

PRELIM 3

Ecuador: UNAE PINE (PINE The National University of Education)

with

International House Bristol

August 2024

Project background

Partnership overview		
Partners	ETA partner	PINE-The National University of Education (UNAE)
	UKI partner	International House Bristol
User Profile	Context overview	Regional (Educational Zone 6 - the Southern provinces of Azuay, Cañar, and Morona Santiago)
	Learner age group(s)	Ages 12-14 approx. (Basica Superior Grades 8-10)
	Curriculum overview	Supplementary to curriculum
Teacher support resource package	Resource format and organisation	30 stand-alone skills lessons with accompanying teachers notes; 10 per grade; linked to topics and content of current course materials
	Resource content	A1-A2 Reading and Listening lessons; 40 minutes each; supported by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers notes • Supplementary resources • Skills lesson activity bank: video demonstrations • Reflection templates
	Resource sustainability	Fully documented; accessible and downloadable indefinitely online; printed and distributed to schools across 3 provinces
Dissemination	Methods	Trials; Live workshops; Website
	Timeframe	September 2023 – July 2024
	Number of teachers reached	120 directly; 240 indirectly

Description of the partners

The National University of Education (UNAE) in Ecuador seeks to transform and innovate education not only from the academic perspective, but also by valuing multicultural richness. The school of Pedagogy of National and Foreign languages (PINE) prepares pre-service English teachers for a globalised society and strengthens the UNAE mission by creating programmes for educators who do not have easy access to professional development opportunities in Educational Zone 6 region and around Ecuador. They previously collaborated with Peartree Languages in PRELIM 2.

International House Bristol (IH Bristol) is a private language school, established in 1987, offering the following relevant provision:

- general, exam (IELTS, Cambridge, OET) and specialist English courses for adults
- general and specialist English courses for juniors (between 8 and 17)
- teacher training (CELTA, courses for foreign teachers of English, CLIL)

The school has participated in several transnational teacher development projects, including PRELIM 1 partnered with API-ELI in Cuba and PRELIM 2 partnered with ANELTA in Angola.

Key features of the context

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador aims to support the policy of developing citizens who can communicate effectively in today's globalized world. The curriculum is communicative and emphasises skills and purposeful interaction. There are five curriculum strands: Communication and Cultural Awareness; Oral Communication; Reading; Writing; and Language through the Arts.

Compulsory education (EGB) is from Grades 1-10, ages approximately 5-14. English is now included in the curriculum from Grade 2. However, until recently English was not a compulsory subject until *Basica Superior*, the final three years of compulsory education. Therefore, many learners entering Grade 8 have had no exposure to or instruction in English and enter Grade 8 as pre-A1 beginners. This is particularly common in rural areas where there are fewer English teachers and there is less accessible training and professional development.

Content for English lessons is available as Education 'modules': downloadable documents on the Ministry of Education's portal. However, these resources are designed to bring students to B1 level, and pose a significant challenge in terms of content and level for many students (see *figure 1*). There are also no teachers notes, guidance, or supplementary resources available. A further challenge facing teachers is curriculum changes related to Covid-19, as class time for English in Grades 8-10 was reduced from five hours a week to three, with a typical class length of 40-45 minutes.

There is considerable variance in class sizes and available classroom resources and technology between the regions. Many schools do not have Wi-Fi or digital facilities and the most common format of resources is printed (see *figure 4*). Over 90% of teachers surveyed would like to teach listening and reading comprehension skills much more often. They prefer short lessons with brief audios and texts to ensure they are achievable for the students level and practical for classroom use.

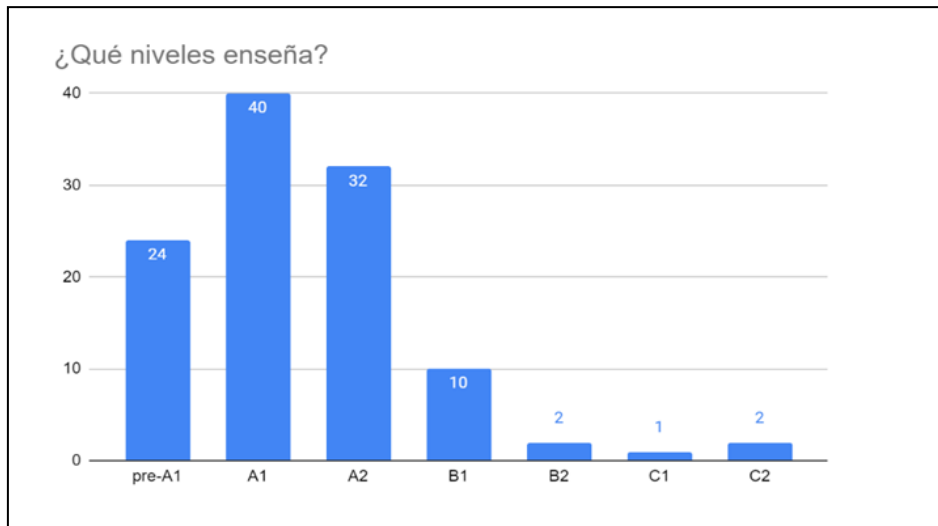


Figure 1: SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1: needs analysis data on students' levels

Outline of the teacher support resource package and rationale

We created 30 discrete, systematically documented, supplementary skills lessons. Our main goal was to equip teachers of 8th, 9th and 10th grade of basic education with the necessary resources, knowledge and strategies for reading and listening skills to create effective learning environments, and allow teachers greater adaptability and flexibility in their classrooms and fill a materials gap for teachers of these grades. Our resources relate to topics in the current modules, so that teachers can choose to use them alongside existing content, either replacing or supplementing as desired. By providing skills lessons we are supporting teachers who currently have to create their own texts for receptive skills lessons, taking them a considerable amount of time.

The lessons are accompanied by a rationale of methodology and guidance to support teachers less familiar with communicative language teaching. Each lesson has teachers notes including a summary of the lesson flow, as well as a detailed procedure and accompanying supplementary resources such as flashcards. There is also a bank of suggested activities for receptive skills and short instructional videos illustrating key techniques. Each lesson is linked to the syllabus aims for Basica Superior, with a primary focus on either listening or reading, and secondary foci on communication and cultural awareness or language through the arts. A scope and sequence document provides an overview of content and links to the lessons and curriculum aims of existing resources, and reflection tools are provided to help teachers evaluate their use of the lessons. Combined with the comprehensive written guidance, this ensures the resources are accessible and sustainable to English teachers across Ecuador beyond the timescale of the project.

Working within the CoP

Given the scale of PRELIM 3, the CoP felt somewhat disconnected this time around. The length of the project meant that members were rarely in the same project phases at the same time, and that the range of individual projects was very broad, making comparisons and collaboration more

challenging. However, there was a sense of comradery in that when someone encountered an issue, others were quick to reassure and share their solutions as to how they got around similar problems. There appeared to be an understanding from the beginning that given the timescale attached to this iteration of PRELIM, there would be ebbs and flows in the project given national holidays in the various ETA's and UK peak summer season.

The support from the NILE team was exemplary and played a key role in identifying next steps in the project and suggesting ideas and solutions.

Project findings

Working in partnership



UNAE-PINE and IH Bristol collaborated effectively on the goals, design, and dissemination of the course through email, regular Zoom meetings, and WhatsApp. Shared working folders on Google Drive were also a valuable tool for accessing drafts and documents on both sides of the partnership. Regular meetings were held over Zoom, enabling smooth communication and offering opportunities for collaboration and idea generation. Of key importance was a strong foundation of shared goals formed early in the partnership, aligning both institutions' visions for student success and ensuring both institutions could contribute effectively.

Figure 2: Folder design for dissemination

As institutions experienced in this form of partnership, both parties were able to leverage the skills and expertise of their organisations to divide the tasks effectively. For example, UNAE's communications department designed physical folders and promotional materials for dissemination (see figure 2), and IH Bristol's materials writers used their expertise in resources design to create engaging lessons catered to different learning styles (see figure 3). By fostering effective collaboration and leveraging our respective skills and expertise, this partnership not only achieved its shared goals but also sparked innovation and facilitated growth, as evidenced by the creative materials design on both sides.

Designing the teacher support resources

During the process of designing the teacher support resources, our most significant challenge was effectively evaluating the teaching context in the three provinces, and contextualizing our materials accordingly: to be suitable for the Ecuadorian English curriculum, the distinct teaching realities present in urban and rural schools, and the level and knowledge of the students. Of key importance to addressing this challenge were three key factors. Firstly, by establishing shared goals early on, we were able to narrow our focus to receptive skills, which facilitated a more in-depth analysis of teachers' and students' specific needs in this area (see *figure 4*).

You are going to hear four stories about animals who have committed crimes.

Look at the pictures.
What do you think happens in the stories?




Figure 3: A communicative task from a listening lesson

Secondly, the established network of connections at PINE to the teaching community played a crucial role in accessing diverse sources of feedback. Their input helped us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the needs and preferences of the teachers across Educational Zone 6, ranging from just four years of experience to over 30. Additionally, we realized the value of involving key influencers in the form of a small focus group of enthusiastic and engaged participants to provide us with early and frequent feedback. Their insights proved invaluable in designing and refining the materials and ensuring their relevance to the local context. Lastly, we acknowledge the significance of having a long materials design timeline to gather feedback and create iterative versions of the resources. This iterative approach ensured that the materials were continuously improved based on the feedback received, leading to a more tailored final package of resources.

Disseminating the teacher support resources

Several key learnings emerged regarding resource distribution in our context. Firstly, flexibility in the timeline proved to be crucial due to a 60-day state of emergency in Ecuador, which imposed travel restrictions and hindered dissemination efforts.

Another important aspect was the availability of dissemination funding, which played a pivotal role in facilitating access to the materials during the trialling stages. This not only allowed teachers to download the resources using their internet data, but also supported the organization of in-person events to launch the completed package of resources. Additionally, and in contrast to previous PRELIM collaborations we have participated in, it was important to create physical resources, considering the focus on English classrooms and students as the end-users of the resources and the limitations of digital access in many rural schools (see figure 4). Providing tangible materials ensured that teachers in these areas could access the resources without relying solely on internet connectivity.

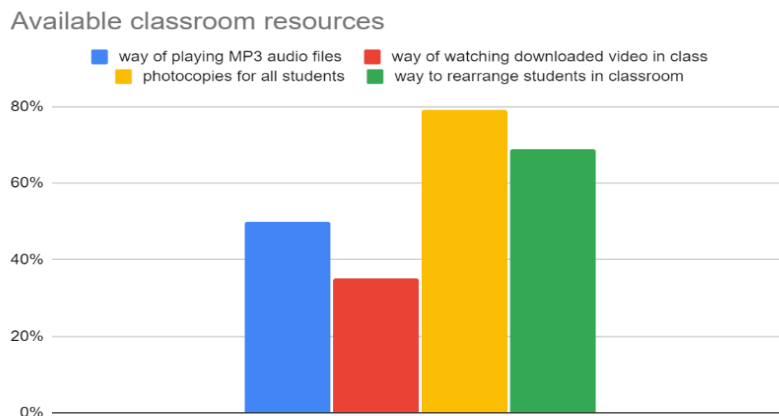


Figure 4: Needs analysis data showing available classroom resources

Monitoring and Evaluation resource use

Data on the use of the resources and support package was gathered through Google forms, focus groups, reflection documents, and a limited number of lesson observations. Of these sources of data, the lesson reflections forms provided the most actionable information, as the detailed feedback provided by trialling teachers enabled the materials design team to make iterative changes based on their perspective on challenges using the materials in the classroom. Although the feedback forms were able to capture feedback from more teachers, their feedback was more general and offered less actionable insight.

The reflection feedback also allowed the design team to tailor the support resource guidance for teachers to their questions and concerns. For example, many teachers were concerned about unknown vocabulary in the receptive skills lessons, therefore the activity bank and lesson rationale were tailored to supporting teachers in this area.

III. Student Reactions

Engagement and Participation:

- **Did you observe active participation from the students during the lesson?**

Yes, they participated during the lesson. Not all them, but most of them.

- **Were there any signs of disengagement or lack of interest?**

Yes, there were. It happened when I began to explain the activities that they had to do using the adjectives to complete and write exercises with the **Superlatives**.

Figure 5: Extract from lesson reflection feedback by María Inga L

Project outcomes

The project team acknowledge the limitations of the data in that our data set is not statistically significant and represents a sizeable amount of self-reported data, and is therefore open to bias. However, we believe the monitoring and evaluation tools used enable us to confidently draw tentative conclusions. Overall, teachers scored the PRELIM 3 project's lesson resources higher than the government modules in all areas, particularly in ease of preparation by the teacher and interest for the students (see *Table 1*). The lowest score for both sets of resources and the area of least improvement was in suitability for students' level, indicating the low English level of students entering *Basica Superior* still presents significant challenges for the teaching and learning of English in this context.

Teacher's Evaluation	Government Modules	PRELIM Materials
interesting for students	3	4.25
relevant for my area / students' knowledge	3	4.25
suitable for my students' level	2.75	3.5
practical to use in the classroom	3	4
pedagogically sound	3	4
easy to prepare by the teacher	3.25	4.75

Table 1: teachers' evaluations of resources (score of 1-5, rounded to nearest .25)

The project team are pleased that the process of disseminating the resources contributed to building a stronger support network among educators, particularly with the National University of Education. The regional workshops included in the dissemination plan encouraged the sharing of best practices and fostered collaboration on innovative approaches. This collaborative environment fostered a sense of community and mutual learning among educators that will benefit future teacher education projects in the region.