

# Lessons learned from **+10 years of** **Ceibal en Inglés**

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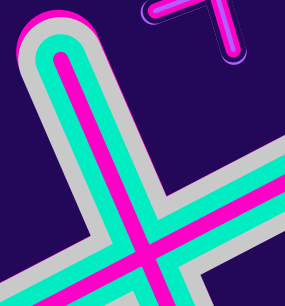
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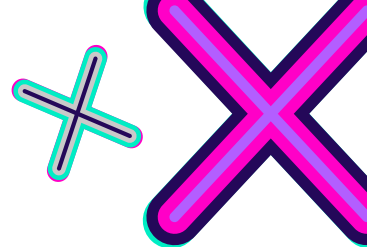


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Executive summary





## Abbreviations used in this report

<b>ANEP</b>	— The National Authority for Education and Teacher Training
<b>CEI</b>	— Ceibal en Inglés – Ceibal’s English teaching programme
<b>CEFR</b>	— The Common European Framework of Reference for language learning
<b>CREA</b>	— The principal digital platform for students and teachers
<b>CT</b>	— Classroom Teacher – a generalist primary school teacher
<b>CTE</b>	— A Classroom Teacher of English – a secondary level specialist
<b>F2F</b>	— Face-to-Face teaching (as opposed to remote teaching)
<b>LB</b>	— Little Bridge – the curriculum and materials used in CEI
<b>NEAT</b>	— The National English Adaptive Test of CEI measuring CEFR level
<b>QM</b>	— Quality Management – system to ensure good teaching
<b>RT</b>	— Remote Teacher – an English specialist teaching the class via videoconference
<b>RTC</b>	— Remote Teaching Centre – hub from which RTs work
<b>TP</b>	— Teaching Point (where a RT teaches from)





Ceibal is a Uruguayan government agency dedicated to integrating technology into education with the aim of increasing inclusion. It implemented the national one-laptop-per-child programme from 2006, and continues to provide laptops to all public school students in Uruguay, a high-income country of 3.5 million people. The Ceibal en Inglés (CEI) programme began in 2012 as a solution to Uruguay's shortage of English teachers, which was hampering the government objective of providing English lessons to all public primary school students.

CEI involves Remote Teachers (RTs, provided through supplier contracts by 13 language-teaching institutes) delivering weekly lessons (Lesson A) to groups of primary school students in their school via videoconference from a Teaching Point (TP) equipped with videoconferencing equipment in a remote location. This may be in the same city as the school, but is often in a different country and housed in Remote Teaching Centres (RTCs). Most lessons are delivered into Uruguay from Argentina, though RTs have been based in various

countries around the world including the Philippines. Continuous coordination between the RT and Classroom Teacher (CT) is a vital part of the programme. The CT is present to facilitate learning during Lesson A, and is expected to organise two more weekly lessons (B and C). Classroom teachers at primary grades 4 to 6 are not expected to know English, although some do. CEI currently reaches over 60% of children in Uruguayan public primary schools, some 75,000 children each year. There is an annual adaptive test of English proficiency for students (NEAT).

This core of RT, CT and technology requires a complex management infrastructure. There is a three-year curriculum with lesson plans, student materials, and an online LMS for students and teachers. A quality management team ensures institutes (each with their own management structure) and their RTs comply with programme requirements through a team of mentors which support CTs; a team of pedagogical and test coordinators; and an operational management team. There is also a teacher development function.

## Methodology

TransformELT conducted a mixed methods investigation of CEI using Thematic Analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data to answer the eight research questions. We reviewed previous external evaluations between 2012 and 2016 which were generally positive about the programme as well as other documentation including yearly internal evaluations. The researchers interviewed a range of stakeholders in Ceibal, The British Council and others with knowledge of the programme, and conducted three online surveys of Remote Teachers, Classroom Teachers, and other interested parties in Uruguay.



## Results

### **To what extent is there evidence that primary pupils have increased their English as a result of taking part in the programme?**

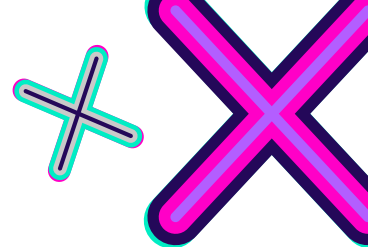
The 9 to 12 year-old students on the CEI programme clearly learn English. 90% of RTs and 77% of CTs rated student learning outcomes and experience as positive. The latest (2022) NEAT test of students finishing primary grade 6 showed that 73% achieved A1 or above with 58% doing so in reading and 30% listening. Of these 34% achieved A2 or above in vocabulary and grammar with 24% doing so in reading and 16% in listening.

There is also evidence of a decreased gap between the most and the least socio-economically advantaged students, with the gap in learning outcomes also reduced over the years.

### **What benefits have remote teachers gained as a result of the teacher development programme run by the British Council?**

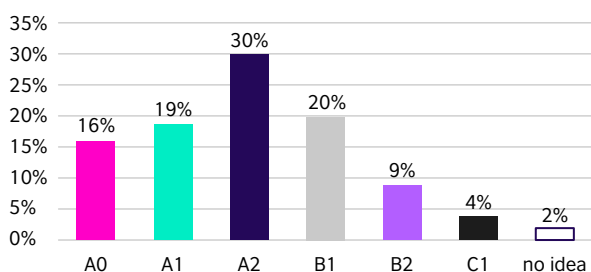
Over 200 RTs are active in the programme (90% female), and 86% of the British Council RTs are satisfied with their jobs. 94% of surveyed RTs were positive about the development offered by the British Council, they were particularly positive about initial training and orientation. 94% of CTs rated RTs as excellent or very good. Issues for RTs are a substantial workload for full-timers, and the increasing demand for home-based teaching, and how that is being integrated into the programme. An important feature of CEI is the need for coordination between the RT and CT, and both RTs and CTs appreciate the quality of coordination.





## What benefits did the local classroom teachers achieve in terms of English proficiency and improving classroom practice?

CTs spend a small proportion of their working time on CEI. They are employed by the school authority ANEP, and not subject to supervision by Ceibal, although supported by the CEI mentor team. An initial aim of the programme was to improve the English of CTs so that they could take more responsibility for English teaching. However, the appetite of CTs to work to improve their English was overestimated. Free English lessons have always been available for CTs though the take-up and attitudes to learning English is varied. The English levels of CTs are also varied, but generally low: 72% say their English has improved a little or a lot during the programme, leaving almost 30% who say it has not improved significantly.



Classroom Teacher self-assessed CEFR profile

43% of surveyed CTs said that participation in CEI had led them to make changes in their classroom practice. 84% rated the support they received positively, both from RTs and mentors.

## What is the perceived difference in learning outcomes and experience between learning face-to-face and via remote teaching?

The CEI remote teaching model has clearly been effective. Teachers say that CEI students have benefitted; the annual NEAT results show learning taking place, and similar learning outcome achievement between the CEI programme and the ANEP face-to-face modality. However, there is still a preference for face-to-face teaching, especially amongst CTs, while RTs, who are immersed in the world of remote teaching are more ambivalent.

### Strengths of CEI remote model

- Allows expert teachers
- Technological novelty engages learners
- Intercultural experience
- Two teachers not one
- Encourages digital skills
- Alternative is no English class
- Allows outsourcing to private sector
- Rapport, human touch, bonding is easier F2F (though the CT can provide this)
- Class management is easier F2F (though the CT can provide this)
- Individual attention + differentiation easier F2F

### Weaknesses

- Relies on lessons B & C taught by non-expert teacher
- Fewer teaching hours in practice
- Technical problems arise
- Cost
- Needs time-consuming coordination RT-CT
- More difficult to align with core primary curriculum
- Removes need to produce local English teachers



## What has been the effect of the quality management system put into place for CEI?

There is a rigorous quality management system to ensure that the institutes and their RTs deliver good teaching and management. Every RT is observed by the CEI quality management team at least once a year. A sophisticated observation instrument measures RT teaching in 12 areas of competence, assigning a level: undeveloped, emerging, developed, or advanced to each area of competence for each RT. There are protocols for action in case of unsatisfactory teaching.

- RTs rated the quality management system positively as it gives them clarity in what is expected in complying with the contract between their institute and Ceibal.
- However, some teachers believe that the system is too inflexible and does not allow for teacher agency and creativity in adapting the curriculum for the needs of specific groups. Consistency may be being achieved at the cost of creativity.

- The RT observations build up to an annual institute evaluation which also takes account of good administration and contract compliance of the institute.
- CEI quality managers are aware of the characteristics of each of the 13 institutes delivering remote teaching.

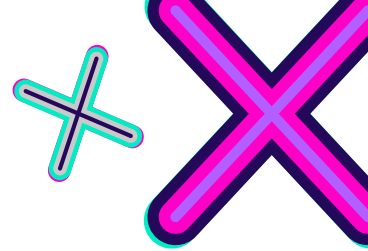
**Ceibal en Inglés relies on collaborative expertise between the private and public education sector, and on (mostly) private sector English language teachers working in the public school system in Uruguay. What challenges and/or difficulties exist when it comes to facilitating / enabling this cooperation?**

The Uruguayan public sector, through Ceibal, has supplier contracts to deliver remote teaching with 13 private sector organisations. This innovative approach to dealing with a shortage of English teachers allows a number of benefits including:

- The ability to introduce English teachers into the public system on different contracts, with no upset to the status quo in schools and limited interest from unions.
- The arm's length relationship with the RTs through contracts with institutes absolves the public sector of direct responsibility,

while allowing a level of rigorous quality management of teaching that is generally not practicable in the public sector.

- The CEI programme's rapid growth would not have been possible without the recruitment of teachers from the private sector, and it would not have been possible to deliver English to all primary school students.
- The benefit to the private sector institutes goes beyond increased business and income.



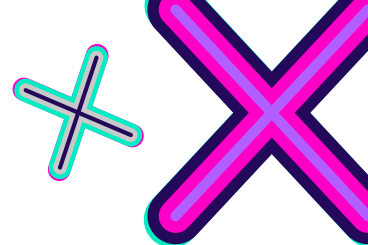
- The institutes have learned a lot over the years about remote and online teaching via the CEI programme.
- CEI uses institute premises during school hours when there is low demand for private sector classes.
- CEI business was especially valuable for institutes during the COVID pandemic, and those institutes involved in CEI were able to adapt to different forms of online teaching more rapidly.

### What long-term, sustainable, positive impacts can be determined on the education system in Uruguay, and to what extent are they due to the longevity of the project and / or partnership?

- After four years of CEI almost all primary school children were receiving lessons (from CEI or ANEP). From that point it can be considered to have been institutionalised.
- The shortage of English teachers at primary levels has been solved by using remote teaching, which works as well as the face-to-face solution in this context.
- Some stakeholders bemoan the continuing lack of local English teachers. However, there has been no significant attempt to increase the numbers, and therefore there is no possibility of rapid moves to the face-to-face teaching that many Uruguayans say they prefer.







- There remains a shortage of qualified English teachers elsewhere, including at secondary level.
- The aim for a plurilingual country with a wide knowledge of English, is contradicted by the lack of action to develop English ability amongst teachers, who are a model for young people.
- The 12-year timescale to date has allowed for volume growth and learning in the early

phases, leading to a period of continual improvement including the curriculum and materials, the annual test, the quality management system, the mentoring of CTs, and the continuing professional development of RTs.

It has also allowed the Ceibal team time to develop practical professional knowledge to operate the programme independently, and this new skill-set has helped Ceibal in other areas.

## What is the value that the British Council brings as a long-term partner for the Ceibal en Inglés programme?

Main areas of contribution are: curriculum methodology and materials; test development; the recruitment and management of RTs; teacher development and quality management; English improvement for CTs; programme evaluation; and international exposure of the programme. All this has required the development of specific management processes.

### The involvement of the British Council can be seen in three stages:

1. designing and piloting the programme
2. establishing remote teaching centres in Argentina and Uruguay, subcontracting and managing others (Philippines) while developing the elements listed above (2013-19). Enabling Ceibal to gradually take over operational responsibility.
3. becoming a supplier institute from the Buenos Aires Remote Teaching Centre, with additional responsibility for teacher development across the programme (2020-23).

Ceibal management speaks positively of the British Council contribution, how

the Ceibal team were able to learn from the experience in running English programmes, and how the British Council has been generous in passing on the benefits of that experience.

Uruguayan survey respondents who knew about the British Council were overwhelmingly positive. The main factors in leading Ceibal to look to the British Council for this support were:

- track record of success in English programmes globally,
- not-for-profit nature of the Council
- accountability of the organisation
- importance it gives to its own reputation

## Overview of strengths and challenges

The core aim of the programme was to ensure that all primary school students received English lessons, whether from CEI or ANEP face-to-face teaching. This has been achieved.

It is clear that the teaching has been of good quality, as evidenced by the quality management system, and that children have learned English, as evidenced by the annual NEAT results. 90% of the RTs and 82% of the CTs surveyed considered the programme a success.

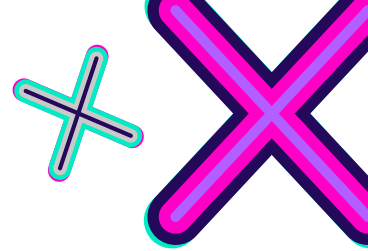
The challenges to the programme are largely about integration with the wider education system.

### Strengths:

- Clarity of aims – Reach, outcomes, inclusion
- Demonstrated learning outcomes
- Strong sustained leadership
- Rigorous management processes
- Quality remote teaching
- Can-do culture for continuous improvement
- Adaptive test development
- Technology-pedagogy innovation

### Challenges:

- Ceibal's historic separation from the education authority ANEP and schools.
- Lack of action on ITT to solve teacher shortage
- Slow acknowledgement of effect on secondary ELT
- Lack of integration with primary curriculum
- Variation in degrees in which CTs engage

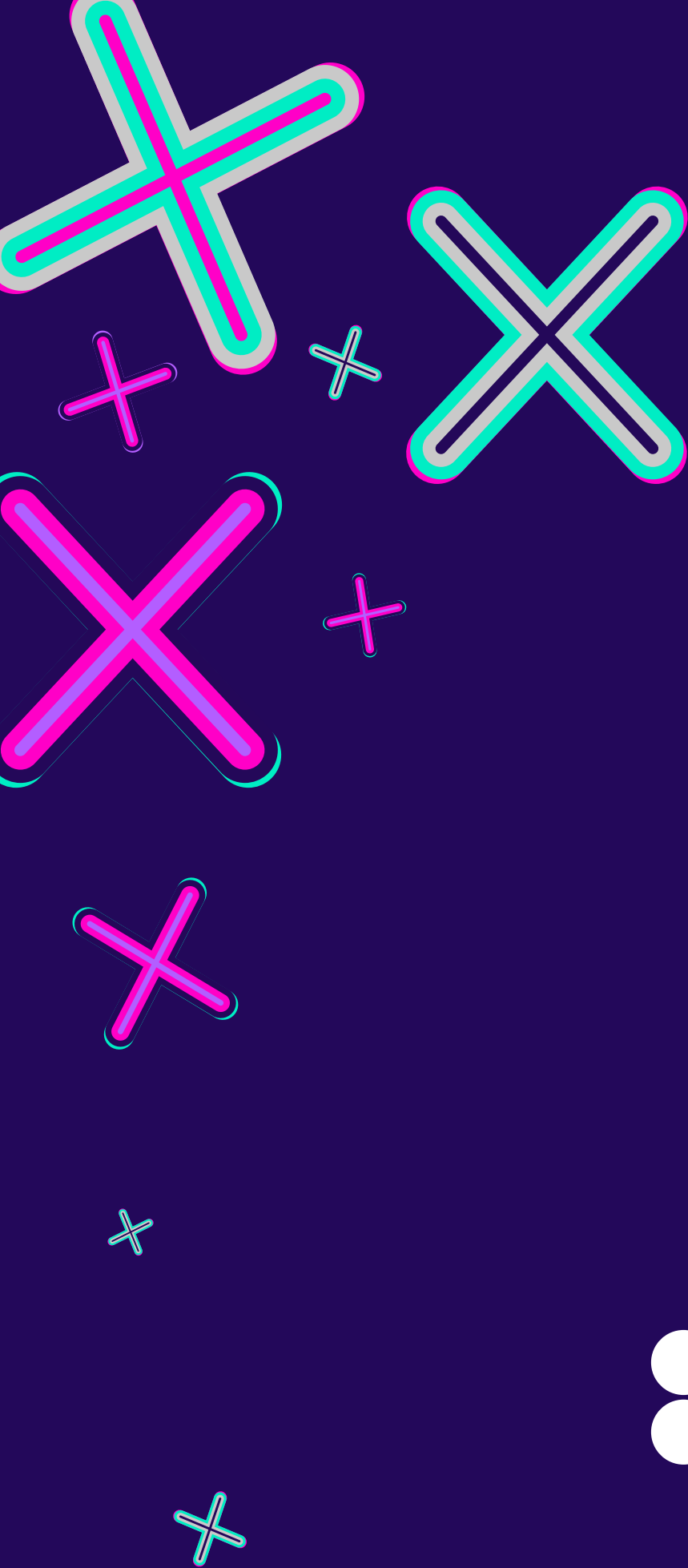
**CEI has contributed to the British Council's wider strategic aims by:**

- Developing systems to improve quality and standards in Uruguayan education
- Providing insight and knowledge to that system to help achieve objectives
- Building long-term relationships and influence with Uruguayan influencers
- Contributing to raising the quality of education; and supporting action to reduce inequalities
- Supporting inclusive, quality teaching, learning and assessment of English involving no British Council financial input.

Against 20 principles of good practice, CEI performed excellently against the majority, with particular strengths in: strong continuous leadership, protection against political changes to allow longevity, and ensuring that all elements are addressed (teachers, curriculum, learning assessment, and quality assurance). Integration of the programme with other elements of the system which are not under Ceibal's control have been more challenging.

The CEI remote teaching model clearly has applicability to many other contexts, and others can learn from the CEI experience while applying new technologies that were not widely available in 2012. Recent experience indicates that it might be easier to apply the model at a smaller local education authority level, rather than at a national scale, especially in larger countries.





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