

PRELIM 3

Uganda: UNELTA (Uganda English Language Teachers' Association) with Wimbledon School of English

August 2024

Project background

Partnership overview		
Partners	ETA partner	Uganda National English Language Teachers' Association (UNELTA)
	UKI partner	Wimbledon School of English (WSE)
User Profile	Context overview	Approximately 250 member schools in the four regions of Uganda Some rural and urban schools
	Learner age group(s)	Primary and secondary education
	Curriculum overview	Content-based syllabus, organised over three terms in the school year (each of approximately 12 weeks) English skills and systems integrated into the syllabus
Teacher support resource package	Resource format and organisation	Five writing lessons, each on a different text type Five language lessons (grammar and lexis) Each lesson is 80 minutes
	Resource content	Each lesson package: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lesson plan/notes for teachers • classroom presentation visuals • student worksheets • screen capture tutorial video
	Resource sustainability	Use of Google Drive and USB to share materials easily and more widely.
Dissemination	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to Google Drive containing all materials and videos • printed copies in booklet form distributed at regional workshops • USB drive with all materials distributed at regional workshops • Updates to documents sent via WhatsApp
	Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of pilot materials April 2023 • Dissemination first draft of package to focus group August – November 2023 • Dissemination nationwide November 2023- February 2024
	Number of teachers reached	198 teachers directly

Description of the partners

UNELTA is a non-profit making association founded in 2011 by former students of Makerere University concerned that few students pursue English Language Studies to university level. UNELTA's mission is to contribute to effective teaching and learning of English Language through teacher training, collaboration and resource sharing. There are approximately 250 member schools spread across the four regions of Uganda.

Wimbledon School of English (WISE) is an independently owned language school based in South-West London with a peak capacity of approximately 400 full-time students. Academic Staff consists of 16-28 teachers (depending on the season) and 3-5 Academic Managers. There are 20 non-academic administrative staff.

Multiple General English, specialist courses and teacher training courses are offered in school, with some one-to-one lessons being delivered online. Non-timetabled ESP courses are available on demand.

WSE participated in PRELIM 1. Both partners participated in PRELIM 2, on different projects.

Key features of the context and resource design rationale

Typical Ugandan classes contain 60-80 students. This was the primary consideration in the development of activities and accompanying instructions for teachers to be able to set up, and gather feedback from, tasks. Broadly speaking, classes are differentiated by level rather than age.

UNELTA colleagues reported a deficit of resources for English teaching at secondary level with a high dropout rate for students. The resource package is designed for the lower secondary age range (approximately ages 13-16 years old) as this was considered the stage most in need of resourcing.

UNELTA Member schools are located in each of the Ugandan regions (Central, Northern, Western and Eastern). Within each district rural and urban member schools are represented. Schools in urban areas are more likely to have a shared staffroom PC with Internet access and classroom PCs with projector. Many rural schools have little to no technology resource. Power cuts present challenges countrywide. Similarly, teachers' and schools' connectivity reliability can vary greatly. Resources for use in class and accompanying teachers' notes have therefore been designed so that they can be printed, used with a PC or copied onto a board.

Outline of the teacher support resource package and rationale

The resource package supplements the national syllabus and integrates speaking, reading and writing skills during lesson stages, while supporting teachers to deliver lessons communicatively.

The content of the writing lessons was informed by the syllabus and exam content for this secondary education stage. The key consideration was ensuring that models and genre conventions matched those used in Uganda. Feedback from participating teachers was essential in understanding this, and in finalising contextualised language examples and illustrations on student handout and classroom visuals.

The aim of the teacher notes is to provide information about managing communicative tasks in larger classes. Suggested group sizes are provided for classes of over 30 students and clear guidance given regarding conducting feedback. We also identified that teachers' experience and confidence in teaching grammar varied, and so the notes provide detailed grammar explanations and suggest terms for class use to avoid using metalanguage with students.

The accompanying tutorial videos include information about differentiating tasks for fast finishers or students who need more processing times. There are also suggestions for expanding and adapting stages to include more lexis and further productive skills work.

Project findings

Working in partnership

The partnership met on Zoom in January 2023 to make introductions and gain an understanding of the Ugandan school context that UNELTA teachers work within, both the constraints and the positive aspects.

Subsequent email communication was slow as we had not discussed suitable methods of communication. Frequency and ease of communication improved once we had selected WhatsApp to agree monthly meetings, send Zoom links, Google Drive links and ask quick questions. This change was essential when applying for the dissemination grant and made the process more efficient. A more solid and natural working relationship then formed.

There were challenges with involving teachers directly from UNELTA member schools in the needs analysis process. This was due, in part, to a lack of internet data. As a result, needs analysis relied on UNELTA project coordinators to gather information and pass on findings to WSE. Project coordinators from UNELTA and WSE met every 6-8 weeks throughout the project.

Learning points

- Agreeing efficient methods of communication at the start of the project is vital to build a successful partnership.
- Provision of a small connectivity grant from the outset of the project would enable more teachers to participate in initial needs analysis.

Working within the CoP

Working with the CoP was positive overall for WSE. The Slack platform was very active in the early stages as UKIs posted resources, links and tools to assist with different project elements. At times it was challenging to sift this and access what was useful. Slack was not really used to discuss challenges experienced by UKIs in their partnerships. Sharing of such obstacles mainly occurred during CoP meeting discussions and this was reassuring and less isolating.

One-to-one meetings and email exchanges with the project coordinator were invaluable in helping the partnership overcome obstacles faced with involving teachers in the trial and feedback of resources.

Learning points

- Sharing points of challenge within the CoP was very useful and led to collaborative working and problem solving between UKIs. Such sharing is also needed on Slack.
- It is essential to approach the assigned project coordinator with any questions to avoid the project experiencing periods of inactivity.

Designing the teacher support resources

Designing the resources was a process of several cycles. After initial needs analysis, two pilot lessons were designed, one based around functional skills and the other a grammar lesson. The second stage of the process responded to needs teachers identified in their contexts. It was here that a gap was perceived in resources available to teach writing components of the National Curriculum and teachers requested more resources to supplement their grammar textbooks. More definition was provided as more teachers were involved and identified which writing genres and language structures needed to be prioritised.

Creation of the finished resources took longer than anticipated to refine the presentation of the package. Different materials writers have different preferences and styles which are evident in early drafts of handouts and teacher notes. Materials were submitted to focus group teachers for final presentation standards to be decided.

Learning points

- Seeing the resource package as an evolving entity enables material writers to be flexible in approach to content and editing. The resources then better met the needs of the users.
- Writing content and working on the visual presentation of materials can be seen as two separate processes. The aesthetics of the package need to be included as part of needs analysis and piloting stages.

Disseminating the teacher support resources

The most effective way to introduce the resource package to teachers was through workshops. These enabled UNELTA coordinators to visit teachers they already had a relationship with and meant internet connectivity was not a consideration. The same workshop was held twice, at different locations, in each of the country's four regions, with the aim of an average of 25 teachers attending each. Most workshops were held in November and December 2023 during the school vacation to maximise teacher participation. The Western region workshops were delayed due to preparations for the start of term and took place in February 2024. Dates for the workshops:

Eastern region	27th and 28th November 2023
Northern region	4th and 5th December 2023
Central region	15th and 16th December 2023
Western region	17th and 18th February 2024

100 different schools were represented, and teachers present shared the resources with at least three colleagues.

Workshops were held after completion of the majority of materials in first draft form to equip teachers with as much of the package as possible on USB drive and in printed format. We recognise that some teachers may be using earlier drafts. Any changes and updates were sent on WhatsApp and all drive and document links remained the same so that those previously shared remained relevant.



1.



2.

Figure 1: Teachers at Abim workshop (Northern region)
Figure 2: Teachers at Jinja workshop (Eastern region)



3.



4.

Figure 3: Teachers at Luwero workshop (Eastern region)
Figure 4: Teachers at Mbara workshop (Western region)

Learning points

- Presenting teachers with the resources package in more than one format avoids the exclusion of rural teachers and students and maximises use.
- Any updates to documents stored on Google drives must also be present on WhatsApp and email so that users have most recent versions.

Monitoring and Evaluation resource use

Feedback on material design and use was gathered at the trial stage, regional workshops and after material use. This was done using Microsoft forms, WhatsApp, Zoom focus groups and by questionnaire at regional workshops. UNELTA project coordinators also observed some teachers to gather feedback on the appropriacy of materials for learners, learners' response to materials and ease of use for the teachers.

1 Feedback

Complete and return to the Facilitator

3-2-1 Feedback!

3 - things you learned today

- That learning has to be facilitated like using
- class room materials should be authentic
- _____

2 - questions you still have

- Nil
- _____

1 - thing you want to do in your community of practice

- Need to learn to create more teaching materials and other resources

Comments:

Good Facilitation because we have received the materials like resource 1/2 books and discs

Figure 5: Sample feedback 1 regional workshops

1 Feedback

Complete and return to the Facilitator

3-2-1 Feedback!

3 - things you learned today

- How to write a good lesson plan.
- How to motivate learners.
- Using group dynamics to achieve effective learning

2 - questions you still have

- How to acquire the relevant learning materials.
- _____

• - thing you want to do in your community of practice

- Develop learning materials relevant to my community.

Comments: I am yearning for more

Figure 6: Sample feedback 2 regional workshops

1 Feedback

Complete and return to the Facilitator

3-2-1 Feedback!

3 - things you learned today

- Teaching in reference to the real world (job market)
- Creation of learning materials for functional writing (especially)
- More skills in learner engaged in lesson.

2 - questions you still have

- How can we/I teachers adequately use this format using the little time given?
- _____

• - thing you want to do in your community of practice

- To improve on my class performance

Comments:

Very wonderful presentation.

Figure 7: Sample feedback 3 regional workshops

Some data was less useful than anticipated. Longer questionnaires prompted more precise data, yet gained responses from fewer teachers. Shorter open questionnaires gathered responses from ten teachers, but contained fewer insights to inform resource development. The partnership then relied on UNELTA project coordinators liaising directly with teachers and passing responses to WSE second-hand. Prior to dissemination grant approval, the first focus group attendance was low with only two teachers. However, insights gathered were vital in understanding the teaching context more fully.

After assigning the budgeted dissemination grant funds for data allowance, participation in further groups increased. Sending reminders on WhatsApp helped here also. Six teachers fed back on the design of the materials and seven on their use. Providing questions for consideration in advance of the focus groups provided more targeted discussion. More teachers joined the project WhatsApp group throughout the project, totalling 25 teachers. Some sharing responses and experiences using the materials.

Learning points

- Having a small core group of teachers involved throughout the project provides valuable qualitative data to inform resource design. Motivation is increased as they see how contributions impact the materials. Other teachers can join different stages of the project as able.
- Providing certificates for participation in stages of the project validates participants' contributions and increases the participation rate and the amount of qualitative data available.

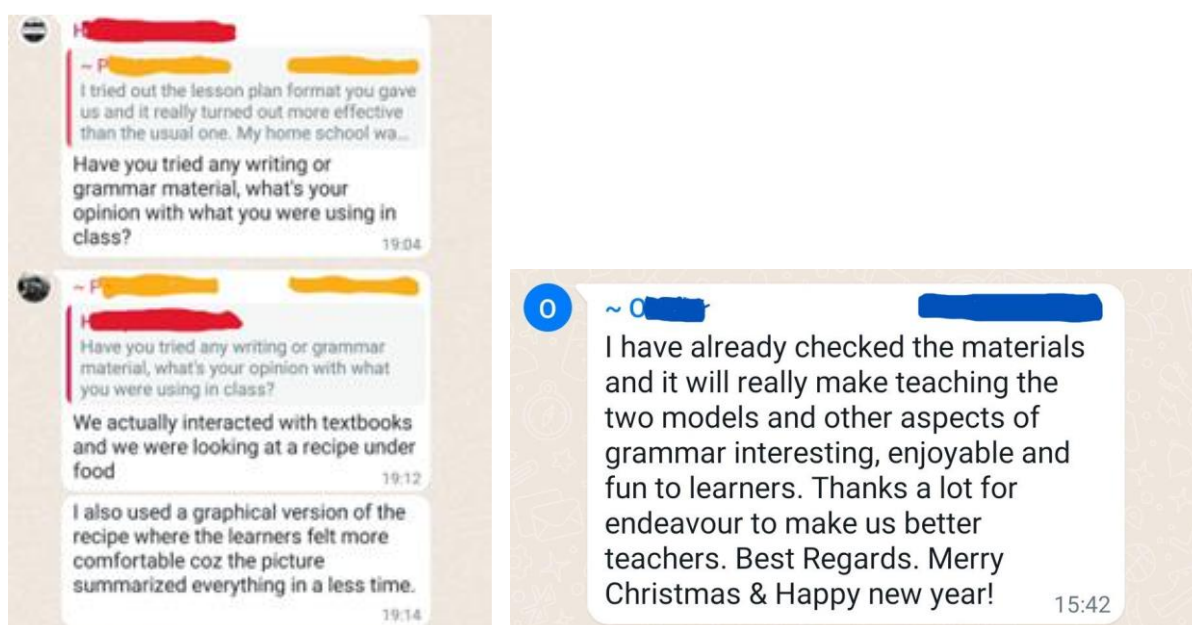


Figure 8: Sample from PRELIM3 teachers' WhatsApp group

Project outcomes and emergent learning

Teachers reported that having the package available in more than one format facilitated their school's participation and allowed materials to be shared successfully. All seven teachers at the final focus group had shared the materials with between three and five teachers in their department, the printed copies being placed in the staff room and used with other resources. One teacher had shared materials from the USB drive with teachers from a neighbouring school not part of UNELTA.

Teachers at both focus groups found the materials impacted their planning and teaching positively by providing examples of communicative activities, step-by-step instructions for tasks and clear and sequential stages to guide students through target language and skills.

'I loved the way they (lesson plans) were so much organised. The step-by-step instructions were so clear. It was a little bit unique because students are used to different styles of teaching. So, when we bring this method, they are so excited and you grab their attention quickly.'

(Teacher 1, final focus group meeting)

'It made the lesson so much easier. Maybe I was making it too complicated before. This was more fun and interesting...for me also. The students were doing things and talking more about the lesson.'

(Teacher 2, final focus group meeting)

All teachers found students more engaged in lessons where the materials were used and reached a deeper understanding of the target writing or language.

'We were making things a bit hard and giving them all the information at once. All my students can now see the patterns and produce their own (modal sentences).'

(Teacher 3, final focus group)

One teacher shared an account of students benefiting from the lessons so much that they told their peers in other classes, who then approached their own teachers to request the same materials.

Learning point

- Exposure to, and input in, the process of resources design has shown there is an eagerness within the ETA to develop further and produce similar materials more independently. PRELIM 3 modelled the process and exemplified types of classroom activities and lesson stages. The natural progression for any future projects would be training in the principles of resource design.