

## PRELIM 3

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# Bangladesh: TESOL Society of Bangladesh with Capital School of English Bournemouth

August 2024

## Project background

Partnership overview		
Partners	ETA partner	TESOL Society of Bangladesh
	UKI partner	Capital School of English, Bournemouth
User Profile	Context overview	Bangladesh is a diverse country with numerous local dialects. English communicative proficiency is vital for the country's development.
	Learner age group(s)	Junior secondary; Grades 6-8
	Curriculum overview	English is a compulsory subject for all grades and level assessed via the Secondary School Certificate. National Education Policy 2010 introduced a more communicative approach. The curriculum is designed by National Curriculum and Textbook Board.
Teacher support resource package	Resource format and organisation	The Pronunciation Toolkit (PT) supports the read aloud sections coursebooks by focusing on pronunciation issues and providing classroom activities linked to those pronunciation issues. The PT includes two sections: (1) Teachers' Guide (2) Classroom Activities.
	Resource content	Teachers' Guide: An introduction to seven common pronunciation issues for Bangla speakers, with practice tasks for teachers, and supporting teacher development audio and videos.
	Resource sustainability	Classroom Activities: 14 classroom activities linked to the different pronunciation issues in the Teachers' Guide.
Dissemination	Methods	The PT Classroom Activities are transferable to future updates to the NCTB coursebooks. The PT is open-access and available via multiple sources; digital and physical to ensure inclusivity. The ETA have full ownership of the PT and can update, as and when required. Moving forward the ETA will use the PT Teachers' Guide for CPD sessions.
	Timeframe	Online training sessions delivered by the UKI to ETA teacher trainers, providing materials for local workshops.

	<b>Number of teachers reached</b>	Face-to-face, local workshops with small groups of grade 6-8 teachers delivered by ETA teacher trainers.
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## Description of the partners

**TESOL Society of Bangladesh (TSB)** is the nationwide equal opportunity platform for practitioners and aspiring English language teachers of all levels of education in Bangladesh. TSB have over 7000 members on various social media platforms.

**Capital School of English (CSE)** is a small family-run language school established in 2003 based in Bournemouth. CSE delivers General English courses, exam preparation courses and bespoke mini-stay group courses. CSE creates all resources in-house for mini-stay groups and Young Learner Programme.

## Key features of the context

Below highlights the key features in Bangladesh that impacted the PRELIM 3 resource package design:

### National Curriculum Requirements:

- The National Education Policy 2010 introduced a more communicative approach. High stakes exams, such as SSE (Secondary School Certificate) do not currently assess speaking and listening. Teachers believe that the curriculum aims to address this in the not-too-distant future, therefore activities that improve the pronunciation of teachers and students are of importance.
- Teachers have limited contact with the students each week and must teach the relevant sections of the National Curriculum Textbook Board (NCTB) to match the curriculum, with limited time to supplement.

### Teacher skills, knowledge, and experience:

- Teachers can start teaching without a formal qualification and undergo a 'training' phrase.
- Teachers themselves generally have a low level of English and lacked confidence in their own speaking ability. Teachers were identified as B2-C1 in Dhaka and A2-B1 in rural areas.
- A significant number of teachers stated they had limited knowledge of teaching pronunciation.

### Class Size:

40-100 students

### Technology:

Outside of Dhaka, access to the internet and electricity are restricted and teachers in rural areas have limited access to resources and reliable technology.

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Below highlights the key features in Bangladesh that impacted the PRELIM 3 resource package dissemination:

- **Academic Year**
  - To coincide with the academic year in Bangladesh workshops ran from October 2023 to January 2024.
  - The Pronunciation Toolkit (PT) was disseminated to precede the release of the NCTB to all students and teachers in January at the start of the academic year.
- **Technology**

Face-to-face workshops were necessary as internet access and electricity are restricted in rural areas.
- **Political Situation**

General elections were held on January 7th 2024 for which the political campaigning began in November 2023, during which time there were advised curfews and stay-at-home policies in-place that restricted the movement around Bangladesh.
- **Religious Holidays**

Bangladesh has numerous public holidays including, Muslim, Hindi, Christian and Buddhist holidays.

## Outline of the course and rationale

The main resource is designed directly to support junior secondary teachers; teachers of Grades 6, 7 and 8. The resource also supports the move of the national curriculum to a more communicative approach, by providing teachers with supplementary classroom activities to improve pronunciation of English for Bangla speakers (teachers and students), based around a limited range of fundamental principles of English pronunciation without using technical terms. The design principles for the resources therefore is that they are:

- interactive and communicative
  - Visual and physical activities that all students in the class can see and do, no matter the size of the class.
  - Communicative activities with guidance for teachers as they may not be accustomed to this style of communicative teaching.
- short in duration, as teachers have limited time to supplement
- low resource
- easy to model.

To ensure the success of the classroom activities they had to be supported by a comprehensive teacher's guide which was:

- accessible for newly appointed teachers in their 'training' phase
- a supporting aid for teachers with a low level of English themselves or a developmental aid for teachers with a more competent level.

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# Project findings

## Working in partnership

The standout feature of the UKIs collaboration with the ETA on this project has been its collaborative nature driven by the desire of the main contacts to learn and develop their understanding of the other's cultural and teaching situations and experiences.

From the outset mutual respect and understanding were paramount. Time dedicated to fully understanding each other's organisational and personal aims and values was invaluable to ensuring effective open and honest communication, which in turn ensured a deeper understanding of the cultural and teaching situations in Bangladesh.

What we learned from this was that it was only by allowing time to develop this mutual respect and understanding while working with all concerned, that we would be able to ensure that the resource that was developed would be beneficial for the targeted learners. This was achieved via meetings with specific focus groups:

- individuals from the NCTB writers to the Board Members of the ETA
- secondary teachers in the capital and townships
- non-teaching individuals working on phonics projects within Bangladesh

## Designing the teacher support resources

As a partnership we have been on a journey developing the resources. The resources adapted and changed in nature, from Supporting Listening Resources to a Pronunciation Toolkit, the more research was carried out and the more the UKI learnt about education in Bangladesh and the requirements of the end users. This highlighted the importance of thorough research, data collection and gaining a deep understanding of the context before committing to designing resources, and the ongoing need for review and re-development of the resources in response to feedback/data.

Gaining constructive feedback from the ETA and Bangla teachers was vital. Initially gaining feedback was not always easy or forthcoming. We had to internally review our feedback strategies to ensure the feedback was specific, timely and encouraging, and most importantly valued. Valuing feedback required a deep understanding and respect for cultural differences and creating a safe, comfortable, and trusted environment for everyone to share their opinions and perspectives openly.

Understanding the prevailing pedagogical norms and the National Education systems future pedagogical desires for the ETA teachers and teaching context was key to developing simple and effective resources. The resources had to be familiar but also support the development of a more communicative approach.

Creating a collaborative team approach between the UKI and ETA, and within the UKI and ETA separately was vital to developing the resources. The UKI as a small school was able to include all

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members of the academic team at various stages in the development of the resources. Members with little to no resource development experience were guided to create a truly collaborative PT.

## Disseminating the teacher support resources

We learned the value and importance of collaborating with the ETA as to the manner and timing of the dissemination as they have a better understanding of the external factors that impact on this, such as:

- practicalities
- costs
- political situation
- timing and quantity of
  - public holidays
  - academic holidays
  - ETA and national conference programmes
- availability of technological resources
- optimum time for dissemination
- teacher engagement
- achievability.

Consequently, compromises and adaptations had to be negotiated and constantly re-evaluated in the dissemination process to manage these factors.

We responded by:

- designing a resource that could be disseminated with or without the need for technology
- scheduling the timeline of dissemination to take into account:
  - Predominately, coinciding with the start of the academic year
  - The political situation
  - That dissemination was completed prior to the ETA's annual conference.
- budgeting effectively for the variation in running expenses for the different locations (capital vs. townships), for example teacher engagement was enhanced by covering travel expenses and providing meals
- delivering comprehensive full-day local face-to-face workshops dedicated to the resource and teacher development. Giving it the gravitas it deserved, with a 360-degree approach, where the teachers experienced the resource from the student perspective before delivering it.

## Monitoring and Evaluation resource use

The UKI and ETA worked collaboratively to gather data via different methods from multiple sources over the duration of the project in response to the varying success of each method/source of data collection.

Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered via:

- focus groups with multiple sources
- online and paper questionnaires
- online Feedback Forms accessible via links or QR codes.

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Data was gathered via multiple sources:

- NCTB writers
- board members of the ETA
- secondary teachers in the capital and townships
- non-teaching individuals working on phonics projects.

Findings of previous research projects focusing on improving English language teaching in Bangladesh, especially those that had first-hand observations of the teaching situation in the country provided valuable insight.

When gathering data we learnt that:

- The local knowledge and contacts of the ETA were invaluable for distributing questionnaires and organising all focus groups
- Teachers in Bangladesh are generally not accustomed to providing feedback, especially on resources
- It was difficult to collect data that would be true representation of the whole country, there are extreme variations between the capital and townships
- The expected number of responses we had hoped for would be limited, as teachers have full schedules
- Reminders and deadlines are imperative, although with a degree of flexibility.

Overall, the data collection was successful as we constantly adapted and responded to the varying ways and forms of getting feedback or obtaining information.

The most successful approaches to data collection were:

- Gathering qualitative data via focus groups was easier to obtain than quantitative data via online forms due to:
  - Availability of technological resources
  - Teacher engagement.
- By establishing relationships and an understanding of the culture and teaching situations with the teachers in the focus groups
- Using small focus groups with teachers based in the capital due to them having access to reasonable and reliable technology
- Setting deadlines that could easily be extended without impact on the overall timeline for the project
- When data collection was combined with personal development training sessions
- When considering the variation in working week for the ETA and UKI.

On reflection better data collection could have been achieved through:

- Forming stronger connections with individual schools and their English teaching department, rather than directly with individual teachers, as this may have ensured the school's senior leadership team:
  - Were aware of the teacher's involvement in the project and made accommodations to their schedule

- Assisted with distributing and providing the necessary technology/infrastructure for teachers to complete the questionnaires or attend the focus groups.
- An additional grant, to the dissemination grant, to assist with the distribution of needs analysis questionnaires or to provide the necessary technology for teachers to complete the questionnaires or technology or transport to attend the focus groups
- Including students as a source of information.

## Project outcomes

From the ETA's perspective the project has received a lot of interest from teachers around Bangladesh and at the ETA's annual conference. It has opened avenues for future workshops, and the creation of a new chapter in the township of the ETA.

One teacher in Rajshahi township stated:

*'It is great the resource is on the new coursebook. It helps understand the coursebook more. We would be keen to get this type of training again from the resource.'*

From UKI's perspective the project has enabled a small language school the opportunity to design and produce a comprehensive resource that is having an impact on the teachers and teaching styles of teachers in Bangladesh.

Spencer Fordham, Managing Director of Capital School of English

*'I am immensely proud of the resource package my team have created, and thankful to the ETA for disseminating it around Bangladesh.'*

## Emergent Learning

There have been a number of significant emergent learning outcomes over the course of this project.

- We have both, UKI and ETA, gained a deeper understanding of each other's culture, teaching environments and teaching methodologies.
- The ETA teachers have discussed the new National Curriculum in more detail, enabling them to share experiences and understanding.
- All CSE teachers, irrespective of their teaching experience, have been involved in the resource development at relevant stages. It has been an opportunity for the UKI teachers to fully understand the process of materials design.



The image shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a presentation slide is displayed with the following text:

**PRONUNCIATION TOOLKIT**  
A RESOURCE

Logos for **CAPITAL SCHOOL OF ENGLISH - BOURNEMOUTH -** and **TESOL.BD** are visible at the bottom of the slide.

On the right, a grid of video thumbnails shows several participants. Visible names include Nuzhat Ara, Professor Dr Sayeedur Rahman, P., Sabreena Ahmed, Mizanur Rahman, Dr. Mian Md. Nauchaad Kabir, Int., Zohur Ahmed, Hamdul Haque, and Abdullah Al-Mamun. The meeting title at the top right is "Capital School o...".

