

## PRELIM 2

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# Guinea: GETC (Guinea English Teachers' Club) with Bell

August 2022

# Project background

Partnership overview		
<b>Course overview</b>	<b>ETA partner</b>	GETC “Guinea English Teachers’ Club”
	<b>UKI partner</b>	Bell
	<b>Course length</b>	8 weeks
	<b>Number of groups/cohorts</b>	4
<b>Participant profile</b>	<b>Total number of CPs</b>	118 registered initially, 85 joined the course in the 4 WhatsApp groups and approximately 73 were active throughout the courses.  Group 1 - 19 were active / 27 in group Group 2 - 22 / 25 Group 3 - 16 / 16 Group 4 - 16 / 17
	<b>Language level(s)</b>	A2-B2 with most B1
	<b>CPs’ teaching context</b>	secondary school English in French language school system
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	<b>Synchronous platforms used</b>	Zoom
	<b>Synchronous session length</b>	60 minutes
	<b>Synchronous session frequency</b>	once a week
	<b>Asynchronous workload</b>	Main work was done on WhatsApp with daily lessons. 2 hours commitment per week for teachers.
<b>Course content</b>	<b>Language development focus</b>	Classroom Language for teachers
	<b>Methodology focus</b>	Examples of activities used to demonstrate where to use the language, examples of simple games and speaking activities in zoom classes for fluency practice
	<b>Technology focus</b>	Use of Zoom for a live class with opportunities to interact in Breakout Rooms and WhatsApp for daily professional development tasks

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## Description of the partners

### GETC

[The Guinea English teachers' Club](#) was founded in 2019 with the intention of promoting training for English language teachers in Guinea. There are 766 registered English teachers in Guinea according to Ministry of Education records and 562 are members of GETC.

There are eight administrative regions in Guinea which each have their own regional 'club': Conakry, Kindia, Boke, Mamou, Labe, Kankan, Faranah and N'zerekore. GETC has a national WA group. We formed four WhatsApp class groups with teachers from a mixture of regions.

We worked closely with Abdoulaye Konate (Vice-president), Mamady 5 Nabe, the Disciplinary Inspector of English language in Guinea and President of GETC, and Hossein Kebe, an English teacher and the Coordinator of GETC-CONAKRY.

### Bell Educational Services Ltd.

Bell is a language education and teacher training provider based in Cambridge. Bell's Education Programmes department (through whom this project was delivered) also provide educational consultancy services and work with partners around the world to offer teacher training and English language tuition. The main contacts for this project were Kristina Smith (Trainer and Course Developer) and Tom Beakes (Academic Manager for Bell's Education Programmes). Kristina acted as the main project coordinator for the project and was supported in the course delivery by two Bell trainers Anna Young (Guinea) and Sandy Millin (Bangladesh).

## Key features of the context

Nation-wide, literacy rates are low (less than 50%) and fewer than 50% of children attend primary school. Children start school age between 5-7 and by the end of secondary, Year 13, the age in class can be up to 20 or 21. Large classes of up to 130 are common, with average class sizes 90-110. Guinea has French as an administrative language and it is taught in primary schools. Starting in 2020, English was introduced as a secondary school subject, but it is mainly taught through French.

Most university graduates are male in Guinea and this is reflected in the gender balance of teachers with around 70/80% being male and 20-30% female.

Internet access is quite limited across Guinea. Only about 30% of the members of GETC have a smartphone and 15% are estimated to have Internet access at home. The internet is largely accessed via smartphones, but high data costs make this expensive for many teachers.

## Outline of the course and rationale

The objective of this training course was to support teachers of English in Guinea to use English more confidently in their classrooms. Whilst not a methodology course, we did use examples of classroom activities to draw out the language teachers use for various classroom tasks.

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We designed a course of three strands:

1. Culture sharing
2. Classroom language focus
3. Pronunciation

We taught the daily lessons Monday to Friday on WhatsApp using PowerPoint slides saved as .jpeg files, and used text messages and voice notes. Teachers were encouraged to respond with text, voice notes and video.

Some members of GETC took part in a British Council teaching methodology training in February 2021 and had cascaded it to other regions, so we designed the PRELIM course with this model in mind.

A significant number of English teachers started learning English at university and therefore do not have very high levels of proficiency. We based our decision to focus on classroom English and pronunciation on this information.

## Project findings

### Working with the CPs

The Bell trainers found working on this course extremely eye-opening and it was also a very challenging and developmental experience as they were unused to working with participants in this mostly remote, asynchronous manner. We surveyed the trainers involved and they reported developing skills in:

- Designing and formatting Powerpoint (PPT) materials for teaching via Whatsapp
- Using Whatsapp as a delivery method, exploiting functions such as emojis, gifs and voice notes (VNs) to make content more accessible

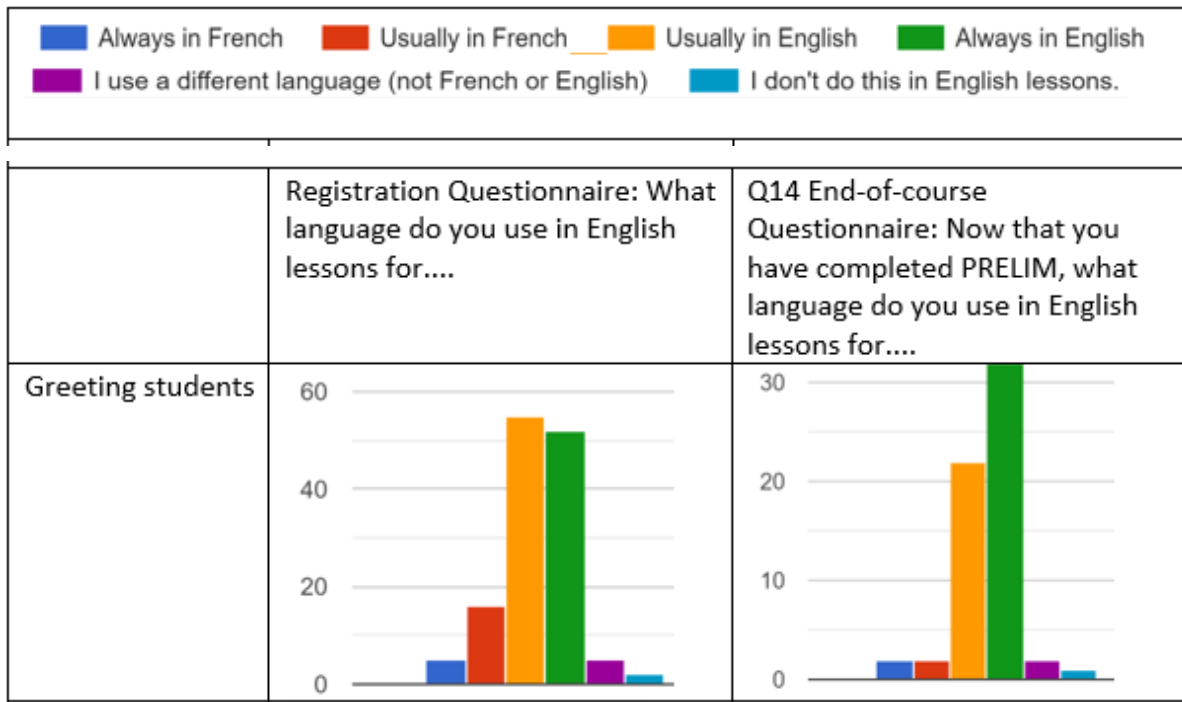
Other comments centred around working with teachers from such a different context to those our trainers usually work with. Lesson learned from working with the Guinean participants included:

- A need to assume nothing in terms of prior knowledge of the teachers (e.g. using step by step super guided instructions; teaching the concepts of Bingo, crossword puzzles)
- Greater scaffolding is required when explaining activities – e.g. creating a visual ‘storyboard’ of how to do an activity, before expecting participants to be able to do it
- Concepts such as asking reflection or follow-up questions or eliciting from students were unknown. These concepts need to be introduced slowly, in small steps.

### Course outcomes

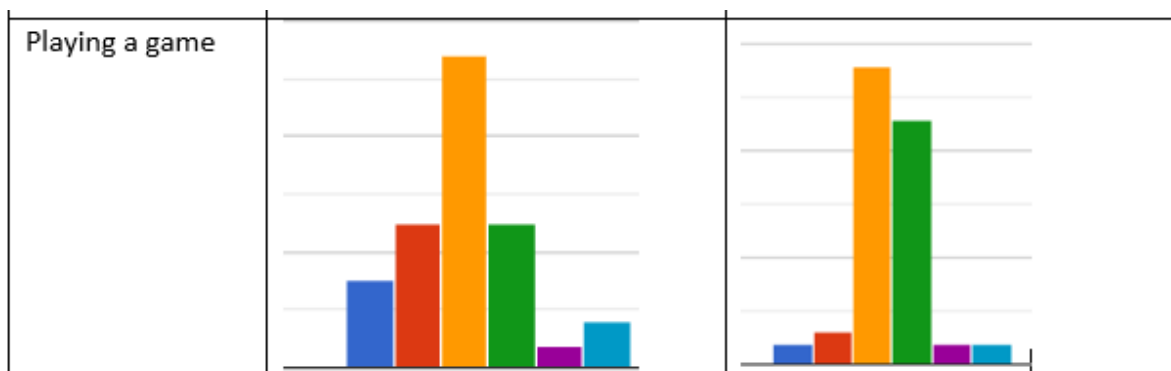
The course appeared to have a very positive impact on both the participants and the trainers. We mostly collected data on course impact using [Google forms questionnaires](#), along with interviews and surveys of the trainers.

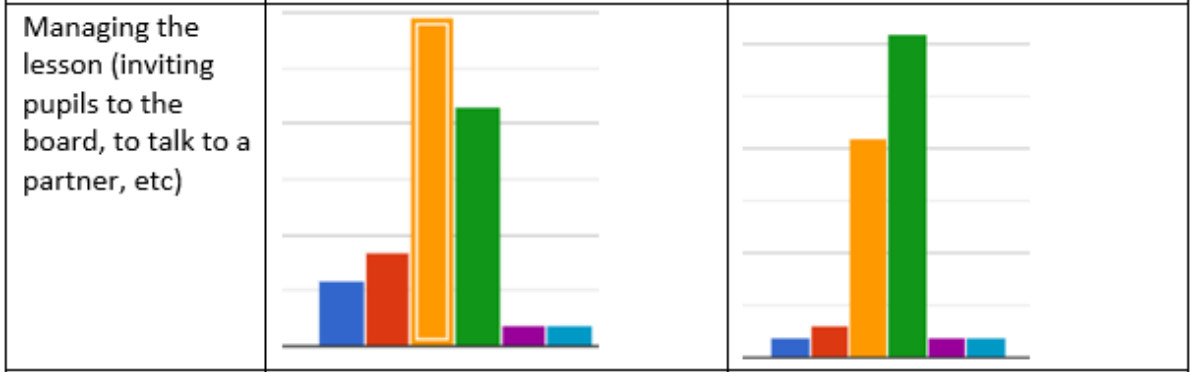
We asked the participants at the start and end of the course the same question: 'What language do you use in English lessons for [list of classroom activities]?'. Participants selected from the below choices which allowed us to compare changes in their language use using colour coded bar charts (note the scales for pre and post course are different as more participants completed the pre-course than the post-course, so we can't compare them directly, but we can compare trends in the proportion of answers for each column).



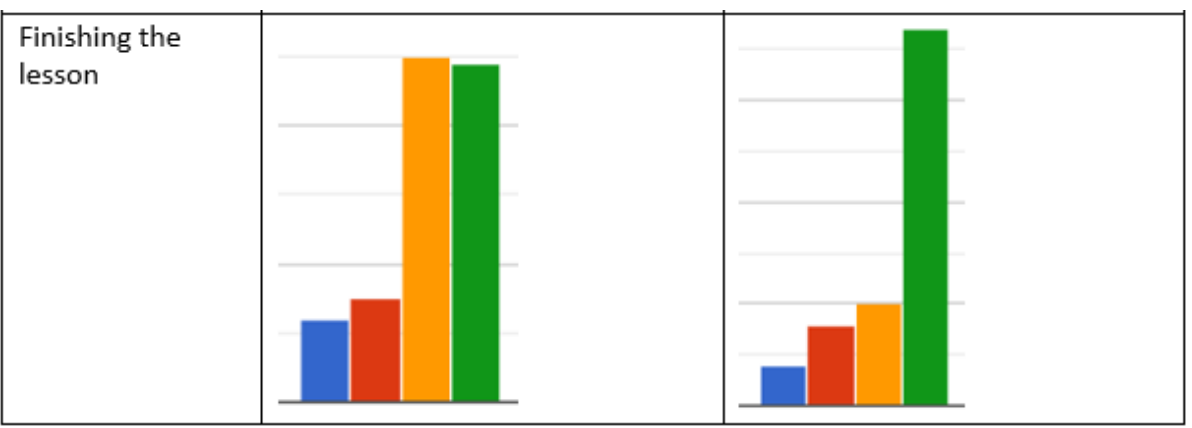
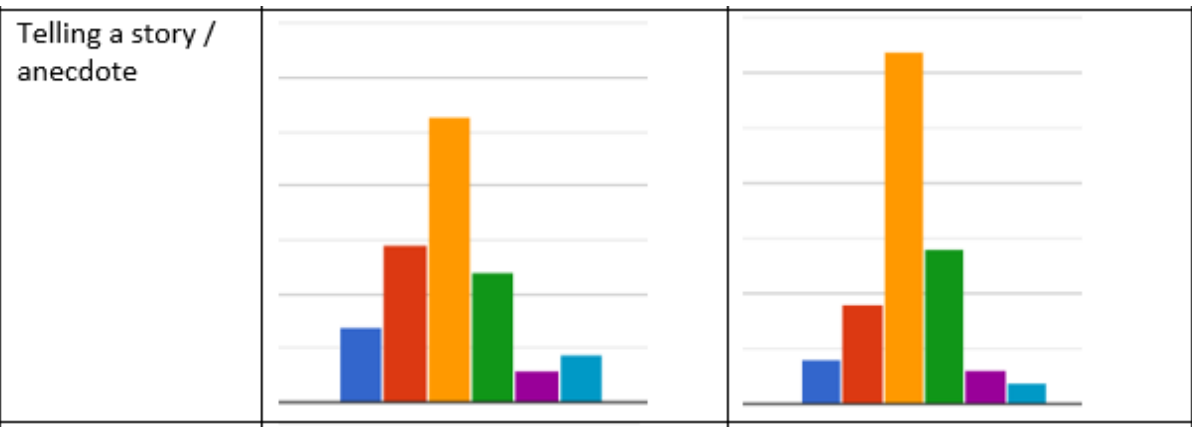
[The full questionnaire responses can be viewed here.](#)

When we compared the pre-course and post-course graphs from Google Forms we can see big changes in the use of English for all the areas covered in the course. The reduction in use of French during English lessons is especially noticeable (first dark blue and red columns). For example:

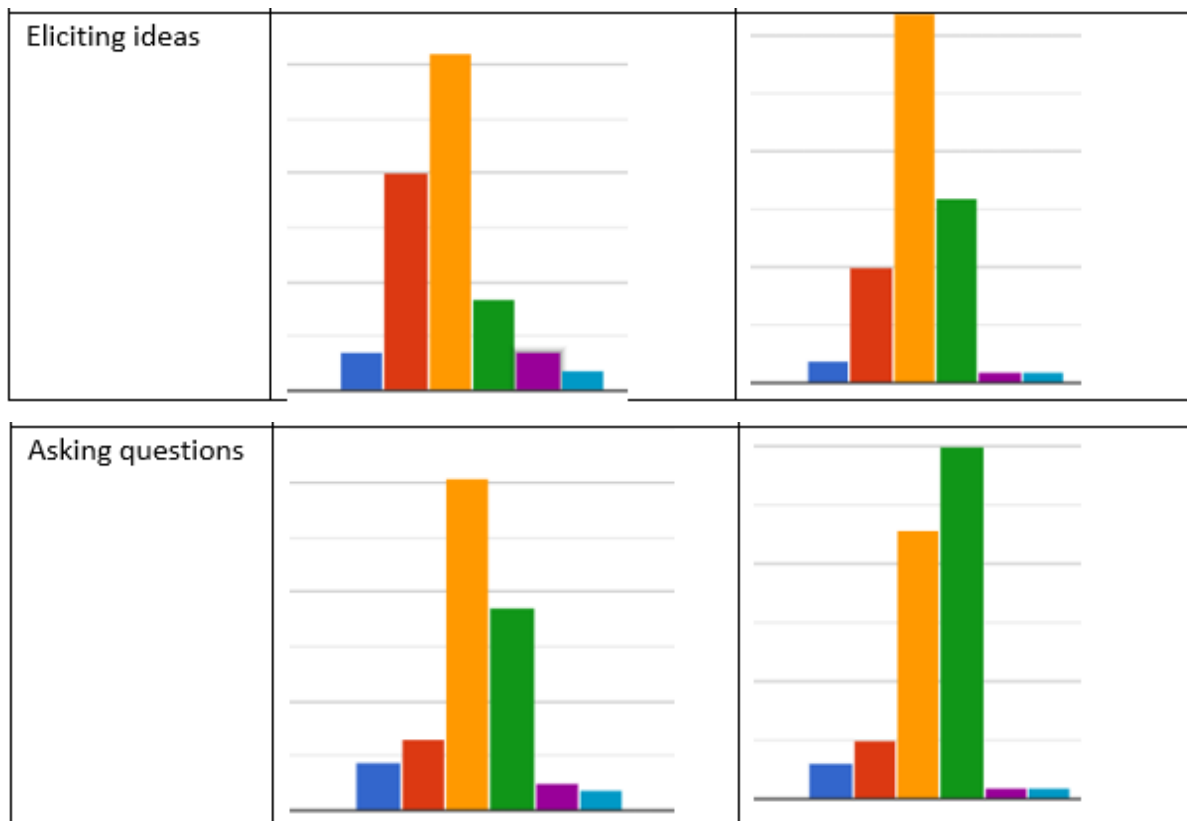




Language areas with more predictable or formulaic language (e.g. greeting students, finishing lessons) saw a more pronounced change towards using English whereas 'Telling a story or anecdote', which requires more complex language, changed less. Compare the two charts below:

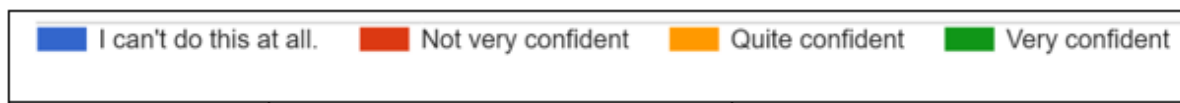


Particularly exciting is the increase in the use of English for elicitation and asking questions, since these invite more student responses, and suggest a shift towards more learner involvement in lessons using English. Teachers also report using English more to play games or use pictures, again suggesting more opportunities for the learners to speak English as well.

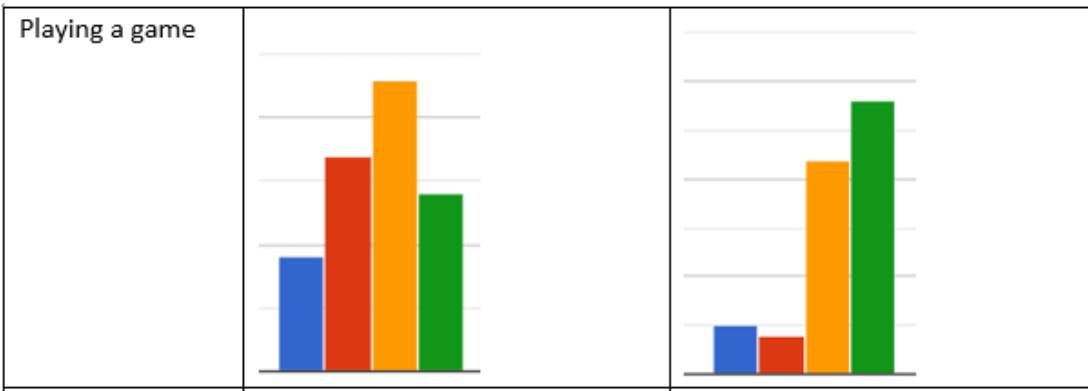
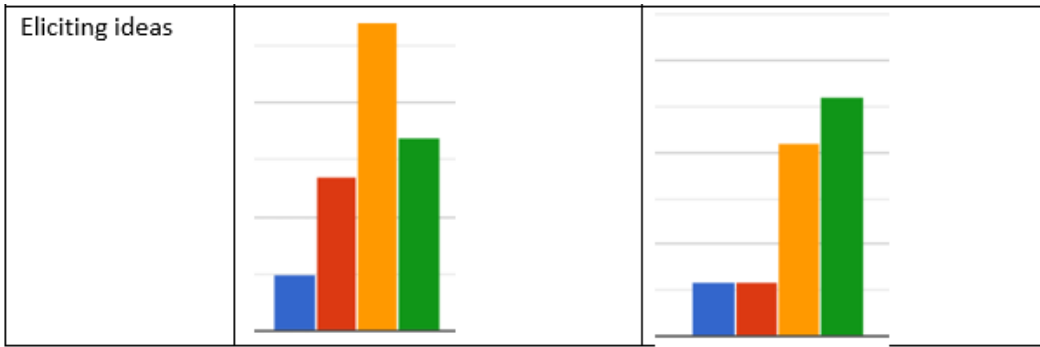


### Confidence:

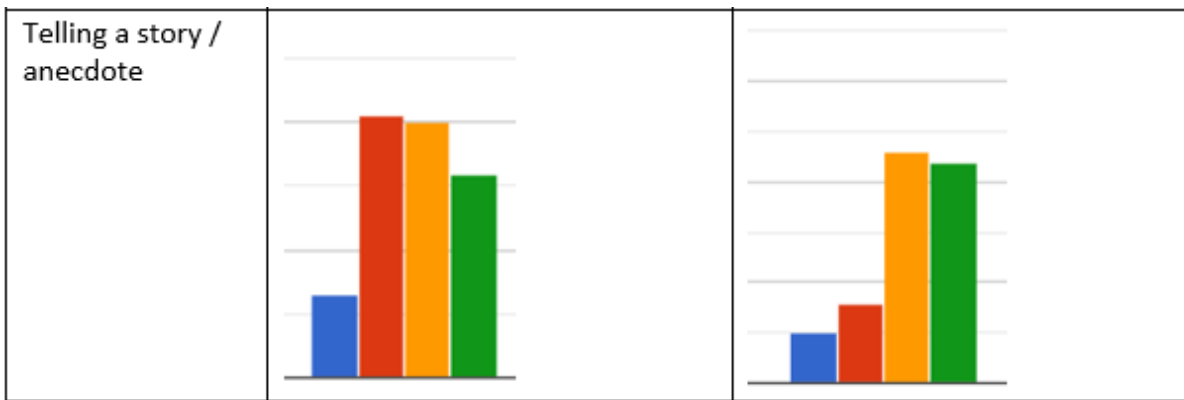
We also asked participants about their levels of confidence participating in certain classroom activities both pre and post course. Again, we colour coded the responses so that we could compare overall confidence rates for different areas before and after the course.



We can see overall significant gains with teachers reporting improved confidence using English across all areas. Again, we can notice a pattern with those activities with higher numbers of blue/red responses pre-course seeing the greatest changes. This tended to be activities which were less familiar to the participants from a methodology perspective, such as eliciting ideas or playing games:



Again, 'Telling stories and anecdotes' is a more linguistically complex area which may explain the slightly lower rates of confidence, although even here we see a shift from 'not very confident' to 'quite confident'.



We attribute the overall positive changes to the successful design of the materials which provided examples of teacher language and sentence frames for activities that teachers could take straight to the classroom. Another factor positively affecting teachers we believe was our encouragement to use whatever English the teachers have, without worrying too much about accuracy. A final important factor was the willingness of Guinean teachers to try the activities and techniques with their learners during the 'practice weeks'.



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## Qualitative responses

A sample of participant responses to the course are provided below, taken from the end of course questionnaire.

Question:

Do you think your confidence using English has improved because of the PRELIM course? If yes - how? If no - why not?

- *Yes because I realized now teaching English without using grammar translation is possible.*
- *Yes my confidence using English has improved because the PRELIM training has cleared out all the fears and doubt I had while teaching*
- *Yes ,my confidence improved a lot because I got some New methods that I didn't use to [use] & once I started sharing this with my students after the PRELIM2 sessions I noticed a positive change through their excitement & willingness to participate in the different courses*
- *Yes because, they [the students] use more English*
- *Yes. I didn't have a lot of instructions. Because of the prelim I can give all instructions in English*

Question: On Mondays each week we shared pictures and information about these cultural topics: Your house, garden and surroundings; Breakfast, lunch and dinner; Your school; Shopping; British and Guinean culture; Special days Did you enjoy this part of our course? Why/why not?

*Yes I really enjoyed this part of our course because it enabled me to know the different types of culture, foods and other activities across the Guinea and also in Britain.*

*Yes, because it helps us more to know each other.*

*No, because my working area has weak network so connection is impossible in my living home.*

*I really enjoyed these exchanges of ideas, values and cultures every Monday morning during this training. and that will obviously strengthen the professional links between English teachers in the different schools in Guinea.*

*Because it helps me to know more about British culture and other Guinean culture through my friends English teachers.*

*Yes, culture is one of the best things to know about teaching.. in my own country, I didn't know some local cultures before this. it is important.*

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## **Emergent learning**

Having a culture component to the course worked extremely well in a country as diverse as Guinea. The questionnaire revealed that participants enjoyed learning about each other's cultures and customs in different regions of Guinea as well as learning about English culture via our trainers. This helped 'group building' and fostering a sense of community and undoubtedly improved motivation and teachers' willingness to experiment and share their experiences.

The concrete linking of the language component to classroom tasks and activities seemed beneficial because it allowed participants to use what they learned immediately, and they could see the relevance of the new language. It also allowed for the introduction of new pedagogical ideas and activities.

Having two 'catch-up weeks' (or perhaps, more accurately, 'application weeks') was vital in achieving strong outcomes on this course. It gave participants the time and space to try out the things they had learned and report back on them, which helped maintain a sense of learning, achievement and engagement with participants.