

PRELIM 3

Vietnam: VietTESOL (Vietnam Association of English Language Teaching and Research) with **Nottingham Trent University**

August 2024

Project background

Partnership overview		
Course overview	ETA partner	VietTESOL: Vietnam Association of English Language Teaching and Research
	UKI partner	NILIC, NTU: Nottingham Institute for Languages and Intercultural Communication, Nottingham Trent University
User profile	Context overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English is a compulsory subject for Primary and Lower Secondary learners in Vietnam. A new curriculum launched in 2018 Published ELT resources are plentiful Many state-school teachers also have private students
	Learner age group(s)	Primary (ages 8-11); lower secondary (11-16)
	Curriculum overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New curriculum was issued in 2018 and will be phased in by 2025 Curriculum promotes communicative language teaching and student-centred methodology Themes, topics and language knowledge to be taught at each level are prescribed
Mode of delivery	Resource format and organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two sets of digital worksheets for Primary and Lower Secondary learners Worksheets in each set organised according to language skill (reading & writing, listening and speaking, grammar and vocabulary)
	Resource content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner worksheets with associated flashcards covering all four skills and with a unifying environmental theme Teacher guide for each set of materials Video for teachers with suggestions
	Resource sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital worksheets can be projected in classroom Worksheets and flashcards can be laminated
Course content	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material hosted on the VietTESOL website and available to all teachers to download for free Dissemination webinar planned for May 2024 Two in-person dissemination workshops planned for June 2024 (Hanoi and Ho Chi Min City). Funded by BC Dissemination Grant

	Timeframe	February 2024-July 2024
	Number of teachers reached	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3000 active members of VietTESOL • Approx. 2000 members of the K-12 Special Interest Group (SIG) • Many thousands of English teachers who are not VietTESOL members

Description of the partners

VietTESOL is a nonprofit organization based in Hanoi for all those involved in English language teaching and research. It over has over 3000 active members and carries out regular workshops, training courses, and webinars for members and non-members. It hosts a website with online teaching resources and has an annual international convention. VietTESOL also undertakes policy advocacy work related to capacity building and leadership development within ELT. It partners with various international agencies including the American Embassy and the British Council.

NILIC is a department within the School of Arts and Humanities at Nottingham Trent University which delivers innovative programmes of English and foreign language learning, language teacher training and intercultural communication development across a broad portfolio of certificates, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and short courses. NILIC also works with a number of international partners on externally funded projects related to teacher training and materials development.

Key features of the context

- English is a compulsory subject for around 15 million Primary and Secondary school pupils.
- A new English curriculum for public schools was introduced in 2018 which promotes a shift from rote-learning to a more communicative approach.
- Teaching remains largely textbook-based, test-oriented, and teacher-centred.
- Class sizes are typically large with mixed levels of proficiency.
- Policy of ‘One curriculum many textbooks’ means more published materials are available.
- Teachers are reluctant to adapt materials themselves.
- Many teachers supplement their incomes with private tutoring.
- There are significant urban-rural disparities in ELT provision and quality.

Outline of the teacher support resource package, and rationale

- Focus on Primary and Lower Secondary teachers was agreed with partner.
- Materials are designed as supplementary to textbooks in areas not well covered.
- There is a set of collated worksheets for each level, closely aligned to the curriculum.
- There is a unifying theme which aims to raise young learners’ environmental awareness.
- Each pack has an easy-to-use teacher guide with instructions for each worksheet.
- There is a video which includes examples of how to differentiate and exploit materials in different ways for ‘fast finishers’ or learners who require more scaffolding.
- Teachers can use the worksheets in any order, selecting by topic, skill, duration, etc.
- Digital materials can be downloaded and printed or projected depending on the situation.
- Materials can be used by teachers in their school classrooms or with their private students.

Project findings

Working in partnership

Regular Zoom meetings with the three VietTESOL coordinators assigned to the project enabled us to establish a shared understanding of the project aims and a common sense of purpose. From the outset we agreed that VietTESOL members should be closely involved in the process of developing the materials to ensure that they would be appropriate for the context. We cooperated very closely to plan the project, to introduce it to K-12 SIG members and NILIC staff via webinars and then to select teachers from both partners to form the working groups which would work together on creating the materials (see flyers below produced by VietTESOL). We also collaborated on presentations at the VietTESOL annual convention and the ASEAN Teaching English conference. Although it was often challenging to find times when all team members in Vietnam could attend working group meetings, there was frequent communication of questions, answers, draft activities and feedback via Zalo and a real sense of partnership.

The image shows two promotional flyers for the PRELIM 3 Project. The left flyer is a registration call for participants, and the right flyer is for a training event.

Left Flyer: CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

PRELIM 3

Exciting Opportunity for VietTESOL Members!

REGISTER

Become part of a newly joint project between VietTESOL and Nottingham Trent University (NTU).

Register link: <https://tinyurl.com/28hw3tkb>

Registration deadline: February 26, 2023

NTU COORDINATORS

Martin Seviour
Nottingham Trent University

Catrin
Nottingham Trent University

VietTESOL COORDINATORS

Le Thi Hong Van, PhD
Tay Nguyen University

Nguyen Van Thinh, PhD
Ha Long University

To Thi Nhu Quynh, MA
Lao Cai High School No.3

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

• Are you interested in developing your classroom skills?
• Would you like to work with teachers from the UK to create your own materials and activities?

Participants: EFL and EM/ teachers in K-12 and those interested in K-12 teaching

Quantity: Maximum 45, three groups
Primary school level: 15
Secondary school level: 15
High school level: 15

Requirements:
- VietTESOL member
- English proficiency equivalent to level B2 or C1
- Strong commitment throughout the project

Meeting mode: Online

Time: 3 months for one group
Primary school level: 3/2023 - 6/2023
Secondary school level: 6/2023 - 9/2023
High school level: 9/2023 - 12/2023

The end result:
We hope that the materials we develop together will be made available to schoolteachers across Vietnam.

Benefits:
You will be fully credited as a co-author of any materials produced and you will also receive an NTU certificate of participation in the project. In addition, you will have the opportunity to attend online training events for which you will also receive certificates. Of course, we also hope that you will benefit both professionally and personally from collaborating closely with your partners at NTU.

Right Flyer: PRELIM 3 PROJECT

Training event
for all project participants!

'Basic Principles in Designing ELT Materials for K12'

Martin Seviour
Nottingham Trent University

Le Thi Hong Van
Tay Nguyen University

Nguyen Van Thinh
Ha Long University

To Thi Nhu Quynh
Lao Cai High School Number 3

Zoom link for the event:
<https://zoom.us/j/5160313134?pwd=dCtHWmEvWUlhYnNrUmJoVmVaVmIGQ09>

Meeting ID: 516 031 3134 Passcode: Martin22

Taking part in the event, you will receive a certificate from NTU

Date: Thursday 30 March, 2023 Time: 7.30-8.30pm

Figure 1: screenshot of WhatsApp video

Working with the CoP

There was excellent support from project management (NILE) in one-to-one meetings and by email. Communication with other UKIs was sporadic and perhaps there was sometimes a reluctance to put issues they were experiencing on the written record in Slack. However, the CoP meetings were always useful in terms of moral support and concrete ideas.

Designing the teacher support resources

The resources were developed in working groups consisting of five to eight VietTESOL members and three NILIC teachers who met online and communicated regularly via Zalo. Following the completion of the Primary materials new groups were formed to work on the Secondary materials. Each group was allocated one area of the curriculum (Reading and Writing, Listening and Speaking, Grammar and Vocabulary) and they began by sharing and discussing key information about the young learners in Vietnam, the curriculum, the textbooks and the classroom context. Groups decided on language content and activity types within their area and NILIC staff then drafted worksheets and teacher's notes. Drafts were then sent to VietTESOL group members for review and comment and a selection were piloted in classrooms. Draft worksheets were revised on the basis of feedback from piloting. The design and illustration of the materials was done by an NTU Graphic Design graduate from Vietnam which helped to ensure that it was appropriate for young Vietnamese learners. We also produced a short video to give teachers further assistance in using the various activity types included in the materials.

Disseminating the teacher support resources



Photo of dissemination workshop in Hanoi on July 18th 2024

On 18 and 25 July, 2024, two in-person dissemination events were held in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to introduce new supplementary resources for K-12 English teachers. These events were organised with the help of the British Council in Vietnam in collaboration with Nottingham Trent University (UK) and the K-12 SIG group of VietTESOL Association (VTA). The resources, entitled “The Magical World” [*Thế giới diệu kỳ*] In Vietnamese language], consist of two volumes specifically designed for separate use by primary and secondary school teachers and learners. These resources aim to enhance the quality of English language teaching materials in Viet Nam.

The events brought together 40 teachers in Hanoi and 34 teachers in Ho Chi Minh City. Led by Ms. Catrin Egan from NTU, Dr. Le Thi Hong Van, and Dr. Nguyen Van Thinh from the K-12 VietTESOL group. Participants actively engaged in activities to explore and implement the “Magical World” materials in their teaching practice. The teachers shared practical, creative, and inspiring ideas on how to use the materials effectively.

“The Magical World” not only supports learners in developing their language skills through familiar and modern topics but also promotes cultural awareness, global citizenship, and a sense of responsibility in building a sustainable community.

Useful links

Learn more about the two dissemination workshops as reported in British Council Viet Nam's August 2024 e-newsletter:

[New classroom resources launched for English teachers | British Council](#)

VTA's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1017052063544287&set=a.683845110198319>

Access to the resources - All the Primary materials including Worksheets, Teachers' Notes, Audio, Videos, and Flashcards are now hosted on the VietTESOL Association website and can be freely accessed and downloaded by all - members and non-member teachers. They can be viewed here: [Home | Partnered Remote Learning Improvement \(PRELIM\) Vietnam 3 \(www.viettesol.org.vn\)](#). The Secondary materials will also be uploaded on the website shortly. The resources have also been publicised via British Council Viet Nam network channels.

Monitoring and evaluating resource use

Teachers involved in the working groups piloted the materials with their own students. Each pilot teacher used a specially designed form to provide specific feedback on the appropriacy of specific lesson content, how well different activities engaged the learners, timing of activities and exercises, and whether learning objectives were met. Here are some example comments from piloting teachers:

'This one gave my students a wow moment after I helped them understanding the content of listening audio.' (Primary teacher)

'This lesson reminded me that I can expand the lesson for a topic. For example, with the topic weather, we can compare weather in different countries like that, not only just talk about the weather today or activities in a kind of weather.' (Secondary teacher)

'After implementation, I found that having students redraw rooms based on their family's layout and fill in the objects in the rooms, along with writing the corresponding English words, was very effective. It helps students remember the vocabulary they have learned.' (Primary teacher)

Together with their feedback some piloting teachers sent pictures of their classes using the materials. The picture on the left shows a group of Secondary (Grade 6) learners while the one on the right is a class of Primary (Grade 5) learners.



Figure 1: Grade 6 and Grade 5 using the materials

We also invited a Vietnamese teacher trainer from a Hanoi university to review the materials and provide feedback. Here is a selection of her comments:

‘Considering the standard 35-minute period in primary school, the handouts are appropriately designed to fit within this timeframe.’

‘The worksheets are designed at an A1 level (Level 1), but some activities contain a high number of new words, which may pose challenges for students. Adding pictures alongside new vocabulary, for example for Page 14, Activity 2, could help scaffold learning effectively.’

‘Most topics in the worksheets align with the curriculum themes and are suitable for Grade 5 students. However, some topics, such as language for comparison, may need adjustment to better fit within the curriculum framework. Students are not learning them until grade 6 (secondary school).’

All the feedback we received was discussed in working groups and where necessary changes were made to specific lessons or activities. Feedback was particularly helpful in improving the instructions and guidance provided in the teacher’s notes and video.

However, we have not yet gathered extensive data on the use of the materials due to delays in receiving permission to make the materials available on the VietTESOL website. Teachers who do access the materials and use them have been invited to provide us with feedback. We will also use the planned dissemination events in June to gather more feedback from those attending.

Project outcomes

- We have developed a strong working relationship between VietTESOL and NILIC through a genuine sharing of the work involved in delivering the project outcomes.
- A set of original co-produced supplementary materials for Primary and Secondary teachers resulting from a thorough analysis of the teaching context and piloting.
- Teachers on both sides who have gained professionally and personally from working creatively with colleagues from very different educational and cultural contexts.

Emergent learning

- Co-producing materials online with teachers in two countries with a significant time difference has presented some real challenges. However, involving Vietnamese teachers at all stages of the design process was a key objective for both partners and has resulted in a good quality end-product and valuable learning for all involved.
- Developing effective professional relationships online requires time and patience. We began the project with very limited understanding of the Vietnam context or the nature of VietTESOL as an organisation. Also, our partners knew very little about PRELIM3 and assumed it would be similar in content and approach to PRELIM2. So, it took several months and many meetings before we had a shared understanding of the project aims and agreement on the approach we would take.
- It became clear as part of our initial needs analysis that ELT in Vietnam is relatively ‘resource rich’. As a result of the ‘one curriculum many textbooks’ policy there are now a wide range of published textbooks and other materials aligned to the new curriculum. VietTESOL is also very well supported

by international partners, especially the American Embassy which delivers regular webinar training for K-12 teachers. This made it quite difficult for us to find a distinct niche for the PRELIM3 collaboration. We achieved this by deciding with our partners to step outside the set syllabus and produce supplementary materials which teachers could use flexibly both in their school teaching and with their private students. Through the teacher's notes and accompanying video, we aimed to encourage teachers to experiment with exploiting materials in different ways. PRELIM3 was also different from other VietTESOL collaborations in the way we actually tried to engage teachers in the process of materials development rather than only as end users.

- School teachers in Vietnam are extremely busy since the majority take on additional private work in the evening and at weekends. This, together with the time difference, made it particularly challenging to arrange meetings of working groups. It is commendable that so many teachers gave up some of their limited free time to be involved in PRELIM3 and also indicates the prestige associated with working closely with a UK university on a British Council supported project. The same is true for the three VietTESOL K-12 leaders who attended regular project coordination meetings often quite late in the evening and devoted significant time to communicating with their members, organising our webinars and providing us with important information at key times. Care was taken to express empathy with our partners' context, showing gratitude for all their contributions, and adapting to their work patterns. Coupled with an awareness of the difference in communication styles, this played a significant role in keeping the relationship positive and the project on track.