

## PRELIM 2

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# Cote d'Ivoire: CINETLA (Cote d'Ivoire English Teachers Association) with Capital School of English

August 2022

# Project background

Partnership overview		
<b>Course overview</b>	<b>ETA partner</b>	Cote d'Ivoire English Teacher Association (CINELTA)
	<b>UKI partner</b>	Capital School of English, Bournemouth
	<b>Course length</b>	10 weeks
	<b>Number of groups/cohorts</b>	2 groups
<b>Participant profile</b>	<b>Total number of CPs</b>	40
	<b>Language level(s)</b>	B1 – C1
	<b>CPs' teaching context</b>	All teachers work in secondary schools. There is a split between those who work in a general school (with a prescribed syllabus), and those who work in a vocational/technical school (more flexibility, better paid)
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	<b>Synchronous platforms used</b>	Zoom
	<b>Synchronous session length</b>	90 minutes
	<b>Synchronous session frequency</b>	Once a week
	<b>Asynchronous workload</b>	30-60 minute assignments once a week to be submitted on community workspace (Slack)
<b>Course content</b>	<b>Language development focus</b>	Functional classroom language, general English, partly in line with the state syllabus
	<b>Methodology focus</b>	30-45 minute reflection and discussion stage in the synchronous sessions, and pre/post-synchronous session tasks in the asynchronous assignments
	<b>Technology focus</b>	Zoom crash course in the week 0 induction. Meeting with local facilitators prior to course to train them to use Zoom/Slack

## Description of the partners

CINELTA is the nationwide English language teachers' association for Cote d'Ivoire with over 1,000 members across the country. CINELTA has participated in/driven a number of teacher development projects over the years to support its members and promote good practice. It is currently looking for

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more opportunities for online collaborations with teaching and training institutions and other teacher associations.

Capital School of English is a family-run language school established in 2003 and based in Bournemouth. Capital School of English delivers general English courses, exam preparation courses (IELTS, Cambridge main suite, and OET), and runs bespoke teacher development programmes to teachers in-country and online from the UK and abroad.

## Key features of the context

The course participants mostly range in age from 35 – 45 years old, and more than 50% of them have over 10 years of teaching experience. French is the official national language, though there are also several local languages. All CPs are teachers in secondary schools from different regions of Cote d'Ivoire. There is a centralised education system managed by the Ministry of Education, however there is a distinction between 'general' (state) or 'technical' (private) schools, with the majority of the CPs belonging to the former which tend to be less funded and more restrictive in terms of syllabus. Teachers are usually paid to attend in-service training sessions. The English language teaching profession is very male-dominated in Cote d'Ivoire, and even after making a conscious effort to invite more female teachers onto the programme, male teachers made up 75% of CPs. The typical class size is 50-100 students, with some CPs saying they regularly teach over 100 students in one room at a time. There are limited teaching resources available to teachers and problematic broadband or internet connection or coverage. Familiarity with mobile apps among CPs was very low, however WhatsApp is commonly used and preferred to email as a means of communication.

## Outline of the course and rationale

The course encouraged applications from teachers of less-developed areas of Cote d'Ivoire, as well as female teachers, who are underrepresented in the teaching context. Based on the needs analysis, the course aimed to develop the confidence of in-service teachers by focusing on teaching methodology (communicative approach) and development of their General English (language informed by the state syllabus, and functional language for the classroom).

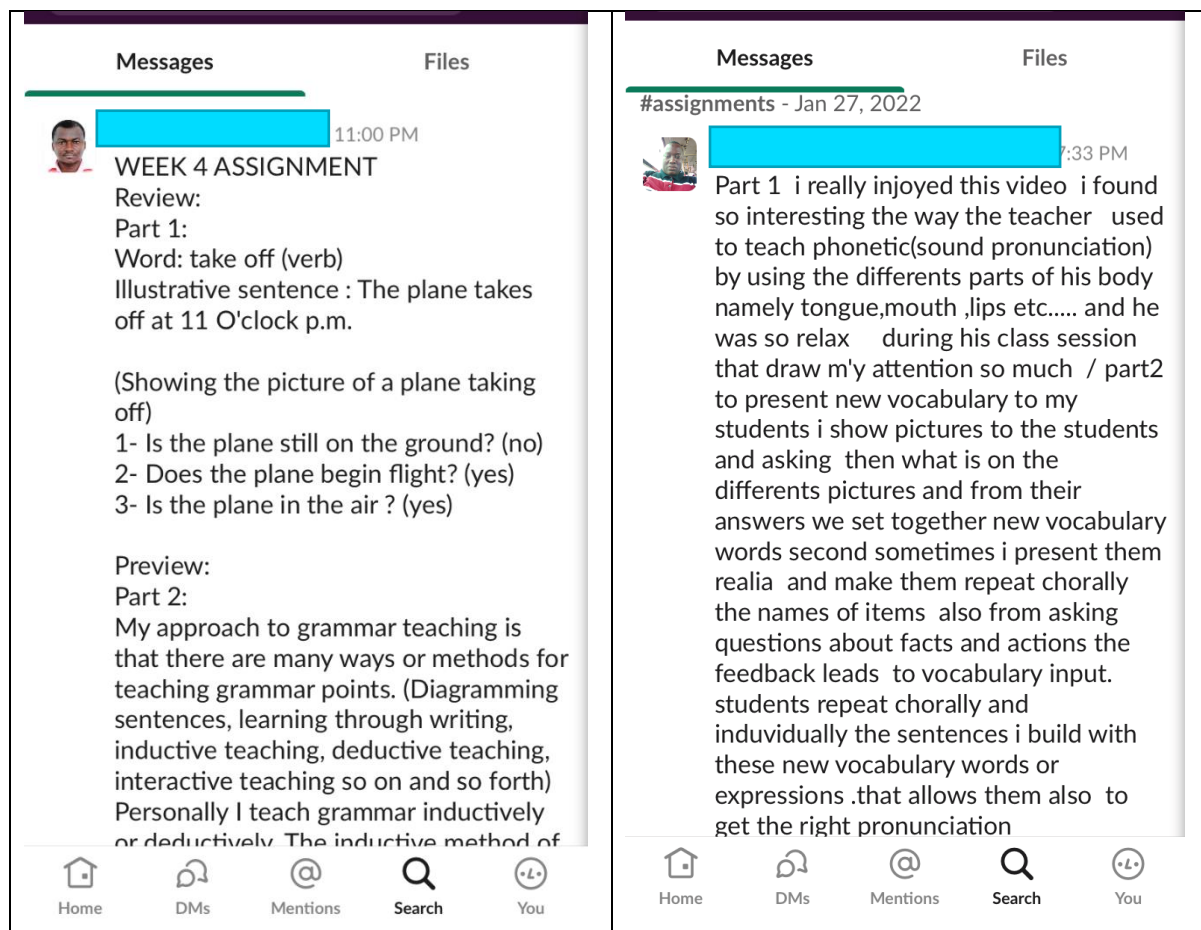
A 10-week course was designed with a balance of synchronous (Zoom) and asynchronous assignments (Slack) each week. A typical 90-minute synchronous session had the following progression:

- 45-minute 'mini lesson' (General English input)
- 30-minute methodology and reflection
- 15-minute context adaptation

The asynchronous assignments were designed to reflect and build on content from the synchronous sessions and to look ahead and preview the content in the upcoming synchronous session (see figures 1 and 2 below). There was an additional 'Week 0' induction meeting on Zoom with all CPs, which functioned as an introduction to using Zoom/Slack, and also outlined the course syllabus, aims and expectations.

Synchronous sessions were held on Zoom on Wednesday afternoons at two different times to coincide with CPs' availability. CPs had the flexibility to choose which synchronous session they would attend, with the intention that 2 groups of approximately 20 CPs in each would naturally form.

All synchronous sessions were recorded to allow CPs to participate retrospectively in case of schedule conflicts or connectivity issues. All asynchronous assignments were published on the community workspace and available for other CPs to view.



Figures 1 and 2. (Above) Samples of asynchronous assignments.

## Project findings

### Working in partnership

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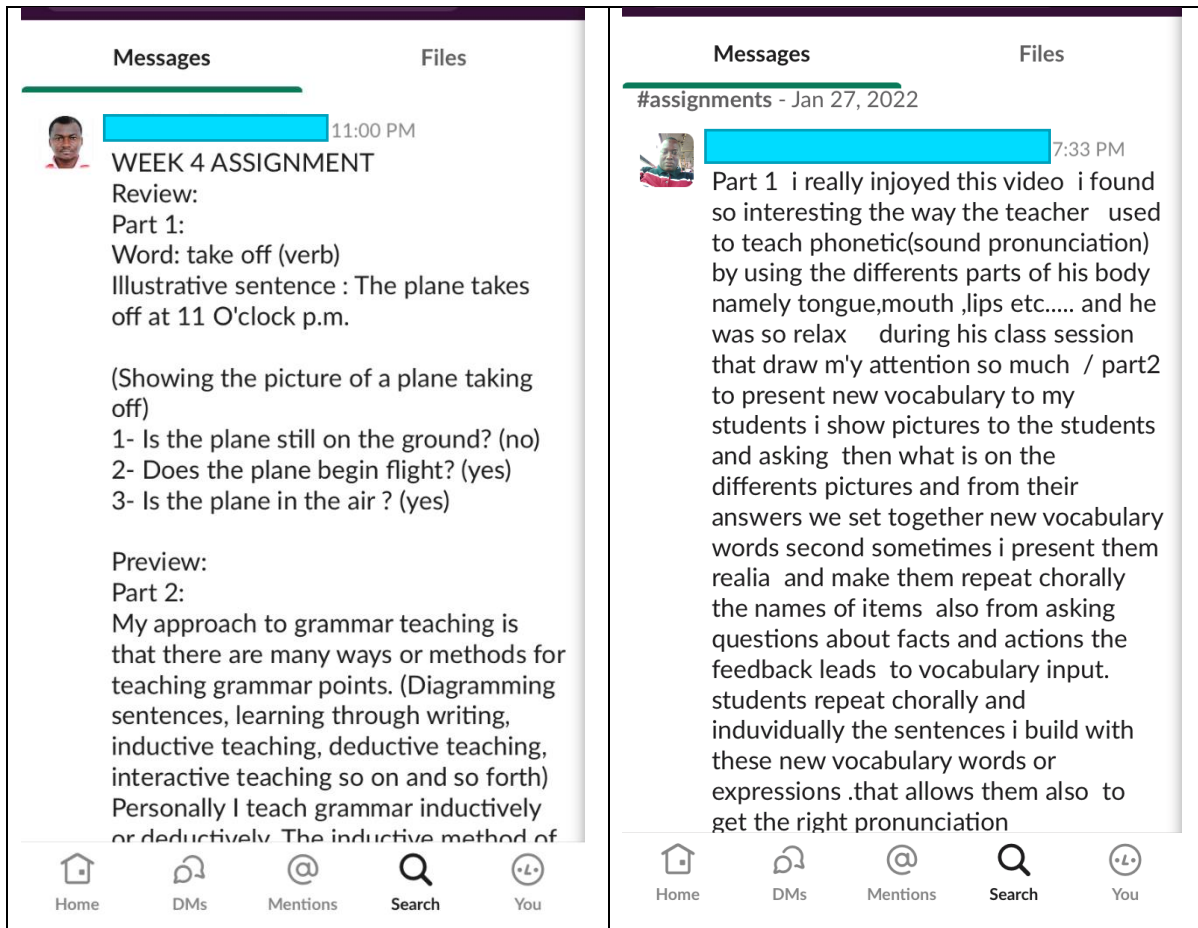
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## Working within the CoP

With Capital School of English being new to PRELIM, it was incredibly beneficial to be part of a CoP which contained a wealth of experience from institutions who had taken part in PRELIM 1. Everyone involved in the CoP was forthcoming in sharing best practices and playing an active role on Slack by highlighting potential issues and guiding other institutions towards effective solutions.

The check-in meetings on Zoom at key checkpoints during the programme enabled all institutions to deal with emergent concerns or issues that came up throughout. It was particularly valuable to feedback and report on how various stages of the course had gone and to get advice on upcoming stages (recruitment of CPs, conducting needs analysis, creating an induction, adapting course content, maintaining attendance/motivation, creating a closing ceremony, ensuring sustainability post-PRELIM).

Capital School of English has built stronger ties with a number of UK institutions thanks to the collaborative environment fostered by the CoP. It was great to see that all institutions involved understood that the success of PRELIM as a concept required a team effort from the top down.

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## Designing / delivering the course

A course syllabus outline was informed by conversations between Capital School of English and CINELTA and the results of the needs analysis received from CPs. The core materials used in the course were designed week by week so as to ensure they met the needs of the CPs and were pitched appropriately.

While delivering the course, it became evident that the teaching context of the CPs didn't always align with that of the course tutors. As a result, some of the teaching principles or approaches seemed too abstract or theoretical to be applied to the classrooms of the CPs. This led to a 'context adaptation' stage being added to the synchronous sessions where CPs could consider how the methodologies or approaches could be implemented into large classes or with young learners. Course tutors also used asynchronous assignments as a chance to learn more about the CPs' teaching context before delivering sessions.

Although Slack and Zoom were new for the majority of the CPs, they proved to be successful mediums for delivering the course. All CPs became competent users of these platforms by the end of the course. However, even with connectivity funding, some CPs were unable to have a reliable connection for the full 90 minutes. Additionally, due to the fact that most CPs used their phones for the synchronous sessions, there were occasional issues with background noise and microphone-muting etiquette on Zoom. This improved throughout the course, but at times it did hinder valuable communication between CPs when working in breakout rooms. This challenge did, however, push course tutors to adapt a low-resource approach and to consider other ways of engaging the CPs, mostly to great effect.

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## Course outcomes

### *Course participants*

It was pleasing to note that 85% of course participants attended at least 70% of the 10 synchronous sessions. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected weekly after each synchronous session and also through a mid-course and end of course questionnaire.

All CPs said that the programme met their expectations, with 86% saying that it exceeded them. All CPs said their confidence as a teacher had improved since the beginning of PRELIM, with 95% giving a score of 4 or 5 out of 5.

100% of CPs said that their awareness of teaching methodology had improved during the course, giving a score of 4 or 5 out of 5. One CP noted that: *'After each session it was very difficult for me to continue my old teaching approach and practices. I discovered new, amazing things that could make my teaching more vivid and active.'* Another added: *'I have learnt many techniques that I can use in my classroom, and they work very well. PRELIM sessions have been interesting, involving, instructive and very enriching.'*

All CPs said that their overall level of English had increased since the start of the programme, with 90% of CPs giving a score of 4 or 5 out of 5 in this regard. CPs expressed enthusiasm about the language input stage of each session: *'We learnt lots of different things from the mini lessons to the methodology with some great, vivid examples.'*

CPs were highly satisfied with the quality of materials used during the sessions (average rating of 4.67 out of 5), and with the quality of the trainers (average rating of 4.86 out of 5). One CP said: *'We had an amazing trainer [with] a great deal of human skill and a very sociable personality which allowed him to talk the right way to each learner. This really created a stress-free atmosphere and eased the teaching / learning process.'*

The initial concerns about connectivity and internet coverage were borne out in the feedback, with about half of the CPs saying that issues with technology had some negative effects on the PRELIM experience. While connectivity funding alleviated a lot of these issues, improvements could still be made in this area. Potentially by looking into specific local sites a more stable connection can be guaranteed. Nevertheless, it was pleasing to see that all the CPs were happy using Zoom as an online meeting application and Slack as a workspace for the programme.

The CPs expressed their desire to keep the community workspace active. One CP commented: *'The different sessions were rich in terms of sharing experiences with colleagues. So a great thanks to everyone for the different interactions'*. Another added: *'Throughout the PRELIM training programme you have formed a family without noticing it. When we talk about family, we think about constant exchange between the members . . . We need to finish what we started and keep the community active'*.



## Capital School of English

The key, positive course outcomes were:

- Fostering a strong relationship with CINELTA and the course participants
- Improving our confidence as an institution able to provide an intensive, online programme on a large scale
- Developing our understanding of a new context and making the most of the opportunity for cultural exchange and sharing teaching practices
- Challenging our existing preconceptions about the most effective means of teaching (methodology and practice); rejecting the idea of a 'one size fits all' approach to teaching.

PRELIM Lead Trainer Shaun Douglas (Director of Studies at Capital School of English) said: '*PRELIM has been a hugely rewarding experience for all those involved at our school. We worked hard to deliver a high-quality, rich programme to a wonderfully receptive group of teachers, and ended up learning a lot from the CPs in return. I am surely not alone in considering PRELIM as a personal career highlight.*'

## CINELTA

At the PRELIM 2 closing ceremony (Figure 4), Marcos K. N'Goran (CINELTA President) summarised the benefits of the project to CPs and the ETA: "*CINELTA is really satisfied, the participants are satisfied, and Cote d'Ivoire is happy. We have seen a new generation of teachers who are ready to learn. So, what next? How to keep the family united? How to keep the flame continuing to burn? That will be our next challenge and CINELTA is looking forward to working on it. Congratulations to everyone involved!*"

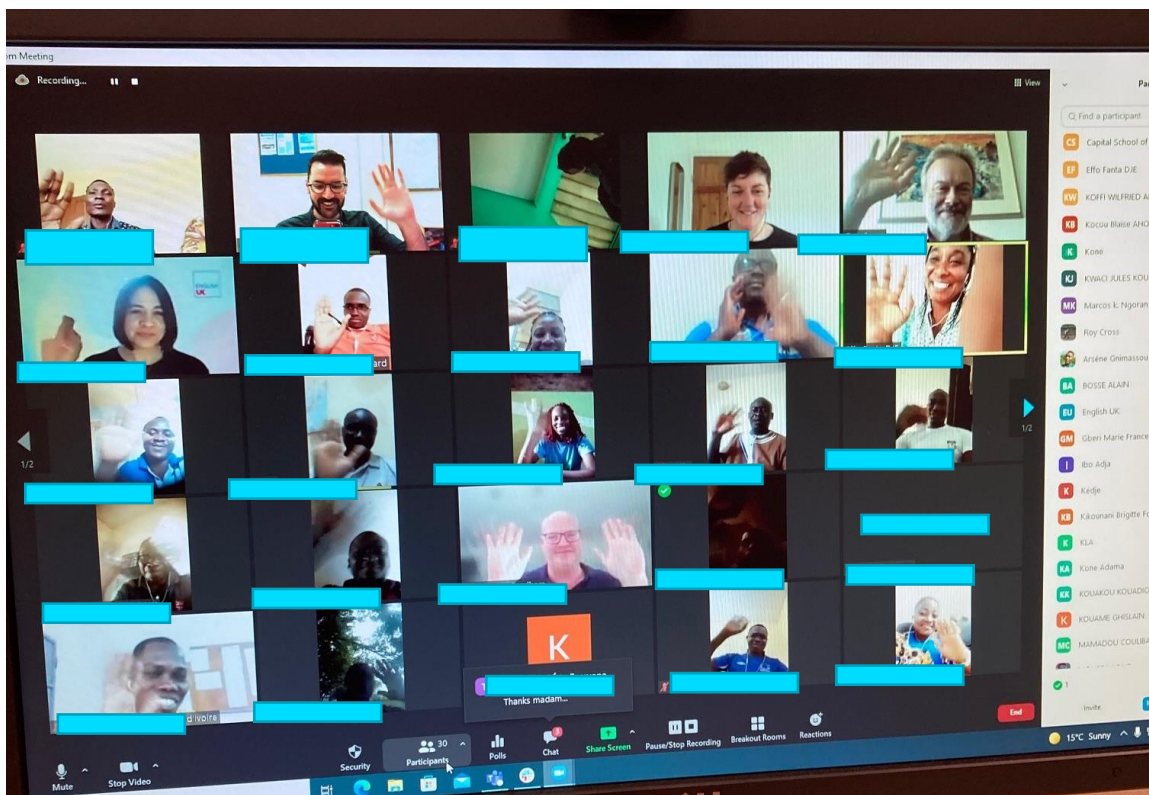


Figure 4. (Above) PRELIM closing ceremony and graduation.