








ABLA

SANTA CRUZ DE LA SIERRA • BOLIVIA
2025

JUNE 11th - 13th
+ ELT 14th

 **Innovation** •  **Intelligence**
 **Integration** •  **Inspection** •  **Inclusivity**

InBNCs

Daily Planner



Welcome to ABLA 2025

in the vibrant city of

SANTA CRUZ

de la Sierra!

We are honored to bring together such
passionate educators, cultural ambassadors,
and leaders who strengthen the bonds between
the United States and Latin America.

Your work through binational centers is vital in
advancing our shared safety, strength and prosperity
and supporting U.S. foreign policy goals through
education, culture, and dialogue.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment and
the transformative impact you have on your communities.
May this convention inspire new ideas, deepen collaboration,
and celebrate the powerful connections we build together.

THANK YOU!

EMBAJADA DE ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMERICA



Association of Binational Centers of Latin America

Welcome to ABLA 2025 – Bolivia

Dear participants,

It is a great honor to welcome you to ABLA 2025, hosted in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia — a city known for its warmth, culture, and energy. This year, under the theme “InBNCs”, we celebrate the values that define us: **Introspection, Intelligences, Integration, Innovation, and Individuality.**

Over the next few days, we invite you to engage, share, and co-create a space where binational centers from across Latin America come together to build meaningful connections and shape the future of education and culture in our region.

Let this planner be your tool to organize, reflect, and take action — because every day at ABLA is a new opportunity to inspire and grow.

Organizing Committee ABLA 2025

Santa Cruz de la Sierra – Bolivia



Week at a Glance

Tuesday, June 10

09:30 – 12:30 — **Registration**

15:00 – 19:00 — **Registration**

Wednesday, June 11

07:00 – 16:00 — **Registration**

08:30 – 09:30 — **Plenary Inauguration - Opening Remarks**

09:30 – 10:30 — **Plenary - NATGEO**

10:30 – 11:00 — **Coffee Break**

11:00 – 12:30 — **Concurrent Sessions**

12:30 – 14:00 — **Lunch Break**

14:00 – 15:30 — **Concurrent Sessions**

15:30 – 16:00 — **Coffee Break**

16:00 – 17:00 — **Plenary - EDUSOFT**

19:00 — **Welcoming Event - Cohost NGL**

Thursday, June 12

08:30 – 09:30 — **Plenary - PEARSON**

09:30 – 10:30 — **Concurrent Sessions**

10:30 – 11:00 — **Coffee Break**

11:00 – 12:30 — **Concurrent Sessions**

12:30 – 14:00 — **Lunch Break**

14:00 – 15:30 — **Concurrent Sessions**

15:30 – 16:00 — **Coffee Break**

16:00 – 17:00 — **Plenary - EMPRESER**

19:00 — **Cultural Show “Misturas Bolivianas en el Bicentenario”
– Theater of CBA Santa Cruz**

Friday, June 13

08:30 – 09:30 — **Plenary - JINSO**

09:30 – 10:30 — **ABLA Business Meeting**

10:30 – 11:00 — **Coffee Break**

11:00 – 12:30 — **Concurrent Sessions**

12:30 – 14:00 — **Lunch Break**

14:00 – 15:30 — **Concurrent Sessions**

15:30 – 16:00 — **Coffee Break**

16:00 – 17:00 — **Wrap-up – ABLA Board & U.S. State Department**

19:00 — **Closing Event – Cohost Jinso Labs**

Saturday, June 14

08:30 – 14:00 — **ELT Event – Centro Boliviano Americano
– Santa Cruz de la Sierra**



Wednesday, June 11

08:30 - 09:30

PLENARY 1

Plenary Inauguration - Opening Remarks

09:30 - 10:30

PLENARY 2

NATGEO - Revolutionizing Education: Building Peace in a Divided World - **Aziz Abu Sarah**.

10:30 - 11:00

COFFEE BREAK

11:00 - 11:40

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

The Strategic Role of a Shared Service Center in Driving Innovation and Integration in Educational Institutions. Casa Thomas Jefferson, Brazil - **Paula Pacheco Costa Reis** - **Lucia Santos**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

Student Use of Artificial Intelligence: What to Fight and What to Surrender. ICBEU Manaus, Brazil - **Junior Codi**, **Alexandre Mendonça**.

Hall 3 Magnolia:

Strategic Planning and American Spaces Programming. State Department/ REPS Buenos Aires, Argentina - **Rebecca Ernest**.

Hall 4 Jazmin:

Digital Reflection Journal as a Tool for Inclusion and Personalized Learning in the English Classroom. BNC "Centro Boliviano Americano de Tarija". Bolivia - **Lic. Lizet Susana Martínez Ortiz & Lic. Patricia Marcela Jijena Maldonado**.

11:50 - 12:30

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

Leveraging Lean Startup Methodologies to Drive Innovation. Instituto Cultural Argentino Norteamericano, Argentina - **Mariel Doyenart**, **Verónica De la Vega & Agustina Aranguren**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

Evolving Digital Content: From Pandemic Adaptation to AI-Driven Innovation. Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano, Paraguay - **Teresa Martinez & Diego Palacios**.

Hall 3 Magnolia: Modified session: it has been moved to Friday at the same time, in the Jazmin Room.

Hall 4 Jazmin:

Hands-On English. CCBEU Belém, Brazil - **Elda Maria de Moura Moraes & Rosilene do Socorro Santos de Oliveira**.

12:30 - 14:00

LUNCH BREAK

14:00 - 14:40

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

Henry Kissinger's Strategy to Gain Market Share. North American Northern Chile, Chile - **Maykol Olivares Alano**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

STEAM-Driven English Teaching: Engaging Students with Real-World Learning. Centro Boliviano Americano La Paz, Bolivia - **Genaro Alberto Quisbert Escobar**.

Hall 3 Magnolia: Community Impact and Leadership Development through Special Programs. Alianza Cultural Uruguay - United States, Uruguay - **Lucía Pin**, **Claudia Helguera**, **Vanessa Mernies & Paula Oliva**.

Hall 4 Jazmin:

Creating & Thinking with AI: Language, Creation & Possibilities. CICBEU São Carlos, Brazil - **Mariana B. Zanelli & Natalia C. Silva**.

14:50 - 15:30

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

Strategic Partnerships for Sustainable Programming. Alianza Cultural Uruguay - United States, Uruguay - **Victoria Dieste & Luciano Bermúdez**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

Teacher Training in Times of AI: What Changes?. Associação Cultural Brazil-United States - ACBEU Salvador, Brazil - **Maria Helena Meyer & Jorge Roberto da Silva Mendes**.

Hall 3 Magnolia:

A Self-Reflective Approach to Strengthening American Spaces Programs. Centro Boliviano Americano Sucre, Bolivia - **Tabita Mamani Sanabria**.

15:30 - 16:00

COFFEE BREAK

16:00 - 17:00

PLENARY 3

EDUSOFT - "The Power of English: Preparing Students for Global Work and Lifelong Learning" - **Carla Bustos**.

19:00

Welcoming Event - Cohost NGL



Please scan the QR code below to complete the evaluation for Day 1.



Thursday, June 12

08:30 - 09:30 PLENARY 4

PEARSON - Future-Ready English Teaching: Intersecting Intelligences and Self-Reflection to Cultivate a Human-Centered Approach to English Education - **Mónica Rodríguez Salvo**.

09:30 - 10:30 CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

A Networked Approach to Teacher Selection and Development: Casa Thomas Jefferson's Case Study. Casa Thomas Jefferson, Brazil - **Frank Couto**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

Creative Autonomy in a Standardized Curriculum: Making Room for Teacher Innovation. Centro Boliviano Americano Cochabamba, Bolivia - **Ma. Eugenia Balderrama**.

Hall 3 Magnolia:

EducationUSA and American Spaces Programs in Tough Environments. U.S. Embassy - Venezuela Affairs Unit - American Spaces Venezuela Network, Venezuela - **Michelle Lee & Ney Espina**.

Hall 4 Jazmin:

From Teachers to Leaders: a PD Framework to Boost New Teaching Skills for XXI Century Binational Centers. Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá, Colombia - **Luz Libia Rey Garzón & Johana Andrea Melo Figue**.

10:30 - 11:00 COFFEE BREAK

11:00 - 11:40 CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

The AMAR Business Model: How BNC Bogotá Didn't Just Survive, But Thrived in the Pandemic and Beyond. Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá, Colombia - **Janet Van Deren, Luz Libia Rey & Belkys Agudelo**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

Step into the Future: Virtual Reality as a Dynamic Learning Space. Centro Cultural Paraguay Americano, Paraguay - **Diego Palacios & Teresa Martinez**.

Hall 3 Magnolia:

E-CAP – Employability and Career Advancement Program. CICBEU São Carlos, Brazil - **Yuri Marmorato Torre, Wesley Oliveira (US Consulate in São Paulo) & Noemi Fontão (CCBEU Sorocaba)**.

Hall 4 Jazmin:

Breathe In, Speak Out: How Mindfulness Empowers Language Learning. CBA Sucre, Bolivia - **Karen Sofia Poppe Palma**.

11:50 - 12:30 CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

From Software to Program Development: Integrating Agile Methodologies. Alianza

Cultural Uruguay - United States, Uruguay - **Victoria Dieste**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

Empowering Young Changemakers: Leveraging AI in Student Projects on Global Goals. ABA Recife, Brazil - **Mariana Vilela & Fabiana Fonseca**.

Hall 3 Magnolia:

Integrating Socio-Emotional Learning into Student Advising in a Culturally Diverse Bolivia. U.S. Embassy La Paz, Bolivia & EducationUSA Center La Paz, Bolivia - **Daniel Murillo & Marcelo Saldaña**.

Hall 4 Jazmin:

RELO Free and Great Resources that can be used in American Spaces Programming. Regional English Language Office - U.S. Embassy Lima, Peru - **Sandra Story, Karina Garcia and/or Marcela Raffo**.

12:30 - 14:00 LUNCH BREAK

14:00 - 14:40 CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

Leveraging Talent Management as a Strategic Advantage for Binational Centers. Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá, Colombia - **Belkys Eliana Agudelo Chavarro**.

Hall 2 Gardenia: Mapping Candidate Profiles in Latin America: An Approach to Key Market - **Viviana Avella**.

Hall 3 Magnolia:

Expanding Horizons: Extending American Space Programs through Local Institutional Partnerships. Centro Cultural Sampedrano, Honduras - **Francia Quintana**.

Hall 4 Jazmin:

Cognitive Flexibility and Creativity in English Teaching: A Polyvagal Approach. ACBEU Bahia, Brazil - **Carolina Espinosa & Samantha Mascarenhas**.

14:50 - 15:30 CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

Integrating to Innovate: Data-driven Insights for Impactful Partnerships. ABA Recife/ CICBEU São Carlos, Brazil - **Danyelle Marina & Yuri Marmorato Torre**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

Graphic Design for Teachers Using Digital Platforms. Alianza Cultural Uruguay–United States, Uruguay – **Lucía Pin**.

Hall 3 Magnolia: Mediating the American Space Identity of Binational Centers: Building Unforgettable Experiences for our Students. Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá, Colombia - **Johana Andrea Melo Figue & Luz Libia Rey Garzón**.

Hall 4 Jazmin:

Leveraging Gamification to Foster Skills and Integration. Tarija, Bolivia - **Paola Andrea Ortega Barriga & Claudia Griselda Andrade Serrano**.

15:30 - 16:00 COFFEE BREAK



16:00 - 17:00

PLENARY 5

EMPRESER - Gamification: Putting an End to the Engagement Crisis - **Ana Laura Martínez Vázquez**.

19:00

Bicentennial Concert of Bolivia "Mistura de Bolivia" – CBA Theater Santa Cruz



Please scan the QR code below to complete the evaluation for Day 2.

Friday, June 13

08:30 - 09:30

PLENARY 6

JINSO - Empower Educators: The Voice AI Revolution in English Education - **Jay Lee-Gopalan**

09:30 - 10:30

ABLA - Business Meeting

10:30 - 11:00

COFFEE BREAK

11:00 - 11:40

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

Innovation in Strategic Planning. Centro Cultural Colombo Americano Cali, Colombia - **JoEllen Simpson**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

Culinary Arts and Teaching: Drawing Parallels to Enhance Professional Development. ICBEU Manaus, Brazil - **Zaira Coutinho**

Hall 3 Magnolia:

Integrating BNC Programs with New Administration Priorities. IHCI, Honduras - **Claudia Alcerro**.

Hall 4 Jazmin:

Mastering the Art of College Essays and Impactful Recommendation Letters - **Juan Carlos Toro & Armilo Gutierrez**.

11:50 - 12:30

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

Cost Management and Operational Optimization. CCBEU Belém, Brazil - **João Carlos Aragão Addário Junior & Elda Maria de Moura Moraes**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

Mastering Pronunciation in a Digital Age. Centro Boliviano Americano de Santa Cruz, Bolivia - **Andrea Alejandra Menacho Arteaga**.

Hall 3 Magnolia:

EducationUSA & BNCs: It's a match! Leverage and integrate EducationUSA in your BNC Engagement Strategy. EducationUSA Department of State - **Ana Villavicencio, Rita Moriconi & Giselle Dubinsky**.

Hall 4 Jazmin: From Inc to the Cloud - Modernizing American Spaces through Partnerships. Benjamin Franklin Center Mexico City, Mexico - **Monica Sarmiento & Lea Belaunzarán**.

12:30 - 14:00

LUNCH BREAK

14:00 - 14:40

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

Redefining Learning Spaces: AlianzaPRO's Approach to Motivation and Skill-Building through Hidden Curriculum. Alianza Cultural Uruguay - Estados Unidos, Uruguay - **Claudia Helguera**.

Hall 2 Gardenia:

Safe Spaces and Brave Spaces. Centro Cultural Dominicano Americano, Dominican Republic - **Amiris Helena**.

Hall 3 Magnolia:

Inclusive Imagination: Building 2D Games to Empower Neurodiverse Children. ICBEU Manaus Brazil - **Flaviana Lopez Cruz**.

Hall 4 Jazmin:

Elevating English Teaching & Learning through AI-powered Socioemotional Strategies. BNCs Bogotá, Cali and Medellín, Colombia - **Johana Andrea Melo, Matha Cecilia Orobio & Claudia Villa**.

14:50 - 15:30

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Hall 1 Buganvillas:

Pearson Session For Leaders Title: Leading through Balance: Integrating Data and People for Peak Performance - **Mónica Rodríguez**



Hall 2 Gardenia:

Innovative Mentoring and Capacity Building for English Teachers in Paraguay. Centro Cultural Paraguay Americano/Asunción, Paraguay - **Angel González & Ignacio Giménez.**

Hall 3 Magnolia:

ENGLISH for Women Entrepreneur US. Embassy in Bolivia - **Gonzalo Fortun**

Hall 4 Jazmin: Motivating and Engaging Students in the Four English Skills. Regional English Language Officer - Director, Peru - **Sandra Story.**

15:30 - 16:00

COFFEE BREAK

16:00 - 17:00

WRAP-UP ABLA BOARD & STATE DEPARTMENT

19:00

Closing Event – Cohost Jinso Labs



Please scan the QR

code below to complete the evaluation for Day 3.

Saturday, June 14 ELT

08:30 - 09:20

Workshop Sessions 1

Room 1 S - 201: A.I. Tools for Production & Conversational Skills - **Jose Diego Mercado**

Room 2 S- 205: Crafting a Learner Centered Classroom - **Adriana Azurduy**

Room 3 S - 207: Why English, and Your Assessment, Matters - **Jair Ayala**

Room 4 S - 303 : Digital Innovation: Using Technology in Learning English - **Kristen Garcia & Cinthia Garcia & Laurent Garcia**

Room 5 S - 302: Distracting the Distraction: The Problem of Inattention in Classrooms Due to Early Overstimulation in Young People and How to Solve It - **Mauricio Castro**

9:30 - 10:20

Workshop Sessions 2

Room 1 S - 203: Mastering Pronunciation in a Digital Age - **Andrea Menacho.**

Room 2 S- 305: 100% Engaging and Entertaining Activities to Enhance Young Learners' Spelling Skills - **Victor Crispin.**

Room 3 S - 307: AI-Powered Solutions: Crafting and Adapting Effective Teaching Materials for English Language Instruction - **Ana Laura Martinez.**

Room 4 S - 301 : Toward Inclusive Education - Addressing Diversity in the

Classroom - **Nataly Zambrana.**

Room 5 S - 202: Lost Writer / Techy Club - **Elias Espinoza & Valeria Lino.**

10:20 - 10:50

COFFEE BREAK - BIG APPLE

10:50 - 11:40

Workshop Sessions 3

Room 1 S - 201: Harnessing the Power of AI for Effective EFL Writing Instruction - **Eduardo Roca**

Room 2 S- 205: Enhancing an English class with Artificial Intelligence: Innovative Strategies for Productive Skills - **Adriana Azurduy & Carlos Zambrana**

Room 3 S - 207: Prompting with Purpose: Advanced AI Techniques to Empower ESL Educators - **Camilo Sanchez**

Room 4 S - 303 : Promoting handwriting and literacy in diverse learners: Inclusive Practices and strategies for supporting neurodiverse students in secondary school - **Martin Choque**

ROOM S-302: "Leveraging Gamification to Foster Skills and Integration" **Claudia Andrade & Paola Ortega (CBA Tarija)**

11:50 - 12:40

Workshop Sessions 4

Room 1 S - 203: Simplifying the Writing Journey - **Lenny Parada**

Room 2 S- 202: Lost Writer / Techy Club - **Elias Espinoza & Valeria Lino**

Room 3 S - 307: Pronunciation Clinic - **Gonzalo Fortún**

Room 4 S - 303 : How to Teach English as a Novice Teacher for Online and Onsite Settings - **Jimmy Ulloa**

12:50 - 13:40

Workshop Sessions 5

Room 1 S - 201: Blended Learning in ESL/EFL Classrooms: Bridging the Gap between Traditional and Digital Learning - **Manfredo Rojas**

Room 2 S- 205: Tech Tools - **Jose Garayta**

Room 3 S - 207: Enhancing Formative Assessment with AI: A New Era of Student Feedback - **Patricia Almendro**

Room 4 S - 303 : Digital Innovation: Using Technology in Learning English - **Kristen Garcia & Cinthia Garcia & Laurent Garcia**



Business and Management

The Strategic Role of a Shared Service Center in Driving Innovation and Integration in Educational Institutions

Casa Thomas Jefferson

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Paula Pacheco Costa Reis

Secondary Speaker: Lucia Santos

Short Bio:



Paula Pacheco - Paula Pacheco holds a BA in Civil Engineering from Universidade de Brasília, a specialization in Strategic Planning and an MBA in Financial Management from FGV. She has been working at Casa Thomas Jefferson for 33 years. With both academic and administrative backgrounds, Paula currently holds the position of Shared Services Center Corporate Manager.



Lucia Santos - Graduated in English Language and Literature from Universidade Católica de São Paulo, with a master's degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Brasília. Lucia has extensive experience working as a teacher trainer in the field of Linguistics and has been working at Casa Thomas Jefferson for 43 years. Lucia is currently the Executive Director.

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, institutions face various challenges, from rising operational costs to increasing demands for better student services. To navigate these pressures, many institutions are adopting Shared Service Centers (SSCs) as a solution. This session explores the strategic role of SSCs, using Casa Thomas Jefferson, the Binational Center in Brasília, as a case study. It will show how SSCs integrate key services like finance, HR, and IT to boost efficiency, reduce costs, and foster innovation. Attendees will learn how centralization improves institutional performance and enables reinvestment in academic excellence. ----- This session explores the strategic role of a Shared Service Center (SSC) in fostering innovation and integration within educational institutions. Participants will learn how centralizing administrative functions—such as finance, HR, IT, and student services—into an SSC can streamline operations, reduce costs, and boost efficiency. The session highlights how SSCs enable leadership to focus more on innovation by reallocating resources to academic and research priorities. Using Casa Thomas Jefferson, a Binational Center in Brasília, Brazil, as a case study, the presentation will show how centralizing services improved efficiency and integration, allowing the school to reinvest savings into innovation and the student experience. Time permitting, a brief Q&A will follow to address participants' questions.



English Teaching

Student Use of Artificial INtelligence: What to Fight and What to Surrender

ICBEU Manaus

Contry: Brazil**Primary Speaker:** Junior Codi**Secondary Speaker:** Alexandre Mendonça**Short Bio:**

Junior Codi is an English teacher and educational technology analyst in the BNC ICBEU Manaus, an alumnus in more than one of the American Embassy programs, and has a degree in Filmmaking by the UEA (University of the State of Amazonas) and post-graduate certificate courses including English Language Teaching and Second Language Acquisition. He has taken part in several projects involving culture, educational technology, and community outreach.

**Alexandre Mendonça**

This session helps teachers navigate the growing use of Artificial INtelligence in student work. Many educators, lacking formal training in AI, struggle to find the balance between embracing this INnovation and maintaining academic INtegrity. We will provide strategies for detecting AI-assisted plagiarism, setting appropriate boundaries for AI use, and INtegrating AI as a supportive tool in the classroom.

This workshop will provide teachers with guidance in navigating AI in the classroom, a tool that most educators have had no formal training in. As AI tools rapidly reshape student learning habits, many teachers are unsure of how much AI use is acceptable, or how to assess work that may be partially or fully AI-assisted. The presentation will address three areas: INtrospection - INnovation and INtegration - and INclusion.

Teachers will have practical strategies for detecting AI-generated work, setting boundaries on its use, and designing assignments that allow for responsible AI use.

American Spaces Programming

Strategic Planning and American Spaces Programming

State Department/ REPS Buenos Aires

Contry: Argentina

Primary Speaker: Rebecca Ernest

Short Bio:



Rebecca Ernest - As Regional Public Engagement Specialist in Buenos Aires, I lead public diplomacy across five countries, integrating AI through an embassy-led working group and establishing public-private partnerships with U.S. companies to enhance American Spaces. My work centers on expanding U.S. engagement and fostering inclusive, impactful community connections.

In this workshop, I will build on insights from my recent ABLA Express presentation with Wesley and Roberta, providing the strategic foundation of our American Spaces partnership and the core principles guiding our programming. This framework will serve as the launching point for an interactive session that enables participants to develop a program that aligns with the Six Pillars of American Spaces while centering on Introspection and Innovation—key themes of the ABLA 2025 Conference.

Following the presentation, we will dive into a hands-on group workshop focused on the full lifecycle of program planning. Each group will collaborate on designing an American Spaces program, engaging with strategic planning tools to identify target audiences, set measurable goals, and integrate elements that reflect our collective values and priorities. This session will empower participants to craft relevant, reflective, and forward-thinking programming, addressing local needs while enhancing international engagement.

The goal is to foster a reflective space where participants can critically assess the role of American Spaces within their communities, drawing on diverse insights to ensure impactful and meaningful outcomes. By the end of the session, participants will have the tools and strategies needed to replicate this process in their own centers, strengthening their unique contributions to the American Spaces network.



English Teaching

Creating & Thinking with AI: Language, creation & possibilities

CICBEU São Carlos

Contry: Brazil**Primary Speaker:** Mariana B. Zanelli**Secondary Speaker:** Natalia C. Silva**Short Bio:**

Mariana B. Zanelli is an anthropologist, EFL teacher, and translator. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences from the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) and is a postgraduate student of Education and Technologies at UFSCar and exploring AI in language teaching at the University of São Paulo (USP).



Natália C. Silva holds a Bachelor's degree in English, Brazilian Portuguese, and Literature from the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) and has been an EFL teacher since 2018, teaching both teenagers and adults while also learning from them.

This presentation discusses the integration of AI to improve foreign language learning in a Brazilian BNC. The goal is to explore how AI can be used to enhance students' engagement and critical thinking skills. We asked AI itself to create a lesson plan on speculative language and AI tools. We want to empower students to use AI to create and analyze content, practice language skills, and critically reflect on the impact and limitations of AI on education and society.

This presentation focuses on implementing AI to develop students' competencies in the classroom. We asked AI itself (Gemini) to create an EFL lesson plan for Intermediate to Advanced classes covering speculative language and the use of different AI tools. This study aims to engage students in a thought-provoking discussion regarding the impact of AI, its benefits, drawbacks and how it can shape teaching and learning practices.

Business and Management

Leveraging Lean Startup Methodologies to Drive Innovation

Instituto Cultural Argentino Norteamericano

Contry: Argentina

Primary Speaker: Mariel Doyenart

Secondary Speaker: Verónica De la Vega y Agustina Aranguren

Short Bio:



Mariel Doyenart is the Executive Director at ICANA, bringing over 15 years of experience in a variety of roles at binational centers in Argentina and Uruguay. With a degree in Communication, a Masters in Public Policy, and an MBA, she is passionate about leading innovative projects and promoting entrepreneurship.



Verónica De La Vega coordinates the Innovation Lab at ICANA. Over the years she has participated in a variety of institutional projects and has specialized in innovation and design thinking. She is a former exchange teacher to the US and Jamaica, TESOL presenter, AE Teacher fellow, and FORUM contributor.



Agustina Aranguren holds a BA in Language and Literature with a background in user experience and communication. Passionate about fostering culture and community within ICANA as a binational center, she focuses on innovative projects that connect people and ideas, enriching the learning experience for all participants.

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This presentation will explore the adoption of Lean Startup methodologies to drive innovation across diverse programs within binational centers. Led by ICANA's Innovation Lab, the session will highlight how agile, customer-focused principles were applied to address challenges and expand educational and cultural exchange initiatives. Participants will gain insight into powerful techniques like hypothesis-driven experimentation, rapid prototyping and iterative development, and learn how to cultivate intrapreneurship across teams. Attendees will leave inspired with actionable strategies to ignite creativity, drive growth, and transform BNC operations to better serve their diverse communities.

This presentation will explore how Lean Startup methodologies can foster innovation across various programs and audiences within binational centers. Using case studies from ICANA's recent projects, the Innovation Lab will show how this approach has helped develop solutions tailored to learners, professionals, and cultural exchange communities.



The session will also highlight how Lean Startup principles promote intrapreneurship within BNC teams by encouraging innovation, experimentation, and ownership of ideas. This empowers teams to identify needs and create solutions aligned with their specific programs and users.

BNC leaders and program managers will gain a practical framework for applying Lean Startup in their own operations. The focus will be on how these methods can enhance educational offerings and expand cultural and community programs. Attendees will leave with strategies to foster innovation, adapt to audience needs, and support sustainable growth across initiatives.

English Teaching

Evolving Digital Content: From Pandemic Adaptation to AI-Driven Innovation

Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano

Contry: Paraguay

Primary Speaker: Teresa Martinez

Secondary Speaker: Diego Palacios

Short Bio:



Teresa Martínez holds a BA in English from the Instituto Superior de Lenguas at the Universidad Nacional de Asunción, and she is currently doing a master's in education. She has been working for fifteen years at Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano, where she has taught a wide range of regular courses to students of varying ages and proficiency levels, as well as the Teacher Certification Program. Currently, she serves as the Academic Coordinator for the Children and Juniors program. In addition to her role as an EFL teacher, Teresa has also gained extensive experience working in various schools as both a teacher and coordinator.



Diego Palacios is a teacher trainer and coordinator of the Innovation Department at the Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano (CCPA). He holds a Master's degree in Education Policy from the University of Rochester in New York, an English Teaching degree from the Universidad Católica "Nuestra Señora de la Asunción", and a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Universidad Americana in Paraguay. He has been teaching since 2012 and is currently involved in various projects related to the implementation of virtual reality and artificial intelligence at the CCPA.

Explore how English programs can evolve from simple adaptations to cutting-edge, AI-powered resources. This session shares our Binational Center's journey from textbooks, teacher-made Power-Point presentations, and video lessons to dynamic, in-house flip books. Learn how tools like Canva, ChatGPT, Vidnoz, Heyzine, and Kukarella empower educators to create interactive content. We will also discuss our AI-based virtual tutor. to enhance student learning, teacher support in this transition, and ethical considerations in AI use. This session is ideal for educators and administrators ready to innovate and transform digital learning experiences.

This session explores the transformation of digital content creation at our Binational Center, moving from pandemic-driven adaptations to developing AI-powered course materials.



Live demonstrations and before-and-after comparisons will showcase how these tools enhance interactivity, creativity, and program coherence. We will also discuss ethical considerations, privacy and data security. We want to inspire educators to use AI and design tools for personalized, engaging digital content.

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American Spaces Programming

From Inc to the Cloud - Modernizing American Spaces through Partnerships

Benjamin Franklin Center Mexico City

Contry: Mexico

Primary Speaker: Monica Sarmiento

Secondary Speaker: Lea Belaunzaran

Short Bio:



Monica Sarmiento - has worked with the Public Diplomacy Office (PD) since August 2005. She recently received the Award for Achievement in Public Diplomacy. She leads the development of public-private partnerships (PPPs) that draw on in-kind and financial support. She also leads efforts to establish and leverage partnerships with federal, state, and municipal governments, and leads Public Diplomacy (PD) strategic planning, audience research, and program evaluation and measurement.

She holds a Bachelor's degree in International Business and a Master's degree in Corporate Social Responsibility from the Anáhuac University.



Lea Belaunzaran - was born and raised in Paris, France, she joined the US Embassy in 2023, she assists the cultural subsection with admin and logistics to ensure PD programs are successful. She went to the University of Essex in England and majored in Latin American Studies and Human Rights, she also completed a year abroad in Yucatán studying Social Anthropology at UADY.

Title: From Inc to the Cloud - Modernizing American Spaces through Partnerships

1. Showcase the Impact of Strategic Partnerships: Highlight how collaborations with major tech companies can integrate advanced technologies in American Spaces, transforming them into centers of innovation and learning.
2. Demonstrate Innovative Program Development: Share examples of how American Spaces have developed and implemented programs that offer certifications and training courses to equip the Mexican workforce with in-demand industry skills.
3. Highlight Benefits to the Workforce and Community: Discuss the direct impact these initiatives



have on employment, innovation, and inclusion in the community, illustrating how they equip human capital with the tools necessary to remain competitive.

4. Engage and Inspire Action: Encourage other American Spaces and BNCs to explore similar partnerships that could benefit their own educational and workforce development programs.

Presentation Plan:

1. Introduction (5 minutes):

- Brief overview of American Spaces network in Mexico and their mission.
- Introduction to the need for modernization through strategic partnerships.

2. Case Studies of Partnerships (15 minutes):

- Detailed presentation of collaborations with Meta, Cisco, Microsoft, and Amazon Web Services. Insights into how these partnerships were established and executed.

3. Transformative Programs and Innovations (10 minutes):

- Showcase specific programs and courses developed, highlighting their components and outcomes.
- Discuss the role of AI and other technologies in modernizing these spaces and offering cutting-edge skills.

4. Impact and Success Stories (10 minutes):

- Present testimonials and real-world examples of individuals who have taken advantage of these initiatives.

5. Call to Action and Q&A (20 minutes):

- Invite others to consider establishing similar partnerships. Engage the audience with an interactive Q&A session, inviting feedback and further discussion.

American Spaces Programming Hands On English

CCBEU Belém

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Elda Maria de Moura Moraes

Secondary Speaker: Rosilene do Socorro Santos de Oliveira

Short Bio:



Elda Maria de Moura Moraes - Academic Manager at CCBEU since 2022, with 29 years of experience in the education sector. She holds a degree in Business Administration from the University of Amazônia and a degree in Education (Pedagogy) from the Federal University of Pará. She also has a postgraduate specialization in Competency Management and is currently completing a postgraduate degree in Neuropsychopedagogy. In 2014, she participated in the Executive Development Program (PDP/PAEX) at Fundação Dom Cabral.



Rosilene do Socorro Santos de Oliveira - Coordinator of the Library & Makerspace at CCBEU Belém since 1996, with a Bachelor's in Library Science from UFPA and specializations in Library Administration (UFPA) and an MBA in Business Management (FGV). She led the ISO 9001 certification for CCBEU's Quality Management System (2001-2017) and served as Lead Auditor.

The session will introduce an innovative English language course that integrates hands-on maker activities and thematic programs tailored for public school students in Belém, Brazil. By combining language learning with STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) projects, the program strengthens the four foundational English skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—while also developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Students participate in weekly, two-hour sessions over eight months, completing four maker projects inspired by selected SDGs, which foster both individual and collaborative growth.

During the presentation, we will outline the course structure, pedagogical methods, and tools, highlighting curriculum elements that provide cultural exposure through a Fellow guest talks on American culture and contributions from an EducationUSA adviser to encourage student participation in the Youth Ambassadors Program. We will share data-backed outcomes, including language proficiency improvements, engagement in cultural activities, and feedback on STEAM projects. Additionally, attendees will gain insights into the program's broader impacts, such as enhancing students' employ-

ability and preparing them for competitive exchange opportunities.

The session will feature interactive discussions, a brief showcase of student projects, and insights into the program's potential for replication across other American Spaces and BNCs to promote inclusion, innovation, and educational advancement.



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Business and Management

Henry Kissinger's strategy to gain market share

North American Northern Chile

Contry: Chile

Primary Speaker: Maykol Olivares Alano

Short Bio:



Maykol Olivares Alano - Business Management, University Professor, Entrepreneur, IVLP

Being a BNC that only teaches English puts us at the same level as all the market companies that offer low prices while sacrificing quality.

It is important that the BNC become "creators and executors of public policies" that correct the inefficiencies of the market and the state.

This presentation talks about how to effectively engage with the state, generating an impact that only BNCs can achieve. ----- In this talk, we will seek to explain our strategy to become a key actor in the development of state public policies and the way in which we take root in the processes.

We will explain the advantages that we see as BNC as the only solvers of the state's historical problems.



English Teaching

STEAM-Driven English Teaching: Engaging Students with Real-World Learning

Centro Boliviano Americano La Paz

Contry: Bolivia

Primary Speaker: Genaro Alberto Quisbert Escobar

Short Bio:

Genaro Alberto Quisbert Escobar - Certified English teacher with over 36 years of experience, ELT presenter, and materials writer, director of several textbook series, and current CBA educator. Holds a postgrad in ELT Methodology from Thames Valley University, UK, and develops teacher education projects, and continues developing materials for English teachers and students.

This workshop introduces the STEAM methodology in English teaching, providing teachers with tools to design projects that enhance language learning through real-world applications. Attendees will work on STEAM activities that foster communication, critical thinking, and creativity, to create an engaging, interdisciplinary classroom environment. We will provide English teachers with strategies to integrate the STEAM methodology into their classrooms to create dynamic lessons where students practice English in meaningful, real-life contexts, and practice critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills, ultimately enhancing both language and interdisciplinary learning.

The presentation will share some aspects of STEAM and its benefits in language learning, and activities to guide students in using English to explore scientific and artistic themes. Teachers will participate in hands-on activities to experience the STEAM approach and explore ways to adapt it to different proficiency levels.



American Spaces Programming

Community Impact and Leadership Development through special programs

Alianza Cultural Uruguay - Estados Unidos

Contry: Uruguay

Primary Speaker: Lucía Pin

Secondary Speaker: Claudia Helguera

Short Bio:



Lucía Pin - is the Educational Services Director at Alianza Cultural Uruguay-Estados Unidos. She is an Architect from UdelaR and holds a Master's Degree in Educational Management and Leadership from UCU. Experience in teacher training and course design. Participated in the Teacher-in-Residence Exchange Program 2018, Partners of the Americas



Claudia Helguera - is an Educational Services Coordinator with experience in managing and innovating programs in Uruguay, Argentina, and the USA. She specializes in ESP, organizational management, and coaching. Holding a Bachelor's in Education Management and a TEFL Diploma, she is also an IATA Certified Trainer and English for Aviation Examiner/Specialist.



Paula Oliva - is an Educational Services Coordinator, Teacher Educator, and Mentor specializing in teacher development. Currently leading Ceibal en Inglés at Alianza. Passionate about ELL pronunciation and teacher education. Strong expertise in program coordination, supervision, and reporting. Active within the Alianza Network. ABLA exchange participant in 2019.



Vanessa Mernies - Educational Services Coordinator at Alianza, General Coordinator of the Alianza's franchises in Uruguay. Holds a TEFL degree from the Alianza in collaboration with the University of Maryland (UMBC). Teacher Educator, Teacher Mentor and materials designer. Teacher-in-Residence Exchange Program. Graduated as a Neuropsicoeducador at Asociación Educar, Argentina.

Objectives:

- Inspire Meaningful Reflection: Encourage participants to thoughtfully examine their roles and the program's impact, aligning with Integrated Country Strategy Goals.



- **Identify Areas of Excellence and Opportunity:** Highlight strengths and pinpoint areas for improvement based on the six pillars of the American Spaces.
- **Develop Actionable Strategies:** Empower participants with tools and techniques to implement positive changes that align with both the six pillars of American Spaces and ICS Goals.

Presentation Approach:

- **Engaging Storytelling:** Engage the audience through captivating storytelling, drawing on personal experiences as an American Spaces Coordinator to illustrate key points and highlight real-world applications.
- **Interactive Activities:** Foster interactive learning by facilitating group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and self-assessment exercises centered around the six pillars of American Spaces and ICS goals.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** Support arguments and inform decision-making by presenting relevant statistics and research findings.
- **Practical Guidance:** Offer practical guidance, providing concrete tips, templates, and actionable steps to develop and implement effective improvement plans.
- **Visual Aids:** Enhance understanding, retention, and engagement by utilizing visual aids such as slides, charts, artificial intelligence, online applications, and images.



English Teaching

Creating & Thinking with AI: Language, creation & possibilities

CICBEU São Carlos

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Mariana B. Zanelli

Secondary Speaker: Natalia C. Silva

Short Bio:



Mariana B. Zanelli - is an anthropologist, EFL teacher, and translator. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences from the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) and is a postgraduate student of Education and Technologies at UFSCar and exploring AI in language teaching at the University of São Paulo (USP).



Natália C. Silva - holds a Bachelor's degree in English, Brazilian Portuguese, and Literature from the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) and has been an EFL teacher since 2018, teaching both teenagers and adults while also learning from them.

This presentation discusses the integration of AI to improve foreign language learning in a Brazilian BNC. The goal is to explore how AI can be used to enhance students' engagement and critical thinking skills. We asked AI itself to create a lesson plan on speculative language and AI tools. We want to empower students to use AI to create and analyze content, practice language skills, and critically reflect on the impact and limitations of AI on education and society.

This presentation focuses on implementing AI to develop students' competencies in the classroom. We asked AI itself (Gemini) to create an EFL lesson plan for Intermediate to Advanced classes covering speculative language and the use of different AI tools. This study aims to engage students in a thought-provoking discussion regarding the impact of AI, its benefits, drawbacks and how it can shape teaching and learning practices.



Business and Management

Strategic Partnerships for Sustainable Programming

Alianza Cultural Uruguay - Estados Unidos

Contry: Uruguay

Primary Speaker: Victoria Dieste

Secondary Speaker: Luciano Bermúdez

Short Bio:



Victoria Dieste - an experienced EFL teacher with a BS in Computer Science, has served 20 years at the Alianza and is the I+D Director. Passionate about tech-driven learning she has led different digital implementations across multiple learning platforms. She has presented nationally and internationally and contributed articles in TESOL publications.



Luciano Bermúdez - is the Executive Director of Alianza Cultural Uruguay-Estados Unidos and serves on ABLA's Board of Directors. He holds a degree in Communication and an MBA, with experience as a journalist, lecturer, and consultant. His expertise spans education, cultural management, leadership, innovation, community development, and organizational growth.

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This presentation highlights how American Spaces can amplify impact through strategic partnerships, complementing valuable support from the American Spaces Office and the local U.S. Embassy. By collaborating with external organizations, we have successfully enhanced diverse programs, such as theater productions, job fairs, and youth initiatives, by obtaining essential resources like venues, trainers, media coverage, and financial support. We will present these examples to illustrate how attendees can identify and foster mutually beneficial partnerships, pitch programs effectively, and manage collaborations for maximum impact, creating sustainable, high-impact initiatives that extend reach and engagement within their communities.

This session will showcase how our collaboration model has strengthened programs such as a theater play, job fair, and youth initiative. These partnerships have contributed key resources—venues, speakers, media coverage, refreshments, and funding—boosting visibility, reach, and long-term impact while engaging new community and business stakeholders.

We will present our approach to identifying sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships, including partner selection criteria, pitching techniques, and strategies to align goals. Lessons learned in managing these relationships for maximum benefit will also be shared.



Attendees will leave with a practical framework for identifying and engaging partners, exploring valuable contributions, and ensuring successful, lasting collaborations. The session highlights how strategic alliances can enhance BNC programs and drive sustainable growth.



English Teaching

Teacher Training in Times of AI: What Changes?

Associação Cultural Brasil Estados Unido -ACBEUvador

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Maria Helena Meyer

Secondary Speaker: Jorge Roberto da Silva Mendes

Short Bio:



Maria Helena Meyer - is a Coordinator for Academic Development at ACBEU, Salvador, Brasil. She is a World Learning/SIT Certified Trainer and has extensive experience as a language teacher, teacher trainer, curriculum developer and materials designer. Her current interests are professional development, curriculum design, assessment and AI-assisted materials development.



Jorge Roberto da Silva Mendes - has been an EFL teacher and teacher-trainer for more than 30 years. He has taught in special programs such as Access for students and teachers, English for Journalism, English for Business and Entrepreneurship. His work also involves training teachers, developing assessment tools and designing, implementing and evaluating courses.

AI tools like ChatGPT are increasingly utilized in education for lesson planning and grading. This raises concerns about AI potentially replacing teachers. For teacher educators, the impact of AI prompts a need for assisting teachers to develop new competencies. Training teachers in technology isn't sufficient. This presentation encourages reflection and dialogue to explore the complexities and proposes new frameworks for teacher development, and an understanding of the opportunities and challenges in AI-enhanced language teaching.

AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Canva and Grammarly are used in education. Teachers use them for lesson planning, materials development, grading, feedback. Learners use AI for writing, researching, virtual tutoring and conversation simulations. And behind this scenario, lies the daunting question: Will AI replace teachers?

As educators of English teachers, we ask ourselves what new competences teachers need to develop. This presentation seeks to explore new frameworks in teacher development programs for teachers to be better skilled to face the challenges of the technological revolution.

American Spaces Programming

A Self-Reflective Approach to Strengthening American Spaces Programs

Centro Boliviano Americano Sucre

Contry: Bolivia

Primary Speaker: Tabita Mamani Sanabria

Short Bio:



Tabita Mamani Sanabria - is an experienced English teacher who holds degrees in English and Higher Education. She has participated in numerous English Language Teaching Methodology Programs, and recently she obtained a diploma in Scientific Investigation with a focus on AI. Currently, Tabita serves as the American Spaces Coordinator in Sucre and the Academic Coordinator at CBA Sucre.

Objectives:

- **Inspire Meaningful Reflection:** Encourage participants to thoughtfully examine their roles and the program's impact, aligning with Integrated Country Strategy Goals.
- **Identify Areas of Excellence and Opportunity:** Highlight strengths and pinpoint areas for improvement based on the six pillars of the American Spaces.
- **Develop Actionable Strategies:** Empower participants with tools and techniques to implement positive changes that align with both the six pillars of American Spaces and ICS Goals.

Presentation Approach:

- **Engaging Storytelling:** Engage the audience through captivating storytelling, drawing on personal experiences as an American Spaces Coordinator to illustrate key points and highlight real-world applications.
- **Interactive Activities:** Foster interactive learning by facilitating group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and self-assessment exercises centered around the six pillars of American Spaces and ICS goals.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** Support arguments and inform decision-making by presenting relevant statistics and research findings.
- **Practical Guidance:** Offer practical guidance, providing concrete tips, templates, and actionable steps to develop and implement effective improvement plans.
- **Visual Aids:** Enhance understanding, retention, and engagement by utilizing visual aids such as slides, charts, artificial intelligence, online applications, and images.



Business and Management

A Networked Approach to Teacher Selection and Development: Casa Thomas Jefferson's Case Study

Casa Thomas Jefferson

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Frank Couto

Short Bio:



Frank Couto - is an Academic Specialist at Casa Thomas Jefferson with over 30 years of experience in English language teaching and teacher training. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Communication and postgraduate certification in Bilingual Education.

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This session will present Casa Thomas Jefferson's framework and strategies for selecting, training and developing English teachers, focusing on how these align with emerging trends in the Brazilian market. We will discuss the evolving profile of English teachers in Brazil, examining key skills and qualifications that meet current market demands. Participants will gain insights into best practices for recruiting and training educators, with an emphasis on strategies that improve teaching quality and student outcomes. The session aims to provide actionable takeaways and foster discussions on innovative approaches to address market challenges and opportunities.

The presentation aims to share best practices in teacher selection by showcasing Casa Thomas Jefferson's evidence-based process for recruiting, training and developing teachers. We will highlight the key criteria used to identify candidates who align with the school's mission and values, and demonstrate the evaluation tools and techniques employed to ensure quality and fit. Also, the session will explore effective teacher development strategies that focus on fostering continuous growth and instructional excellence. A core objective of the session is to foster collaborative learning and idea exchange among participants. By facilitating an interactive dialogue, the presentation encourages attendees to share innovative practices, challenges, and insights related to teacher selection and development in their own educational contexts. The goal is to promote a mutual exchange of knowledge that can inspire new approaches and address common challenges.

English Teaching

Creative Autonomy in a Standardized Curriculum: Making Room for Teacher Innovation

Centro Boliviano Americano Cochabamba

Contry: Bolivia

Primary Speaker: Ma Eugenia Balderrama

Short Bio:



Ma. Eugenia Balderrama - is an EFL teacher with 26 years of experience. She holds a master's in Educational Administration and diplomas in Higher Education, Curriculum Design, and Inclusive Education. With extensive EFL and TESOL training, she is committed to improving teaching practices and fostering inclusive learning environments.

In a standardized curriculum, where is the space for teacher creativity? This interactive workshop explores practical strategies for balancing structure with innovation. Participants will analyze challenges, discover ways to personalize content, experiment with multimodal instruction, and adapt a standardized lesson while maintaining core objectives. Through reflection, collaboration, and hands-on activities, teachers will leave with actionable ideas to enhance student engagement while staying aligned with curriculum requirements.

During this session, participants will be able to analyze the balance between creative autonomy and standardization in curriculum design, and identify practical strategies to integrate teacher innovation within a structured curriculum. They will apply creative adaptations to a standardized lesson plan while maintaining learning objectives, and develop an actionable approach to increasing autonomy in their teaching context.

The workshop will conclude with a structured action-planning exercise, where attendees outline specific steps to implement their ideas in their classrooms.



American Spaces Programming

EducationUSA and American Spaces Programs in Tough Environments

U.S. Embassy - Venezuela Affairs Unit - American Spaces Venezuela Network

Contry: Venezuela

Primary Speaker: Michelle Lee

Secondary Speaker: Marta Garcia

Short Bio:



Michelle Lee - Michele Lee de León, Executive Director. Michele has held the Executive Director position at CEVAM for 32 years. She is also the Senior EducationUSA Advisor. Michel first came to Venezuela as a Fulbright Specialist to teach modeling and simulation at the graduate engineering program at CIDIAT, part of the Universidad de Los Andes. She holds graduate degrees in Urban and Regional Planning and Anthropology from the University of Miami and the University of Florida. As Executive Director of the American Space, Michele has developed the six pillars not only for those who visit the binational center but for unassisted communities in the region.



Marta Garcia - Marta has been with the U.S Embassy for 15 years, and in PAS for 12. She the American Spaces Country Director for Venezuela. Assuming a whole-of-mission approach, she develops and drafts annual strategic planning and budget requests for Washington D.C. and serves as Program Representative for grants. Marta serves as primary liaison with regional coordinators and develops and maintains contact with high-level Venezuelan and U.S. contacts related to the fields of education. Marta is also the primary liaison with the board and directors of the American Spaces host institutions. Academic background: BA/BS PoliSci & Art History, SMU (Texas), and MA, Latin America Economic Development, from American University, in Washington DC. Marta is fluent in spoken and written Spanish, English, and has intermediate French and Italian.

This panel discussion will focus on two new, innovative programs implemented by the American Spaces Venezuela Network, including the nationwide EdUSA Virtual Mock Fair program and the EdUSA Professional College Counselor Network program. These programs implement new approaches to the work of American Spaces and are critically important as the U.S. Embassy to Venezuela is on suspended operations and U.S. travel is restricted.



The EdUSA College Mock Fair is a simulation of a visit to a U.S. university that occurs on Venezuelan soil. This outreach program started in 2016 with trained volunteers representing participating U.S. universities and colleges at local college fairs throughout Venezuela. These mock fairs were initially created as English-learning exercises, then they quickly became very popular EdUSA outreach events, reaching thousands of prospective Venezuelan students. These events provide accurate information regarding U.S. undergraduate and graduate studies to prospective Venezuelan students and their families.

The EdUSA Professional College Counselor Network program is working with the American Spaces team and 50 college counselors across Venezuela to create a dynamic counselor network to facilitate interaction with their U.S. counterparts that will increase the number of students pursuing higher education opportunities in the United States and strengthen the EdUSA brand in Venezuela. The program is also working to support the establishment of a formal professional association for this community.

Business and Management

From Teachers to Leaders: a PD framework to Boost New Teaching Skills for 21st Century Binational Centers

Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá

Contry: Colombia

Primary Speaker: Luz Libia Rey Garzón

Secondary Speaker: Johana Andrea Melo Figue

Short Bio:



Luz Libia Rey Garzón - received her BA in Philology and Languages and her MA in Linguistics from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. She has over 30 years of experience as an English teacher, teacher trainer, and educational administrator. She is currently the Educational Administration Manager of the Centro Colombo Americano, Bogotá.

Luz Libia is co-author of the book *Maximize Your English Study* published by Pearson Educación de Colombia.



Johana Melo - is the academic director at Centro Colombo Americano, Bogotá. She holds a BA in Philology and Languages from Universidad Nacional de Colombia and a Master of Arts in TESOL from SIT Graduate Institute. She is a PhD candidate at Universidad Católica de Córdoba. Her main research interests are teachers' development and formative assessment.

In this workshop, I will build on insights from my recent ABLA Express presentation with Wesley and Roberta, providing the strategic foundation of our American Spaces partnership and the core principles guiding our programming. This framework will serve as the launching point for an interactive session that enables participants to develop a program that aligns with the Six Pillars of American Spaces while centering on Introspection and Innovation—key themes of the ABLA 2025 Conference.

Following the presentation, we will dive into a hands-on group workshop focused on the full lifecycle of program planning. Each group will collaborate on designing an American Spaces program, engaging with strategic planning tools to identify target audiences, set measurable goals, and integrate elements that reflect our collective values and priorities. This session will empower participants to craft relevant, reflective, and forward-thinking programming, addressing local needs while enhanc-



ing international engagement.

The goal is to foster a reflective space where participants can critically assess the role of American Spaces within their communities, drawing on diverse insights to ensure impactful and meaningful outcomes. By the end of the session, participants will have the tools and strategies needed to replicate this process in their own centers, strengthening their unique contributions to the American Spaces network.



Business and Management

The AMAR Business Model: How BNC Bogotá didn't just survive, but thrived in the pandemic and beyond

Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá

Contry: Colombia

Primary Speaker: Janet Van Deren

Secondary Speaker: Luz Libia Rey

Short Bio:



Janet Van Deren - General Manager Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá. Janet has led the Colombo Bogotá since 2015, bringing together her experience in business, government and education over more than 35 years in Colombia to implement changes to modernize and revolutionize the Colombo's operations.



Juan Carlos Lozano - Financial Planning and Business Development Manager. Juan Carlos joined Colombo Bogotá in 2019. His experience in various different multinational corporations in several sectors (education, pharma, outdoor advertising, franchise operations) brought a fresh perspective on financial planning and sustainability to the BNC.



Luz Libia Rey - Educational Services Manager has been with Colombo Bogotá for over 33 years, starting as a teacher and rising through the ranks to her current position. Luz Libia leads a team of almost 300 teachers, supervisors, leaders and directors with a focus on innovation.



Fernando Ramos - Strategy Manager. Fernando joined the BNC Bogotá team in 2021 and created the concept of Strategy Management at Colombo Bogotá from the ground up. Fernando's background leading marketing and sales teams in mass marketing in multinational corporations and his firm belief that mass marketing concepts would work in the education sector provided the tools to allow him and his team to rebrand the Colombo Bogotá and double sales income for the Colombo and create new products and open new markets for the BNC.



Belkys Agudelo - Talent and Culture Manager. Belkys joined the Colombo in 2022, after a successful career in Talent Management in multinational corporations including Coca-Cola Femsa, among others. In two short years, Belkys has re-structured the entire HR process (recruitment, hiring, staff development and training, compensation, and employee wellness). Camilo Villalobos - Shared Services Manager. Camilo also comes from a successful career in Shared services in multinational companies in sectors other than education (Automotive, services, security) and has been able to apply his knowledge and innovative spirit to Colombo's entire backoffice operation, to the point that we are now offering several back office services to other, like-minded organizations.

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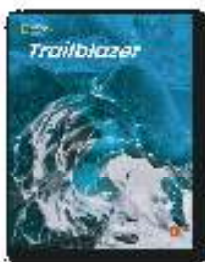
In 2020, the team at BNC Bogotá recognized the need to rethink their business model—not only to survive the pandemic but to seize the opportunities it presented. The AMAR model, created in 2020 and implemented in 2021, enabled BNC Bogotá to more than double its income in just two years and achieve double-digit EBITDA. Remarkably, this was accomplished while retaining all employees and increasing headcount by 30%. In this session, the management team of BNC Bogotá will share the AMAR model and provide real-world examples of how to implement this successful organizational structure.----- The management team of BNC Bogotá will deliver a dynamic and interactive panel presentation explaining how Colombo Bogotá completely redesigned its organizational structure, enabling the BNC to grow and thrive during the pandemic and beyond. The team will share real, relatable insights and practical tips on creating a structure that supports sustainable growth in programming, finances, and market share for other BNCs.



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English Teaching

Step into the Future: Virtual Reality as a Dynamic Learning Space

Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano

Contry: Paraguay

Primary Speaker: Diego Palacios

Secondary Speaker: Teresa Martinez



Short Bio:

Diego Palacios - is a teacher trainer and coordinator of the Innovation Department at the Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano (CCPA). He holds a Master's degree in Education Policy from the University of Rochester in New York, an English Teaching degree from the Universidad Católica "Nuestra Señora de la Asunción", and a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Universidad Americana in Paraguay. He has been teaching since 2012 and is currently involved in various projects related to the implementation of virtual reality and artificial intelligence at the CCPA.



Teresa Martínez - holds a BA in English from the Instituto Superior de Lenguas at the Universidad Nacional de Asunción, and she is currently doing a master's in education. She has been working for fifteen years at Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano, where she has taught a wide range of regular courses to students of varying ages and proficiency levels, as well as the Teacher Certification Program. Currently, she serves as the Academic Coordinator for the Children and Juniors program. In addition to her role as an EFL teacher, Teresa has also gained extensive experience working in various schools as both a teacher and coordinator.

Discover how our Binational Center's new Virtual Reality Room is transforming education through immersive, hands-on experiences that enhance cultural awareness, language skills, and digital literacy. This session highlights the role of the VR Room in supporting diverse learning goals, from virtual tours of U.S. landmarks to skill-building activities. Join us to learn practical strategies for integrating VR into educational settings and engaging students in meaningful, technology-driven learning experiences.

This session will explore our Virtual Reality Room, an innovative space that immerses students in interactive experiences designed to expand cultural awareness, develop language skills, and foster essential digital literacy. By integrating digital tools in a hands-on environment, the VR Room empowers students to develop critical thinking, adaptability, and cross-cultural understanding.



We will outline the VR Room's educational potential and how it enriches traditional teaching methods. Through practical examples, we'll demonstrate how we can make learning more engaging, relevant, and impactful for students of all ages.



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American Spaces Programming

E-CAP – Employability and Career Advancement Program

CICBEU São Carlos

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Yuri Marmorato Torre

Secondary Speaker: Wesley Oliveira

Short Bio:



Yuri Marmorato Torre - Director at CICBEU São Carlos, Brazil, brings 14 years of language education and leadership expertise. His academic background includes studies in psychology at the Federal University of São Carlos. He has served on the Board of Directors for the Coligação de Centros Binacionais do Brasil since 2021.



Wesley Olivera - serves as a Cultural and Educational Advisor in the Public Diplomacy Section at the U.S. Consulate in São Paulo. He brings nearly 10 years of expertise in coordinating strategic efforts for cultural and educational programs, including eight years with the American Spaces network. He oversees initiatives that drive cultural exchange and emerging voices engagement. Wesley holds a bachelor's degree in Marketing and Business Administration and is a U.S. Department of State alum, having participated in three exchange programs, including the Youth Ambassadors Program and the Community College Initiative Program.



Noemi Fontão - is the Academic Coordinator and EducationUSA adviser at CCBEU Sorocaba, Brazil. Beyond her professional role, she is a devoted grandmother who delights in sharing stories with her grandchildren.

This session presents E-CAP – the Employability and Career Advancement Program, a pilot initiative launched in September 2024 that supports the English Language Teaching and Skills Development pillars of the American Spaces Program. E-CAP was developed over nearly a year of strategic planning and collaboration, beginning in October 2023, with guidance from the U.S. Consulate in São Paulo. Created through a deliberate process that integrates local community needs, U.S. Mission objectives, available resources, and the specific expertise of the participating BNCs, E-CAP is funded by the American Spaces Support Funds and represents a partnership between three BNCs in Brazil's São Paulo Consular District: CCBEU Sorocaba, SP; ICBEU Londrina, PR; and CICBEU São Carlos, SP.

Targeting underserved groups—including public high school and first-generation university stu-



dents, first-time job seekers, and individuals between jobs, ages 18 to 35 with an A1 or A2 level of English—E-CAP enhances participants' English proficiency and essential soft skills to improve their employability, especially with U.S.-based companies operating in Brazil. The program includes 200 hours of synchronous English language instruction and asynchronous soft skills courses, delivered through a custom-designed Learning Management System (LMS).

This presentation will cover the program's development, from initial discussions with Consulate São Paulo, curriculum design, and LMS creation to building partnerships with local companies and institutions, participant selection, and course launch. We will also discuss challenges faced, offering practical insights for audience members interested in implementing similar initiatives in their communities.



English Teaching

Breathe In, Speak Out: How Mindfulness Empowers Language Learning

CBA Sucre

Contry: Bolivia**Primary Speaker:** Karen Sofia Poppe Palma**Short Bio:**

Karen Sofia Poppe - English teacher with over 8 years in education, integrating several years of Kung Fu and its breathing techniques to enhance language learning and memory retention. Passionate about innovative teaching, I combine mindfulness with language skills, creating a holistic approach that fosters both cognitive and emotional growth in students.

Discover how mindful breathing techniques can transform the English learning experience by enhancing focus, reducing anxiety, and boosting memory retention. This session explores age-appropriate breathing exercises backed by science, helping learners stay calm and engaged during challenging language tasks like speaking and vocabulary retention. Attendees will gain practical insights into using mindfulness to create a confident, resilient learning environment. Experience how breathing mindfully can empower both educators and learners to approach language acquisition with renewed clarity and ease.

This session aims to equip learners and educators with breathing techniques that support the English language learning process by enhancing focus, reducing anxiety, and promoting memory retention. Attendees will explore scientific research that demonstrates the benefits of breathing exercises, including reduced cortisol levels, better attention span, and improved working memory—essential functions for language tasks like speaking, listening, and comprehension. This session will foster a deeper understanding of how mindful breathing can be a transformative tool for both language learners and educators.

Business and Management

From Software to Program Development: Integrating Agile Methodologies

Alianza Cultural Uruguay - Estados Unidos

Contry: Uruguay

Primary Speaker: Victoria Dieste

Short Bio:

Victoria Dieste - an experienced EFL teacher with a BS in Computer Science, has served 20 years at the Alianza and is the I+D Director. Passionate about tech-driven learning she has led different digital implementations across multiple learning platforms. She has presented nationally and internationally and contributed articles in TESOL publications.



BNCs face challenges such as high dropout rates, teacher turnover, and a competitive educational landscape. This presentation explores how Agile Methodologies can be applied to program development, enabling BNCs to create innovative, sustainable offerings while integrating new technologies, involving multiple intelligences, and maintaining high standards. By adopting principles like customer satisfaction first, delivering value frequently, and reflecting and adjusting regularly, BNCs can enhance program design and responsiveness. In this session, attendees will learn how to implement Agile frameworks to develop and adapt educational and cultural programs, gaining actionable insights to foster growth and meet the evolving needs of their communities.

This presentation explores how Agile Methodology can support program development in BNCs during these challenging times. As the current landscape demands the design of new courses, services, and programs, how can we create innovative offerings that integrate new technologies, engage multiple intelligences, uphold high standards, and preserve our individualities—all within tight budgets?

How can agile principles from software development—such as prioritizing customer satisfaction, delivering value frequently, and adapting continuously—drive educational innovation? The presenter will share how these principles have helped develop and update programs to meet today's needs.

Attendees will leave with actionable insights on using Agile as a flexible and sustainable framework for creating effective educational and cultural programs in their BNCs.



English Teaching

Empowering Young Changemakers: Leveraging AI in Student Projects on Global Goals

ABA Recife

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Mariana Vilela

Secondary Speaker: Fabiana Fonsenca

Short Bio:



Mariana Vilela - is an English teacher at ABA Recife with 11 years of experience in EFL classrooms, instructing multi-level students from children to adults. She is committed to fostering engaging, inclusive learning environments that meet diverse needs, helping students build language proficiency and confidence across all age groups.



Fabiana Fonseca - is an Academic Coordinator at ABA Recife, with extensive experience in English language teaching and teacher development. Recently, she has focused on course development at ABA, emphasizing research and the implementation of assessment strategies that enhance adult student engagement by making learning progress more visible.

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In this interactive workshop, we invite you to explore how AI can empower students to become global advocates. Through case studies, we'll show how to guide students to research and present on Global Goals, integrating language learning with AI. Discover methods for fostering critical thinking, creativity, and leadership in the classroom.

This workshop focuses on how AI can be used to empower students as proponents for global change through engaging technology-based projects. Drawing on case studies from the Pre-Teen 5 In Action project at ABA Recife, we will explore how English teachers can support students in using AI tools to do research, organize information, and create impactful presentations on Global Goals. Attendees will gain insight into practical applications of AI in areas like visual storytelling, pronunciation, and research. By merging language learning with digital skills, this session offers a model for fostering critical thinking, creativity, and leadership in young learners while promoting global awareness.

American Spaces Programming

Panel: Enhancing Student Success: Integrating Socio-Emotional Learning into EducationUSA Advising in Bolivia and Latin America

U.S. Embassy La Paz, Bolivia & EducationUSA Center La Paz

Contry: Bolivia

Primary Speaker: Daniel Murillo

Secondary Speaker: Marcelo Saldaña

Short Bio:



Daniel Murillo - holds a Bachelor's in Political Science. He has a Master's in Public Policy from the University of Minnesota as a Fulbright Scholar. He led community projects at United4Change and worked on cultural repatriation with the Association on American Indian Affairs. Currently, he's EducationUSA's Adviser in La Paz.



Marcelo Saldaña - is the Educational and Exchange Programs Coordinator at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz. Previously served as UPB's Director of International Affairs, Senior EducationUSA Adviser, and Adjunct Professor. He holds a BA in International Business and an MS in Instructional Design and Technology from Emporia State University.

Our session aims to explore how socio-emotional learning (SEL) can be integrated into student advising to support the unique needs of Bolivia's culturally and ethnically diverse student population. Given Bolivia's multi-ethnic society, including significant indigenous communities, many students face socio-emotional challenges such as impostor syndrome, low self-esteem, and feelings of inadequacy when pursuing higher education opportunities abroad. This issue is not unique to Bolivia; throughout Latin America, students from underrepresented backgrounds face similar obstacles. This panel will focus on how EducationUSA advisors from Bolivia and the U.S. Embassy in La Paz are addressing these issues through culturally sensitive SEL practices.

The panel will discuss methods for equipping students with the socio-emotional tools to overcome barriers and build emotional resilience. Panelists will share insights and examples of strategies used to offer tailored advising that respects each student's background, fostering an inclusive advising environment. By promoting SEL, we aim to increase the participation of marginalized groups in international education, ultimately empowering indigenous and rural students from Bolivia—and similar backgrounds across Latin America—to pursue and succeed in higher education in the U.S.

The session will include an overview of SEL concepts, real-life examples from the panelists' experiences, and a Q&A segment to encourage discussion among attendees.



American Spaces Programming

RELO Free and Great Resources that can be used in American Spaces Programming

Regional English Language Office - U.S. Embassy Lima

Contry: Peru

Primary Speaker: Sandra Story

Secondary Speaker: Karina Garcia

Short Bio:



Sandra Story is a Regional English Language Officer (RELO) with the Department of State. She earned master's degrees in special education, TESOL, and educational administration. She completed the Project Zero and Technology Education Certificates. Sandra was a teacher and principal in Washington, DC and Virginia for more than 20 years.

During this highly interactive presentation, we will explore all the RELO materials and learn about free, high-quality resources that can support your planning for American Spaces Programming. Through the Office of English Language Programs, the United States Department of State provides excellent educational materials to teach English, the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), American culture, U.S. literature, and more. These materials, designed for English as a foreign language teachers and students, are available free of charge and can be used at any level. Additionally, the Regional English Language Office provides support to educational institutions to promote the teaching and learning of English around the world. Participants are invited to attend to learn, interact, and take free resources for American Spaces and Binational Centers. During this interactive workshop, participants will have the opportunity to see and interact with some of the free materials available, learn about the different programs that the Regional English Language Office provides, and ask questions about how these materials can be used to support American Spaces' pillars. Examples of projects from around the world will be presented and an opportunity to provide ideas for future projects will be emphasized.



English Teaching

Leveraging Talent Management as a Strategic Advantage for Binational Centers

Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá

Contry: Colombia

Primary Speaker: Belkys Eliana Agudelo Chavarro

Secondary Speaker: Camilo Villalobos

Short Bio:



Belkys Agudelo - Talent and Culture Manager. Belkys joined the Colombo in 2022, after a successful career in Talent Management in multinational corporations including Coca-Cola Femsa, among others. In two short years, Belkys has re-structured the entire HR process (recruitment, hiring, staff development and training, compensation, and employee wellness).



Camilo Villalobos - Shared Services Manager. Camilo also comes from a successful career in Shared services in multinational companies in sectors other than education (Automotive, services, security) and has been able to apply his knowledge and innovative spirit to Colombo's entire backoffice operation, to the point that we are now offering several back office services to other, like-minded organizations.

FALTA INFORMACIÓN DE ESTÉ TEMA



English Teaching

Creating a Customized AI Guideline for BNC Communities

Caso Thomas Jefferson

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Daniela Lyra

Secondary Speaker: Soraya Lacerda, Wander Filho

Short Bio:



Daniela Lyra - is a teacher trainer, online moderator, and materials designer who currently holds the title of Educational Technology Specialist at Casa Thomas Jefferson, Brasilia. For the past three years, Daniela has been implementing Maker-Centered Pedagogy in the first dedicated makerspace in a Binational Center. Daniela was awarded the 2019 MIT Creative Learning Fellowship.



Soraya Lacerda - is a librarian, maker educator, and media literacy facilitator. She has been the coordinator of Casa Thomas Jefferson Educational Makerspace since 2015. Her work in educational projects at the Casa and with partners around Brazil has taught her about active methodologies (creative learning, maker-centered learning, challenge-based learning, and project-based learning), media literacy, and design thinking. Soraya was awarded the 2019 MIT Creative Learning Fellowship.



Wander Filho - is a librarian, educator, cultural manager, and media literacy facilitator coordinating the Casa Thomas Jefferson Resource Centers in Brazil. Wander has been a school librarian for over 15 years and is currently a relevant member of the INE-LI Iberoamerican Program. As a proactive librarian leader, Wander is also a member of the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) and holds the Da Vinci Huis Award - IASL Award for Brazil (2016).

In this interactive workshop, participants will learn to create an AI guideline tailored to the distinct needs of the BNC communities. First, participants will explore research conducted at Casa Thomas Jefferson and examine the foundational principles guiding the creation of the AI Guideline for our American Space. Next, they will identify key components suited to their own communities and outline a personalized, human-centered AI guideline. By the end of the workshop, participants will gain practical tools and insights to thoughtfully and effectively integrate AI into their educational environments.

This workshop will guide participants through three phases. First, they will explore the core principles and essential pillars for creating a customized AI guideline tailored to a BNC community. Next, participants will critically examine and select the AI guideline components most relevant to their specific community needs. Finally, they will outline a personalized AI guideline that promotes a human-centered approach to learning and teaching.



American Spaces Programming

Expanding Horizons: Extending American Space Programs through Local Institutional Partnerships

Centro Cultural Sampedrano

Contry: Honduras

Primary Speaker: Francia Quintana

Short Bio:



Francia Quintana - has been the Executive Director of Centro Cultural Sampedrano since 2012. She has experience in sales, marketing, and public relations in various industries, including textiles and telecommunications. She holds a Master's degree in Business Administration and a Bachelor's degree in Marketing.

The objective of this presentation is to showcase our institution's experience in implementing American Space programs through regional partnerships, emphasizing the challenges, strategies, and impacts while inspiring other institutions to replicate similar models for broader community engagement.



English Teaching

Cognitive Flexibility and Creativity in English Teaching: A Polyvagal Approach

ACBEU Bahia

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Carolina Espinosa

Secondary Speaker: Samantha Mascarenhas

Short Bio:



Carolina Espinosa - has over 25 years of experience in ELT as a teacher, trainer, and coordinator. Her interests include EFL, Young Learners, Systemic Pedagogy, Creative Learning, Maker Education, Bilingualism, Somatic Experiencing, Polyvagal Theory, and Instructional Design, focusing on innovative and holistic approaches to teaching and learning.



Samantha Mascarenhas - is an education professional with more than 23 years of English Teaching, 14 at ACBEU. Academic supervisor specialized in bilingual maker methodology, early childhood education and a teacher trainer. Holds degrees in Speech-Language Pathology (UNEB) and Pedagogy (UNOPAR), with a postgraduate degree in Teaching Methodology and Higher Education Practices (UNIJORGE).

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This presentation explores how cognitive flexibility enhances English learning, drawing on Polyvagal Theory to understand the connection between emotional states, engagement, and retention. By integrating neuroscience and pedagogy, we will discuss strategies for creating psychologically safe classrooms, fostering inclusion, and adapting to diverse learning styles. Participants will gain insights into balancing standardized approaches with individuality while promoting creativity and dynamic, student-centered learning experiences.

Effective English teaching requires adaptability, creativity, and an understanding of how students process and retain language. This presentation explores the role of cognitive flexibility in language learning, drawing on the Polyvagal Theory to examine how emotional states influence engagement, retention, and problem-solving in the classroom. Attendees will leave with insights into how cognitive flexibility supports effective language instruction, how educators can balance standardized approaches with individuality, and how to create dynamic, student-centered learning experiences that nurture both linguistic and emotional development.





Business and Management

Integrating to Innovate: Data-driven insights for impactful partnerships

ABA Recife/CICBEU São Carlos

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Danyelle Marina

Secondary Speaker: Yuri Marmorato Torre

Short Bio:



Danyelle Marina - is the Director of ABA English Education (Recife, Brazil) and holds a Master's in Applied Linguistics combined with 20 years of experience in international education. She's been an EducationUSA Adviser since 2009 and has led impactful youth projects and developed partnerships with local, national and international organizations.



Yuri Marmorato Torre - Director at CICBEU São Carlos, Brazil, brings 14 years of language education and leadership expertise. His academic background includes studies in psychology at the Federal University of São Carlos. He has served on the Board of Directors for the Coligação de Centros Binacionais do Brasil since 2021.

BNCs are recognized leaders in English teaching and cultural programming, often serving as hubs for cross-cultural exchange and community engagement. Our ability to attract meaningful partnerships has been key to expanding reach, visibility, and impact.

This session presents insights from a recent survey of BNCs, revealing the types of partnerships we build and the tangible benefits we bring. Through compelling data and real-world case studies, we'll explore successful partnership models, common challenges, and proven strategies for creating sustainable, high-impact collaborations. Whether you're looking to strengthen existing partnerships or forge new ones, this presentation will offer practical recommendations and fresh inspiration to help your BNC grow and thrive through collaboration.

This presentation will share the findings of a comprehensive survey conducted among Latin American BNCs to classify and assess the types of partnerships currently in place. Through a combination of survey data and in-depth case studies drawn from interviews with selected BNCs, the talk will offer valuable insights into successful partnership models, common challenges, and effective strategies for cultivating and sustaining partnerships. By systematizing and examining these collaborative efforts, this session aims to provide BNCs with actionable recommendations for building and optimizing institutional partnerships, ultimately supporting their mission to foster cross-cultural exchange and educational development.



English Teaching

Graphic Design for Teachers using digital platforms

Alianza Cultural Uruguay-Estados Unidos

Contry: Uruguay

Primary Speaker: Lucía Pin

Short Bio:



Lucía Pin - is the Educational Services Director at Alianza Cultural Uruguay-Estados Unidos. She is an Architect from Udelar and holds a Master's Degree in Educational Management and Leadership from UCU. Experience in teacher training and course design. Participated in the Teacher-in-Residence Exchange Program 2018, Partners of the Americas.

This presentation aims at helping teachers make the most of digital platforms to design materials for their classes. Attendees will be exposed to a few of the most relevant concepts of graphic design, and they will get tips to recognize and create well-designed materials that are focused on promoting learning.

Technology has given teachers the possibility to design digitally. Visual content has a profound effect on our brain's ability to learn and process new information, needless to say, the visual materials we share with our students will have a great impact on their learning process. This presentation demonstrates how core graphic design concepts can be adapted for creating visually impactful classroom materials using tools like Google Slides and Canva. We will explore practical strategies for leveraging space composition, selecting impactful imagery, and using color effectively. Attendees will leave the presentation with a set of practical tips and ideas to easily incorporate into the digital materials they regularly design.



American Spaces Programming

Mediating the American Space Identity of Binational Centers: Building Unforgettable Experiences for our Students

Centro Colombo Americano Bogotá

Contry: Colombia

Primary Speaker: Johana Andrea Melo Fique

Secondary Speaker: Luz Libia Rey Garzón

Short Bio:



Johana Melo - is the academic director at Centro Colombo Americano, Bogotá. She holds a BA in Philology and Languages from Universidad Nacional de Colombia and a Master of Arts in TESOL from SIT Graduate Institute. She is a PhD candidate at Universidad Católica de Córdoba. Her main research interests are teachers' development and formative assessment.



Luz Libia Rey Garzón - received her BA in Philology and Languages and her MA in Linguistics from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. She has over 30 years of experience as an English teacher, teacher trainer, and educational administrator. She is currently the Educational Administration Manager of the Centro Colombo Americano, Bogotá.

Luz Libia is co-author of the book *Maximize Your English Study* published by Pearson Educación de Colombia.

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This presentation will delve into the concept of Mediations as immersive experiences that BNC Bogotá has designed to provide students with impactful and memorable events that enrich their learning journey. Inspired by the notion of cultural mediations, our binational center has developed a series of engaging experiences intended to promote the core pillars of American Spaces: Library, Culture, EducationUSA, Skills Building, Alumni and Language Learning.

Participants in the session will be presented with the creative process to build a mediation activity to enrich students' learning process from a disruptive and innovative perspective. The session will address the implications of training a team of mediators to work collaboratively with teachers to promote cross-cultural dialogue in the classroom to enhance understanding of the identity of an American Space.

Attendees will gain insights into how these mediations have led to improved student engagement, enhanced understanding of the concept of an American Space, and greater collaboration among peers. We will showcase quantitative data and qualitative feedback from participants, illustrating the transformative impact of these experiences on student learning outcomes.



In addition to discussing the results, attendees will have the unique opportunity to participate in a live mediation session during the presentation. This interactive segment will allow participants to engage directly with the mediation process by role-playing as students. Through this experience, we hope to foster a community of practice among educators in our binational centers committed to enhancing cross-cultural dialogue and learning through innovative strategies.



English Teaching

Leveraging Gamification to Foster Skills and Integration

Tarija

Contry: Bolivia

Primary Speaker: Paola Andrea Ortega Barriga

Secondary Speaker: Claudia Griselda Andrade Serrano

Short Bio:



Paola Andrea Ortega - from Tarija, a TESOL-certified educator with a Bachelor's Degree in Languages, has a decade of teaching experience. She is the author of the article 'Basic Competencies for Sustainable Development in Higher Education Institutions' and currently teaches at BNC Tarija and UCB, engaging in US Embassy-sponsored programs like English Plus.



Claudia Griselda Andrade - originally from Tupiza, holds a Bachelor's in Languages. She teaches at CBA Tarija, trains educators, and is the regional coordinator for Inspira Tarija. She has presented at the TESOL Convention, Beta Bolivia Convention, and the CBA Cochabamba Seminars. Sponsored by the U.S. Embassy, she's represented Bolivia internationally.

This session explores the power of gamification in enhancing learning outcomes by fostering essential skills and promoting integration in educational environments. Participants will discover how to leverage gamified inquiry-based activities to engage learners in interactive, critical thinking processes that strengthen collaboration, problem-solving, and creativity. Through game-based strategies, educators can create an environment that encourages students to actively inquire, boosting their confidence and skill in question-asking. These activities help students integrate knowledge across diverse contexts while developing essential communication skills. By the end of the session, participants will be equipped with practical tools and strategies to incorporate gamification into their own teaching practices, driving both individual skill development and collective integration in their classrooms. In this session, participants will explore and implement gamified inquiry-based activities as effective tools for fostering language skill development and promoting integration within educational settings. Participants will also learn how to leverage gamification techniques to enhance student engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration while reinforcing students' English proficiency.



Business and Management

Innovation in strategic planning:

Centro Cultural Colombo Americano Cali

Contry: Colombia

Primary Speaker: JoEllen Simpson

Short Bio:

JoEllen Simpson - is the General Director of the Centro Cultural Colombo Americano in Cali and the President of ABLA. She will be retiring after this conference and is sad to not be able to continue sharing with the ABLA Network, but she is confident that it will continue to thrive throughout Latin America.



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This presentation will share a series of innovative strategies used at the BNC Cali, Colombia, for post-pandemic strategic planning. The changes in business practices brought on by new perspectives from an ever-changing workforce and the demands of our English-language-learning community suggest that we needed an innovative way to look at strategic planning. In this session, participants will see step-by-step “lesson plans” for doing strategic planning that go beyond traditional strategic planning and lead us into an innovative future.

This presentation shares a series of innovative strategies used at BNC Cali, Colombia, for post-pandemic strategic planning. While pre-pandemic planning relied on traditional business models that were effective at the time and contributed to our growth, today’s reality demands a more innovative and introspective approach. Changes in business practices—driven by shifting workforce dynamics and evolving demands from our English-language-learning community—highlighted the need to rethink how we plan strategically.

In this session, participants will explore step-by-step “lesson plans” for strategic planning that engage a diverse mix of staff—from administrative to academic to leadership levels. These collaborative, dynamic strategies move beyond traditional models and offer a forward-thinking roadmap for building a resilient and innovative future.



English Teaching

Culinary arts and teaching: drawing parallels to enhance professional development

ICBEU MANAUS

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Zaíra Coutinho

Short Bio:



Zaíra Coutinho - MA Tesol, DELTA, is an academic supervisor for ICBEU Manaus. She has been involved in English Language Teaching for over 35 years, having served as teacher, teacher educator, director of studies and exams manager.

“The Bear” is a TV series that premiered in 2022. It follows the personal and professional journey of a young chef named Carmen Berzatto. This workshop will emphasize pressing current key themes for teacher development, such as adaptability, continuous learning, teamwork, creativity, and a commitment to serving others. We will show segments from the TV series to inspire educators to acknowledge the importance of these human skills for achieving professional excellence. Participants will be invited to relate the main character’s experiences to their own and identify areas for improvement. Participants will be encouraged to draw parallels between the main character’s experiences and their own, and identify areas for professional improvement, considering their work context, professional goals and individualities.

American Spaces Programming

Integrating BNC Programs with New Administration Priorities

IHCI

Contry: Honduras

Primary Speaker: Claudia Alcerro

Short Bio:



Claudia M. Alcerro - is the Executive Director of the Honduran Institute of Inter-American Culture (IHCI) with over 20 years of experience in education, governance, and international cooperation. Worked extensively with both international and local organizations, as well as the Honduran Ministry of Education, to advance literacy, teacher development, and educational policy. Deeply passionate about education and culture, offering valuable insight into how partnerships can amplify the social and cultural impact.

U.S. Embassy Tegucigalpa inaugurated its New Embassy Compound in January and hosting, for the first time, its own American Center. A recent grant with our longstanding BNC, Instituto Hondureño de Cultura Interamericana (IHCI), will harness BNC programming expertise to ensure strategic use of the new American Center that advances the new Administration's priorities. The presentation will showcase our joint efforts to create dynamic programming that makes America safer, stronger and more prosperous, while also benefitting our host nation. Our collaboration both Integrates and re-envisions existing programs, while also Innovating to create programs that support the new priorities.



English Teaching

Mastering the Art of College Essays and Impactful Recommendation Letters

CBA Tarija CBA Santa Cruz

Contry: Bolivia

Primary Speaker: Juan Carlos Toro

Secondary Speaker: Armilo Gutierrez

Short Bio:



Juan Carlos Toro Bloch - has served as an EducationUSA adviser since August 2023. He is currently based at the Centro Boliviano Americano (CBA) in Cochabamba—theBina-tional Center where he previously taught English for over thirteen years. Throughout his teaching career, he had the rewarding experience of working as an ACCESS and CHOP teacher, where he had the privilege of mentoring many talented students. Inspired by those who aspired to study abroad but didn't know where to begin, he was motivated to become an adviser and help guide them on their academic journey. He holds a bach-elor's degree in Ingenieria Comercial and certificates in Adviser Training Institute (ATI) Level 1, Creating Engaging Environments for English Language Classrooms (CEEELC) from the University of Oregon, Teaching English to Teens (TET) from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and Teaching and Learning English with Digital Tools and Social Media.



Armilo Gutiérrez Ruiz - is a seasoned Business Administrator with over 17 years of ex-perience in English language education, academic coordination, and administrative management. Based in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, he currently serves as an EducationUSA ad- viser at the Centro Boliviano Americano, guiding students on opportunities for higher education in the United States. Armilo has held key roles at institutions such as Berlitz, Universidad Tecnológica Privada de Santa Cruz, and CBA, where he has led multilingual language programs and developed specialized curricula. He is also an expert in TOEFL preparation, corporate language training, and public speaking, having served as master of ceremonies at prominent academic and business events across Bolivia.

The Art of Mastering College Essays and Impactful Letters of Recommendation is an engaging and practical ses- sion designed to equip educational advisors, teachers, and administrators with essential strategies to guide stu- dents through two of the most critical components of the college application process. This presentation offers a comprehensive overview of the key elements that make a personal essay compelling and a letter of recom- mendation truly persuasive. Through practical tips, writing frameworks, and interactive activities, participants will not only deepen their understanding of what admissions officers seek, but also gain hands-on tools to sup- port students in crafting authentic and powerful narratives. Whether advising, writing, or reviewing these doc- uments, attendees will leave with actionable insights to enhance their practice and empower student success.



Business and Management

Cost Management and Operational Optimization

CCBEU Belém

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: João Carlos Aragão Addário Junior

Secondary Speaker: Elda Maria de Moura Moraes

Short Bio:



João Carlos Addário Junior - Treasurer of CCBEU and a partner at the law firm Silveira & Athias, responsible for legal, adm and financial functions. Law graduate from UNAMA; MBA in Business Management from Fundação Getúlio Vargas; Post graduate in Business Management and Innovation from UFPA. Local Coordinator for ONU Volunteer Program, Member of the Action Group for Development (GADE). Red Cross volunteer



Elda Maria Moraes - Academic Manager, 29 years of experience in the education area. Holds degrees in Business Administration and Pedagogy from UFPA. Specialized in Competency Management and is now completing a postgraduate degree in Neuropsychopedagogy.

This proposal highlights how efficient cost management and the integration of collective efforts are fundamental to the success of binational centers, providing practical and applicable insights that can transform BNC operations and increase team engagement.

This workshop will demonstrate how efficient cost management can enhance the operational results of CCBEU Belém do Pará, highlighting the importance of a collaborative approach. Participants will explore key cost control practices, process optimization strategies, and collective solution-building techniques that foster a win-win culture—where everyone is actively involved in addressing and overcoming organizational challenges. The session will begin with an overview of cost management challenges and their relevance to BNCs, followed by an introduction to essential tools and techniques for effective cost control. Attendees will then examine strategies to optimize operations and maximize resource efficiency. A focus on team engagement will showcase how involving staff at all levels leads to more sustainable solutions. Real-life case studies from CCBEU Belém will illustrate successful collaborative projects, and the session will conclude with an interactive activity in which participants work together to identify and address cost-related challenges within their own contexts.



English Teaching

Mastering Pronunciation In A Digital Age

Centro Boliviano Americano Santa Cruz

Contry: Bolivia

Primary Speaker: Andrea Alejandra Menacho Arteaga

Short Bio:



Andrea Menacho - is a dynamic English teacher with over a decade of experience, specializing in pronunciation and critical thinking. She teaches at CBA Santa Cruz, collaborates with the Office of Academic Technologies, and has shared her expertise nationwide, presenting on innovative ELT strategies drawn from her background in TESOL and Critical Thinking.

This session brings a fresh approach to teaching pronunciation. It highlights key strategies and digital tools that can make pronunciation practice engaging and accessible. Participants will gain hands-on experience with techniques that empower students to personalize their learning and build confidence in speaking.

Mastering Pronunciation in a Digital Age” is designed to make pronunciation accessible, engaging, and fun! This session tackles common challenges in English pronunciation, from those tricky individual sounds to achieving a natural rhythm and flow in speech. We’ll dive into practical strategies that participants can apply to their own speaking practice, using interactive activities that make pronunciation both enjoyable and effective. Through hands-on exercises, participants will explore digital tools that support personalized practice, helping them refine their pronunciation skills, enhance fluency, and sharpen listening. We will discover techniques for better sound articulation and real-world fluency tricks to boost confidence in communication.



American Spaces Programming

EducationUSA & BNCs: It's a match! Leverage and integrate EducationUSA in your BNC engagement strategy

EducationUSA

Contry: WHA Region

Primary Speaker: Ana Villavicencio

Secondary Speaker: Rita Moriconi

Short Bio:



Rita Moriconi - REAC based in Rio de Janeiro, has been a member of the EducationUSA network for 32 years. She provides leadership, support, and assessment to the EducationUSA network of 69 offices, working with 81 advisers on topics about student mobility and advancing public diplomacy efforts in the region.



Giselle Dubinsky - REAC for the NCAC with over a decade of experience in educational policy. Previously, she served as the Higher Education Policy Specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Argentina as the liaison with Argentine universities, EducationUSA, and Fulbright. She oversaw English language programs and identified opportunities for academic exchanges.



Ana Villavicencio - REAC based in Ecuador manages the Andean Region portfolio providing training and support to 43 advisers in 43 centers. Prior to working for EducationUSA, Ana was the international relations adviser for SENESCYT, a government institution in Ecuador that oversees the country's higher education and scientific development.

Objectives of session:

- A.** Understand EducationUSA's mission, goals, and success
- B.** Understand the benefits of integrating EducationUSA into BNCs activities
- C.** Learn from other BNCs' best practices to develop your own innovative activities with EducationUSA



American Spaces Programming

"Feel USA" an american experience

Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano (CCPA)

Contry: Paraguay

Primary Speaker: Fabrizio Zucchini

Secondary Speaker: Graciela Meza

Short Bio:



Fabrizio Zucchini - Country Coordinator de los American Spaces en Paraguay con sede en el Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano, CCPA, desde donde ejecuta programas y administra fondos educativos y culturales del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos.

Es Presidente de la State Alumni Paraguay (IVLP 2019) y Punto focal del International Advocacy Programme de la IFLA para los ODS de las Naciones Unidas.



Maria Graciela Meza - Gestora cultural, socióloga y profesora superior de danza clásica.

Coordinadora del Departamento Cultural del Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano (CCPA) y Miembro del Consejo Directivo del Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (FONDEC). Sus competencias incluyen el diseño de planes y proyectos culturales, el análisis de política cultural, las relaciones y cooperación cultural internacionales, la programación y producción en artes con énfasis en artes escénicas.

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Drawing from the experience of the four editions of "Feel USA", this session aims to showcase what has been accomplished and collaboratively explore better ideas through an exchange of information and similar programs conducted at other BNCs. Supported by images, videos, and statistics, the goal is to highlight the positive impact of a public program that emerged during the pandemic with an innovative virtual format, eventually expanding to a street event. "Feel USA" has allowed participants to immerse themselves in the customs, music, gastronomy, literature, dance, and more from the United States' most prominent cultural figures, all with the spirit of an Independence Day celebration. The speakers of this presentation are the creators and key figures behind the program, making them well-suited to address direct questions from attending colleagues. The 45-minute session will be structured as follows: 20 minutes for the presentation and 25 minutes for Q&A, brainstorming, and gathering valuable ideas that can benefit everyone.



Business and Management

Redefining Learning Spaces: AlianzaPRO's Approach to Motivation and Skill-Building through Hidden Curriculum

Alianza Cultural Uruguay - Estados Unidos

Contry: Uruguay

Primary Speaker: Claudia Helguera

Short Bio:



Claudia Helguera - is an Educational Services Coordinator with experience in managing and innovating programs in Uruguay, Argentina, and the USA. She specializes in ESP, organizational management, and coaching. Holding a Bachelor's in Education Management and a TEFL Diploma, she is also an IATA Certified Trainer and English for Aviation Examiner/Specialist.

This session delves into the hidden curriculum—the implicit messages transmitted through classroom culture, teaching methods, and institutional practices—and its impact on AlianzaPRO's scholarship and paid programs for unemployed adults, informal workers, and those seeking reskilling or upskilling. We'll explore how hidden curriculum elements shape motivation, self-efficacy, and engagement, and how AlianzaPRO's approach fosters job readiness through teamwork, problem-solving, and professional behavior. The presentation highlights the roles of teachers and coordinators in promoting adaptability and critical thinking, aligning implicit learning with workforce demands.

This session aims to explore the concept of the hidden curriculum—the implicit messages and values conveyed through classroom culture, teaching methods, and institutional practices—and its impact on AlianzaPRO scholarship and paid programs designed for unemployed adults, informal workers or workers seeking for reskilling or upskilling. We will examine how the hidden curriculum influences student motivation and self-efficacy, emphasizing the role of empowerment and respect in fostering confidence and engagement. Key classroom dynamics and power structures will be analyzed, highlighting how certain approaches to feedback, assessment, and teacher-student interactions affect retention and engagement.

The presentation will also showcase how AlianzaPRO integrates teamwork, problem-solving, and professional behavior to reinforce job readiness. Additionally, the role of teachers and coordinators in promoting skills like adaptability and critical thinking will be emphasized, aligning the hidden curriculum with real-world workforce expectations



English Teaching

Safe Spaces and Brave Spaces

Centro Cultural Dominicano Americano

Contry: Santiago Dominican Republic

Primary Speaker: Amiris Helena

Short Bio:



Amiris Helena - I am a TESOL SIT Certified, TESOL Licensed Trainer from the University of Baltimore Maryland and I am currently working with a SIT to be a Teacher of Trainers. Being a Teacher, Trainer, and Student allows me to give, share, and take valuable lessons to use in life, this has given me endless opportunities to learn how I learn but also how others learn.

Conversations about sensitive topics can be challenging. Meaningful learning happens when the classroom is both a brave space and a safe space—where everyone is open to considering new perspectives. This practice of establishing and maintaining a brave space and safe space in the classroom can be reinforced and applied to learning beyond civics. Our classroom is a melting pot of these varied experiences, making it essential to provide a place where every student feels comfortable expressing themselves on any topic. In this session, participants will explore strategies to cultivate brave and safe spaces that foster respectful dialogue and deeper understanding among students.

Building trust or brave spaces in a student-centered learning environment can be as simple as designing activities that help students connect with one another. In this session, participants will define what a brave space means, discuss its key elements, apply brave space principles through classroom interactions, and identify one action to create or participate in a brave space. They will also explore tools and resources that can help transform spaces into safe and brave environments.



American Spaces Programming

Inclusive Imagination: Building 2D Games to Empower Neurodiverse Children

ICBEU MANAUS

Contry: Brazil

Primary Speaker: Flavia Lopes Cruz

Short Bio:



Flaviana Lopes - holds a degree in Computer Science Education from UEA (Brazil) and is a specialist in Professional Education and Educational Technologies. She has international certifications in STEAM teaching, including the LEGO® Education Academy and The Micro:bit Educational Foundation. She has also collaborated in the development and planning of projects aimed at the technological educational areas working at ICBEU Manaus, focusing on developing the new Maker School Project: extracurricular classes for English students to develop their digital skills for a brighter future. She works in organizing and conducting technology workshops in embassy-supported projects.

In 2023, ICBEU Manaus launched the Game Factory program, an inclusive initiative within the Maker School designed to empower children by creating 2D games. This innovative program focuses on leveraging the creative potential of children on the autism spectrum and their neurotypical peers, teaching them essential game design and development skills. The program enhances technical abilities and promotes social skills, creativity, and confidence, aligning with ICBEU Manaus' mission to foster inclusive, impactful education.

The presentation will address three key areas:

1- Differentiation and Individuality: This section will highlight how the Game Factory program recognizes the unique strengths and needs of both neurodivergent and neurotypical children. The program ensures that all participants can thrive by creating an inclusive, supportive environment. The curriculum is structured to accommodate different learning styles, allowing each child to express their individuality through game design and digital animation.

2- Innovation and Intelligence: The Game Factory program introduces participants to cutting-edge game development tools such as Scratch and GameMaker Studio. Children gain essential coding, logic, and problem-solving skills, which fosters technical intelligence. Through hands-on learning, participants engage in innovative approaches to creativity, exploring how their ideas can be transformed into interactive digital experiences.

3- Integration and Introspection: The program's collaborative nature promotes social integration, encouraging teamwork and communication among participants. Children develop a sense of belonging



and community by working together on projects. Additionally, the program fosters introspection by allowing students to reflect on their learning experiences and personal growth, building confidence and self-awareness.

The presentation will include visual aids, video clips, and testimonials from students and educators, showcasing how the program has transformed the learning experiences and social interactions of children on the autism spectrum. Pre-program assessments ensure that the curriculum meets the diverse needs of each participant, providing a differentiated and customized learning experience.

The session will showcase how this initiative aligns with differentiation, individuality, innovation, and integration, promoting educational and personal development. The program's success demonstrates how STEAM education can empower children by nurturing their technical and social skills, providing a model for differentiated education that can be replicated globally.



English Teaching

Elevating English Teaching & Learning through AI-powered Socioemotional Strategies

BNCs Bogotá, Cali and Medellín

Contry: Colombia

Primary Speaker: Johana Andrea Melo

Secondary Speaker: Matha Cecilia Orobio

Short Bio:



Claudia Villa - holds a degree in Modern Languages from the University of Antioquia and a master's in education and human development from the Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano - CINDE and the University of Manizales. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Social Sciences, focused on language policies in Latin America. She's the Academic Director of the BNC Medellín, Colombia.



Martha Cecilia Orobio - is the current Academic Director at Centro Cultural Colombo Americano-Cali. She holds an M.A. in TEFL and brings 27 years of experience in various roles (teacher, mentor, trainer, coordinator, director) through which she has significantly influenced the institution's language learning programs.



Johana Melo - is the academic director at Centro Colombo Americano, Bogotá. She holds a BA in Philology and Languages from Universidad Nacional de Colombia and a Master of Arts in TESOL from SIT Graduate Institute. She is a PhD candidate at Universidad Católica de Córdoba. Her main research interests are teachers' development and formative assessment.

This workshop explores the transformative potential of integrating AI in English language education, focusing on socioemotional strategies that emphasize empathy, creativity, and critical awareness. Drawing from UNESCO's AI competency frameworks, presenters will share practical strategies for using AI to enhance human interaction. Participants will engage in collaborative discussions on designing activities that promote critical awareness and emotional engagement using AI tools like writing assistants and chatbots. The session highlights maintaining human connections through personalized feedback and ethical considerations. Attendees will gain insights into integrating AI effectively while keeping learning student-centered, ensuring a balanced approach that enhances engagement and outcomes. This workshop explores the transformative potential of integrating AI tools in English



language education, emphasizing socioemotional strategies that prioritize empathy, creativity, and critical awareness. Inspired by UNESCO's AI competency frameworks, academic leaders from three Colombian binational centers will share practical strategies for using AI to enhance human interaction rather than replace it. Participants will design activities promoting emotional engagement and critical awareness with AI-powered tools like writing assistants and chatbots. The session highlights the importance of personalized feedback, ethical AI use, and keeping "the human in the loop" to maintain student-centered learning. Attendees will gain actionable insights for integrating and evaluating AI tools in their teaching, including applications such as conversational chatbots, adaptive grammar checkers, and generative writing aids. The workshop concludes with a collaborative reflection on balancing AI capabilities with essential human oversight to ensure ethical, personalized, and impactful language education.



Business and Management

Person Session For Leaders Title: Leading through Balance: Integrating Data and People for peak performance

Pearson

Contry: Argentina

Primary Speaker: Mónica Rodríguez

Short Bio:



Mónica Rodríguez - As an international speaker and professional trainer, Monica founded InspirED to help organizations unlock their full potential through human-centric strategies for development and growth. Specializing in leadership, teaching and learning and human skills, InspirED has impacted companies in over 10 countries. As a teacher, translator, executive coach, and HR postgraduate, Mónica strives to elevate human performance. Her approach combines innovative methods with a deep understanding of human nature. Passionate about transforming lives, she brings energy and insight to every session.



English Teaching

Innovative Mentoring and Capacity Building for English Teachers in Paraguay

Centro Cultural Paraguayo Americano/Asunción

Contry: Paraguay

Primary Speaker: Ángel González

Secondary Speaker: Ignacio Giménez

Short Bio:



Ignacio Giménez - is a university professor specializing in adult education for English teachers, focusing on professional development and ICTs. He works at the Instituto de Formación Docente Paraguayo Americano (IFDPA-CCPA), primarily working to improve English instruction in rural public schools and leading workshops on diverse educational topics.



Ángel González - holds a BA in English Language from the National University of Asunción and has taught English to teenagers and adults since 2007. He has worked as a teacher trainer at the IFDPA-CCPA since 2013, previously as an academic coordinator for the online program, and currently oversees professional development.

This session highlights the Institutud de Formación Docente Paraguayo Americano's (IFDPA) efforts to strengthen English teaching across Paraguay. This session will explore in-house mentoring at the Centro Cultural Paraguayo-Americano (CCPA) and a nationwide program supporting rural public school teachers. Attendees will gain insights into effective mentoring strategies that foster self-reflection, skill-building, and adaptation to local needs. Interactive elements, including reflection questions and a Q&A, will encourage participants to consider how these approaches can enhance English education in diverse settings.

The session focuses on the need for teacher programs in Paraguay, and will highlight disparities between urban and rural teaching contexts. We will explore the CCPA's in-house mentoring, where new and experienced teachers engage in pre-service training, class observations, and ongoing professional development to refine their practices through feedback and self-reflection. Next, we will share the IFDPA's collaboration with the MOE in a program designed to support English teachers in Paraguay's public schools, especially in resource-limited rural areas.



American Spaces Programming

ENGLISH for Women Entrepreneur US. Embassy in Bolivia

Embajada de Estados Unidos en Bolivia

Contry: Bolivia

Primary Speaker: Gonzalo Fortun

Short Bio:



Gonzalo Fortún Berdecio - is an English Language Programs Specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Bolivia, based in La Paz. He holds a PhD in Educational Science and Research, and Master's degrees in TESOL, Education, and Quality in Higher Education. Additionally, he earned a Higher Education Teaching Diploma and a B.A. in English and Quechua. His professional certifications include a Teacher Training Certificate from the U.S. Department of State and specialized coursework in Educational Technology, ESP, Critical Thinking, Assessment in ELT, Advanced Writing, and Gamification. With over two decades of experience, Fortún Berdecio has designed and led numerous teacher training programs, presented at national and international conferences, and taught English for general and specific purposes to learners of all ages.

This presentation highlights the English for Women Entrepreneurs program, a hybrid initiative designed for U.S. Embassy alumni. Implemented by the Centro Boliviano Americano Santa Cruz, the program combines virtual instruction by a U.S. Department of State Virtual English Language Educator with in-person support from a local co-teacher. This best practice fosters English language development, entrepreneurship, and cross-cultural collaboration, empowering participants to expand their business opportunities and professional networks in both local and global contexts.



English Teaching

Regional English Language Officer - Director

Regional English Language Officer - Director

Contry: Peru

Primary Speaker: Sandra Story

Short Bio:



Sandra Story - is a Regional English Language Officer (RELO) with the Department of State. She earned master's degrees in special education, TESOL, and educational administration. She completed the Project Zero and Technology Education Certificates. Sandra was a teacher and principal in Washington, DC and Virginia for more than 20 years.



English Teaching

Mapping Candidate Profiles in Latin America: An Approach to Key Market Segments for the Expansion of International Examinations"

Senior Business Development Manager, LATAM

Contry: Michigan Language Assessment

Primary Speaker: Viviana Avella

Short Bio:



Viviana Avella - is a Finance and International Relations professional with an MBA and over 12 years of experience in English international assessment. She joined the Michigan Language Assessment team in 2018 and has since played a key role in expanding Michigan's presence and portfolio across the Latin American region. Prior to her current role, Viviana served as IELTS Manager at the British Council Colombia, where she led initiatives that increased sales and business opportunities by more than 50%. Throughout her career, she has collaborated extensively with Binational Centers across the region and participated in various EducationUSA initiatives in Colombia, Mexico, and Ecuador. Has also worked collaboratively with Cambridge Assessment teams. Viviana brings deep expertise in strategic partnerships, test delivery, and the development of assessment opportunities tailored to regional needs. Her work reflects a strong commitment to improving access to high-quality language assessment solutions in Latin America

This presentation explores the identification of market niches in Latin America with a clear or emerging need to take international examinations. Many of these segments are characterized not only by their academic or professional aspirations but also by a pressing need to improve their English language proficiency, often a prerequisite for accessing global opportunities. Binational centers play a key role in addressing this linguistic gap, serving as strategic allies in both language instruction and exam preparation.



Plenary

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Revolutionizing Education: Building Peace in a Divided World

Speaker: Aziz Abu Sarah



This presentation encapsulates Aziz Abu Sarah's profound journey of utilizing education as a catalyst for transformation - steering him away from radicalism towards becoming a dedicated peacebuilder. With a focus on his educational endeavors spanning Syria, Afghanistan, Israel, Palestine, and the United States, Abu Sarah illustrates how these initiatives have successfully bridged chasms among discordant communities. By delving into the omnipotent role of education, this session uncovers its potential not only in resolving geopolitical strife but also within the microcosms of classrooms. Join us for an enlightening discourse that explores the remarkable capacity of education to foster harmony amidst division.

Short Bio:

Aziz Abu Sarah is a National Geographic Explorer and a TED fellow. He is an entrepreneur, speaker, peace builder, and author. He is the author of "Crossing Boundaries" and the coauthor of "Strangers, Neighbors, Friends." In 2009, Aziz co-founded MEJDI Tours, an international tourism company founded on the belief that a place can only be truly understood when seen through multiple perspectives. In 2014, he delivered a TED Talk discussing his vision for redefining tourism. Aziz has addressed numerous international organizations and universities, including The United Nations, Nexus, TED, BMW, the European Parliament, and Harvard. His articles have been featured in prominent publications such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, National Geographic, TED, Haaretz, and The Jerusalem Post, among others.



Plenary

EDUSOFT - TOEIC

"The Power of English: Preparing Students for Global Work and Lifelong Learning"

Speaker: Carla Bustos



As the global demand for English proficiency continues to rise, both educators and institutional leaders are uniquely positioned to shape the future of language learning with purpose and impact. This session will explore the intersection of employability, 21st-century skills, and global English outcomes, highlighting the vital role of English in preparing students not only for academic success but also for meaningful participation in today's workforce. We will examine how language institutions can better respond to the evolving needs of the corporate market, where English functions as a key driver of professional mobility and global collaboration. With a focus on aligning teaching practices and institutional strategies, this talk invites academics and decision-makers to reimagine English education as a catalyst for opportunity, innovation, and measurable outcomes in a competitive global landscape.

Short Bio:

Carla Bustos is an English language academic with more than 20 years of experience in teaching, teacher training, and instructional design. She holds a Master's degree in TESOL from the University of Edinburgh and currently works as Customer Success Manager at Edusoft, an ETS company, where she leads projects in Latin America related to "English Discoveries Excellence and ETS® TOEIC® Certified English Program," an English learning and assessment solution focused on employability and artificial intelligence. Her work has focused on educational institutions and government programs in various Latin American countries, advising on digital transformation processes in English teaching and strengthening the link between language proficiency and job opportunities.



Plenary

PEARSON

Future-ready English Teaching: INtersecting intelligences and self reflection to Cultivate a Human-Centered Approach to English Education

Speaker: Mónica Rodríguez Salvo



Prepare for a transformative session on the future of English language teaching, centered on integrating introspection, inclusion, integration, and intelligences. We will explore how self-reflection empowers teachers and leaders to bring their whole selves to the teaching process. Discover innovative, human-centered approaches that integrate emotional and social intelligences, preparing students for diverse futures. This session emphasizes the importance of developing skills that transcend language, fostering empathy, creativity, and the full spectrum of human potential.

Short Bio:

Mónica Rodríguez - As an international speaker and professional trainer, Monica founded InspirED to help organizations unlock their full potential through human-centric strategies for development and growth. Specializing in leadership, teaching and learning and human skills, InspirED has impacted companies in over 10 countries. As a teacher, translator, executive coach, and HR postgraduate, Mónica strives to elevate human performance. Her approach combines innovative methods with a deep understanding of human nature. Passionate about transforming lives, she brings energy and insight to every session.

Plenary

EMPRESSER

Gamification: Putting an End to the Engagement Crisis.

Speaker: Ana Laura Martínez Vázquez



As educators, the concept of gamification might conjure images of creating elaborate real-life video games with characters, scenarios, challenges, and rewards for our students. This imaginative scenario can sometimes evoke feelings of anxiety. Fortunately, these grand but unattainable visions exist only in our minds. In this workshop, we will discover how to introduce gamification into our educational activities in straightforward and manageable ways. Our goal is to transform our classes into enjoyable, engaging, and stimulating learning experiences.

Short Bio:

Ana Laura Martínez Vázquez - holds an English Language Teaching B.A. by UAEH, Mexico, she is a specialist in book editing and project management by Universidad La Salle. She has been an academic consultant and teacher trainer since 2006, former Sponsoring Editor for ELT materials published in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East for kinder, primary, and young-adult segments. She is now working as ELT Academic Director and Regional Portfolio Manager at Empreser ELT. She is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Public Image Engineering.



Plenary

JINSO

Empower Educators: The Voice AI Revolution in English Education

Speaker: Jay Lee-Gopalan



Accurate pronunciation is key to language learning for comprehensibility and cultural understanding. Delve into the future of artificial intelligence and English education with Jay Lee-Gopalan, Harvard-educated AI expert and serial entrepreneur. In this talk, we will discuss how cutting-edge voice AI is revolutionizing language learning by enabling scalable pronunciation practice. Made possible by recent breakthroughs in AI, these advancements provide the world's first immersive, accessible teaching solution that empowers educators to provide personalized, high-quality English education to their students.

Short Bio:

Jay is a serial EdTech entrepreneur with a diverse background specializing in AI and education. At Jinso Labs, he builds teacher-guided AI English tutors for the best institutions in Latin America, designed for organizations that operate at scale. His last venture used AI to connect high-school students with mentors for project-based learning, and was acquired in 2022 by Correlation One. Following the acquisition, he pioneered the use of AI to generate educational content and built training programs for institutions including Amazon and the US Government. Previously, he studied artificial intelligence at Harvard and taught AI to thousands of professionals in partnership with the Colombian Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications.





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