

PRELIM 3

Guinea: GETC (Guinea English Teachers' Club)

with

Norwich Study Centre

August 2024

Project background

Partnership overview		
Partners	ETA partner	Guinea English Teacher’s Club (GETC)
	UKI partner	Norwich Study Centre (NSC)
User Profile	Context overview	Junior High School.
	Learner age group(s)	11-13
	Curriculum overview	Grade 7. Based on the Mobil 1 coursebook.
Teacher support resource package	Resource format and organisation	Written instructions (printed and Google Doc)
	Resource content	29 communicative activities
	Resource sustainability	Available as a Google Doc and via a bespoke YouTube channel
Dissemination	Methods	50 copies of an instruction book printed in Conakry and delivered to each of the eight administrative regions 10 OTG drives to each administrative region All distribution of the Resource Package (RP) was completed by car by GETC’S regional coordinators
	Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials development: 1st May-1st August 2023 Dissemination to summer school focus group: 14th August-31st August 2023 Nationwide dissemination: 9th October 2023 Monitoring and evaluation via Google Questionnaire: 23rd February-15th March 2024
	Number of teachers reached	400

Description of the partners

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. Each club is led by a regional coordinator.

Norwich Study Centre (NSC) is a private language school established in 2000, with a core team of seven full-time teachers/academic managers and five administrative staff, offering the following courses:

- General English, Exam Preparation (IELTS, Cambridge, OET) and specialist English courses for adults
- General English courses for young learners (11-17 years old)
- Intercultural Exchange courses for adults and juniors
- Professional Development for foreign teachers of English.

The school provides courses face-to-face and online.

Key features of the context and resource design rationale

The learners

- 11-13 year olds in mixed sex classes
- All learners are entry level or equivalent to CEFR A1
- Large classes of between 40 and 100 learners

The teachers

- Those participating in the initial roll out of the RP have between 5-20 years' teaching experience and all specialise in teaching English
- Teachers all hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree in 'Teaching and Education' and/or 'Business and Translation'
- Almost all of those teachers stated that at least 25% of each of their lessons is delivered in French
- Teaching methodology follows a deductive approach

The classroom

- All teachers have access to a blackboard and white chalk
- All learners attend class with a lined copybook, pens or pencils and a ruler

The syllabus

- Based on the Mobil 1 coursebook which comprises 30 units to be taught over the year.
- Learners have 1, two-hour lesson of English per week

Outline of the teacher support resource package and rationale

The Resource Package (RP) comprises a 43-page hard copy 'Teachers' Book' (TB) of written instructions and an OTG drive with demonstration videos uploaded. The TB contains 29 activities, covering all but one of the syllabus units and is designed to provide practice of the language systems introduced. The main, though not exclusive, focus of these activities is numbers and the alphabet along with the functional language and lexis introduced in the syllabus. All activities are intended to be used after a teacher-centred input session and controlled practice allowing for freer practice of the target language. Activities all last between 10-20 minutes. The written instructions

for each activity all include a clear aim, suggested duration, and necessary materials followed by concise step by step instructions. There are also optional variations to allow for extension and smaller or larger class sizes. All of the activities allow for pair and group work as well as interaction between the teacher and learners.

Each OTG drive includes 29 demonstration videos corresponding to each of the activities in the TB. The videos show NSC teachers and students completing the activities. Videos are intended to be used in conjunction with the written instructions and have been edited to emphasise each different stage in the activities.

The decision to narrow the focus of the project to Grade 7 was made because teachers are most confident with the syllabus content at this level and therefore more comfortable with trying the new activities.

Project findings

Working in partnership

NSC and GETC collaborated successfully throughout the planning stage. However, there were periods during the project (school exams in Guinea during May and June, and the summer rush at NSC in July and August) where one or both organisations had to prioritise other work areas, making communication difficult.

Learning points

- At the start of the project, ETAs and UKIs should share their academic calendar as well as information about their additional work commitments and how this might affect their availability at different times during the project.
- UKIs should at the outset provide the ETA with a clear summary of their organisational structure so that expectations regarding project capacity remain realistic.

Working within the CoP

A project like PRELIM 3 can at times feel very daunting. It was therefore helpful to share experiences with other UKIs during CoP meetings. It was particularly useful in those sessions to hear from those UKIs who were partnered with ETAs in contexts similar to our own. This provided valuable insight into how we might approach different challenges.

Learning points

- During CoP meetings, it is beneficial to be open about the challenges being faced. Other UKI representatives are often able to make useful suggestions which may turn out to be viable solutions.
- One-to-one meetings with NILE consultants are very useful in providing clear answers to logistical questions at different points during the project, especially with regard to timelines and grant application criteria.

Designing the teacher support resources

GETC representatives made clear at the outset that they would like the RP to focus on communicative activities. The NSC project team set out to see what this might mean in the ETA context. To this end, a questionnaire was distributed to Guinean English teachers to find out more about their teaching practice, the learners, and available resources.

The following were key findings of the questionnaire which influenced design of the RP:

1. Learners do not typically have access to original copies or photocopies of the Mobil 1 coursebook. Instead, teachers write everything from the book onto the board and learners are expected to copy this into their copybooks.
2. In addition to a blackboard and chalk, all classrooms are equipped with a supply of plain white A4 paper which can be utilised for group work.
3. 80% of the teachers state that they often ask learners to work in pairs, and 40% report that they sometimes organise learners into groups.

To build on the findings of the questionnaire, NSC and GETC organised two focus groups of teachers which took place in April 2023. Each focus group comprised 8 Guinean teachers, 4 GETC regional coordinators, and one member of the NSC project team. The focus groups were hosted via Zoom and lasted one hour. The focus groups confirmed that English classes in Guinea are teacher-centred, following a deductive approach with rules and examples followed by controlled practice.

As well as the project leader, the design phase involved three NSC teachers and the school's Technical Support Specialist (TSS). This phase of the project coincided with NSC's busiest time of the year in June and July. Consequently, the UKI project leader had to balance the needs of the school with the demands of the project.

Learning points

- Involving more teachers in the design phase of the project can add to the quality and variety of materials included in the RP. It can also add value in raising teachers' awareness of their own experience and skills.
- Looking beyond the teaching team to draw on the skills of other staff members can enable the project leader to broaden the scope of the project by incorporating other elements such as video instructions. This can also have a unifying effect on the whole school staff with academic and administrative team members working together towards a shared objective.
- Individual teachers often use different language for task rubric. It is important for the design team to agree on a set of guidelines for presentation to ensure consistency across the RP.

Disseminating the teacher support resources

The stated aim of GETC was for the RP to be rolled out in schools for the start of the new school year in the second week of October 2023. This meant that to allow time for printing and transportation, the grant application had to be agreed and the funds made available at the start of September. The process of completing the grant application was complicated by the difficulty of gathering accurate information about transport costs while the actual transfer of funds was delayed by a lack of clarity with regard to the correct currency. Transportation of the RP to each of the eight regions was delayed by road closures caused by the onset of the rainy season.

Learning points

- As soon as the format of the RP has been agreed, it is vital that both the UKI and the ETA meet to discuss what costs can be covered by the dissemination grant, to avoid misunderstandings about permissible costs.
- The UKI may encounter difficulties when transferring funds to the ETA bank account. It saves time if both organisations research and share information about the best secure method of transfer well beforehand.
- Dissemination of hard copies in the ETA country may be hampered by events occurring locally. Some of these may not be predictable but seasonal weather patterns such as the rainy season should be taken into consideration when agreeing timelines for dissemination.

Monitoring and Evaluation resource use

Having first conducted feedback via questionnaire for the trial of materials in August, GETC and NSC agreed on a further three strands of monitoring and evaluation to take place once the RP had been fully rolled out in October. These were a WhatsApp channel for ongoing feedback, a final written report from each of the eight regional coordinators in Guinea, and a feedback questionnaire to be distributed among all participating teachers. However, due to delays in dissemination resulting from the rainy season, feedback gathering did not begin until the start of January 2024.

Learning points

- When responding to open questions in questionnaires, respondents often express gratitude for the project at the expense of critical feedback. Therefore, it is important to provide clear instructions including examples of the kind of feedback, both positive and negative, that is expected.
- When gathering ongoing feedback via WhatsApp, there are clear advantages to working with a smaller group. This enables the UKI to develop a close relationship with those teachers, responding to their feedback and encouraging further updates. Larger groups are difficult to monitor and participants are less likely to see the value of their contribution.
- Qualitative feedback in the form of written reports is very effective in allowing regional coordinators to pinpoint exactly what challenges their teachers have when using the RP.

Project outcomes

Participating teachers used the materials for several weeks and were invited to complete online feedback using a Google Doc questionnaire. They were asked to reflect on the efficacy of Teacher's Book 1 and the video demonstrations of the instructions. Ten teachers provided feedback.

All participants who provided feedback reported watching the accompanying video demonstrations, with the majority finding them 'very helpful'. 80% of participants reported being very satisfied (5/5) with the Resource Package. 90% of participants found the written instructions easy to understand, and the video instructions were rated highly.

Despite a couple of activities being reported as too difficult for learners to execute effectively, the majority of activities that were tested have been met with resounding positivity, especially circle games. 80% of participants found the activities 'easy' or 'very easy' to organise, and feedback

indicated that learners generally understood the instructions e.g. 'my learners have memorised the language and had an opportunity to practise. They can now greet fluently in their daily routine.' Even when not fully understood, translations helped facilitate understanding. Moreover, 80% reported that learners found the activities 'enjoyable' or 'very enjoyable'.

Five out of eight regional coordinators in Guinea also wrote a final report. In these reports, coordinators stated that teachers who had not attended the online training were finding it more difficult to understand how to use the materials. One also commented that while the duration of their lessons is only two hours, some of the activities were quite long. Nevertheless, they found the materials 'so attractive and motivational' and found that learner participation in classes was higher. One coordinator wrote

'Miss Charlotte let me know that, thanks to Book 1 she's able now to do active teaching (learner centred teaching).'

Overall, despite the small sample size of feedback, the responses suggest overwhelmingly positive outcomes from the project, with high satisfaction levels, ease of understanding, and enjoyment reported by participants.