebooks, which are carefully structured to target exam strategy and practice. Often, the approach is to deliver this material and teach the content as much as possible, and the perception is that there is not enough time (a) to research, understand integrate new, probably alien, activities during the lesson preparation process, and/or (b) to devote crucial lesson space to exploiting coursebook material, introduce games or recycling or extension, when the focus has to be on moving on, turning the page, getting to the next unit. This was echoed in some of the teachers'



comments as the project progressed. In the case of the former point, the lesson preparation process, attempting to use the resource, rather than helping the teachers, came to be seen as an additional effort and time for which they were not paid, and with which they would not see an enormous impact (they felt).

**My students always struggle in using or identifying words in context. They can identify the meaning of the word, but they don't always succeed in filling in the blanks with the right ones.**



**Jess** 11mo



Thank you for sharing this point. I think this is a typical challenge for learners, and definitely something my students struggle with, at all levels! We will be sharing some vocabulary ideas this week that will

*Figure 6: Example of two-way sharing*

The biggest benefit of the project was actually seen in the creators of the resource on the IH London side. Having to put their processes/instructions down on paper, in simple terms for other teachers, really made the trainers question their own principles, examine their own practice and seek to understand a different context. The context they were creating for, as mentioned previously in the report, was considerably different to the one in which they currently work. As a result, they were pushed to gain a more global perspective on English-language teaching than they had before. This was in evidence in one example in which the trainer built a short dictagloss based on an anecdote set in a pub. During peer review, it was pointed out that this was not appropriate for a Muslim country, and the context was changed to a café. This was a valuable moment of learning for the trainer, who had not fully considered the extent of cultural sensitivity needed in producing materials.

Further, it was a very valuable experience of materials creation for the IHL trainers. Some of them had previously expressed an interest in and experimented with materials writing (hence their selection for involvement in the project), and PRELIM 3 really opened their eyes to the reality of this (potential) career path: the physical distance from the target audience, the cultural and social distance from the context, and the lack of genuine interaction with both. Creating materials but then not discovering how these materials were received or what the impact was, can be a prominent

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feature of materials-writing, and can result in frustration. The IHL trainers, through this project, realised how important it is to interact with the recipients, to get feedback and to know what impact their creation was having.

## **Emergent learning**

Resource-producing from a distance is challenging and needs more genuine interaction, for example synchronous attendance and support, which is then logged and contributes to something more than just lesson planning.

Writing materials for a different context is challenging, without having real understanding or experience of the context: doing some lesson observation can help here.

Any kind of teacher support and development needs to be aligned with the academic year of the target teachers, to take into account holiday or exam periods, and be incorporated – or mapped – into the academic cycle, to ensure that there is time to build on experience and experimentation.