REPORT ON HORNBY-FUNDED TEACHER ASSOCIATION PROJECT

Title: Creating context-relevant EFL worksheets for Cameroon secondary schools

Country: Cameroon

Dates: 5 October–19 December 2020 (original dates); 5 October–18 December 2021(actual dates due to Covid)

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Lack of student course materials has been identified as one of the most crucial issues facing teachers in Cameroon, in addition to motivation and low proficiencies in the classroom. It is commonly understood amongst colleagues in Cameroon that available coursebooks are, for the most part, distant from the realities of the learners, inaccessible and expensive. For example, one the main coursebooks currently in use requires learners who have learnt nothing about cars or planes to talk about spacecraft. CAMELTA Research Group members had already developed a way to tackle low learner motivation in an earlier project, and this Hornby-funded project enabled us to address paucity of course materials by creating learner worksheets. The group's decision to create locally-relevant worksheets was not limited to creating the usual language worksheets, but worksheets which reflect the learners' social world and learning experiences. We therefore found it necessary to develop supplementary material content that is more accessible to both the learners and the teachers than that found in the prescribed textbooks.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Our main objectives were:
  ➢ to create EFL worksheets for the first modules of the first three years of secondary school in Cameroon following curriculum requirements;
  ➢ to foster a sense of autonomy in participating members through the process of creating these local learning materials.

3. PROJECT MEMBERS AND THEIR ROLES

Project members were existing members of CAMELTA Research Group, including some pre-service teachers who opted to join the scheme based on perceived relevance*. The project was not initially conceived to run in pools, but due to the constraints imposed by Covid, a pragmatic decision was taken to run the projects this way. Pool leaders opted to lead groups of participants, and this decision was based on their previous experiences of working on CAMELTA Research Group projects. Pool leaders were free to determine the size of their pool although an initial target was set for a maximum of five and minimum of three members. Participants were free to join or leave the scheme at will.

* Very few pre-service teachers have any idea of the existence of our local TA until there is an event or an encounter during which they learn about the things we do. An event or encounter could be a conference, webinars, seminars, or a demo lesson taught by a member of CAMELTA Research Group. The tendency has been that the greater majority of them opt to participate in our activities after such encounters or events.

Name: Eric Ekembe
Institution: ENS Yaounde
Responsibilities: team leader; coordinate the whole project and the various pools

Name: Ita Ndifon Frinwie
Institution: Government Bilingual Technical High School Yaounde
Responsibilities: coordinate work in her pool

Name: James Zih
Institution: Government Technical Bilingual High School Nsam
Responsibilities: coordinate work in her pool

Name: Caroline Linyor Tata
Institution: Government Bilingual High School Etoug-Ebe
Responsibilities: coordinate work in her pool

Name: Dr Nicole Menoh
Institution: Regional Pedagogic Inspector for English for the Litoral Region
Responsibilities: coordinate work in her pool

Note: Two other pools emerged and were supported to work although they did not provide their reports.

4. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Our activities were characterised by a process of conception, actual creation of the worksheets, trial, revision and structuring. Although we had planned to complete this process by April 2021, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it took us until August 2021.

4.1. Conception Phase
The conception phase of our project consisted of two major elements: understanding the curriculum; and recollecting ideas on the categories of actions learners at the target learning levels were expected to do to be able to develop an appropriate framework for creating the worksheets.

4.1.1 Analysing and understanding the curriculum
We sent the school curriculum for the first year of secondary school to the CAMELTA Research Group members via our WhatsApp platform for them to examine its structure and contents (together with guiding questions) in preparation for subsequent discussions on an agreed date. The intention here was to familiarise the teachers with the curriculum, which they too often see as far-removed, complicated and not worth looking at. In a second WhatsApp meeting, we discussed the curriculum independently of learners before brainstorming on challenges that learners face interacting in their social environments. In the online discussions, questions to elicit ideas from participants were horizontally constructed to generate interactive discussions. The questions were often indirect and supported with suggestions to create a safe space for mutual exchange of ideas and preclude any form of suspicion of judgment. This approach to curriculum discussions was of importance since teachers believe the curriculum to be created by 'experts' and would traditionally expect an 'expert' to tell them what is right or wrong. So, for example, instead of explaining that the syllabus has grammar points such as pronouns because pronouns are used in (self)introductions, we led the participants to think of when they had to introduce

themselves/someone else, brainstorm the expressions they would use in such situations and then identify the grammar points in the expressions they had noted down. This way they were able to see *why* a unit in the coursebook dealing with greetings and introductions includes that grammar point.

This forum interaction was later coded, reported on and sent back to teachers via the platform to check that it accurately reflected their thinking and discussion during the meeting. Below is an example of coding of ideas from the meeting.

The first task was for participants to suggest aspects of language learners may require to accomplish the categories provided in the last meeting. The ideas generated in the discussions were summarised as follows:

Theme	Indicators
Language system	Simple present tense/question formation/modals/auxiliary verbs; vocabulary
Language functions	Introductions, politeness; instructions; asking for directions; asking about others, places, complaints

The discussion was further orientated towards activities pre-adolescent learners are most likely to be doing. The ideas generated through brainstorming are summarised below:

Theme	Indicators
Life actions	Describing people; doing house chores/the washing up; making new friends, shopping, completing forms, worshiping and praying, playing, sleeping, watching TV

In a third task, participants were asked to provide ideas related to places where the target learners are most likely to visit and who they are most likely to interact with in such places. The ideas generated are summarised below:

Theme	Indicators
Potential areas for action	Toilet, classroom, office, infirmary, staffroom, dining shed, kitchen, bedroom, living room
People learners are most likely to meet	Teachers, traders, friends

In a final activity, participants were required to suggest the kinds of attitudes learners would be expected to cultivate as humans in society. Suggestions provided are summarised below:

Theme	Indicators
Attitudes necessary to build in learners	Politeness, open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, critical thinking, team spirit/collaboration, generosity, respect, sincerity & honesty, self-esteem, self-awareness, awareness of environment

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Coding from CAMELTA Research Group online meeting

4.1.2 Developing a framework for creating the worksheets

In a third WhatsApp meeting, teachers were guided to identify possible classroom solutions to the problems identified in the previous meeting, placing the learners at the centre of the suggestions. The discussions made no explicit reference to the curriculum. In other words, we did not link this discussion to ideas generated from the previous meeting, where participants had assessed the curriculum in the context of the learners' social world. The discussions were again coded, reported on and sent back to participants to check.

A framework task/table based on the coding from the two interactive discussions was then given to participants, in which they keyed details from the coding which reflected the various language skills to be developed (see below).

CAMELTA Research Group
Framework Task for developing worksheets for beginning EFL secondary school learners
Complete the table following the instructions provided.
Below is a summary of all the brainstorming from our two meetings. Select elements from the box that fit in each of the columns in the table. You may add more as you deem necessary.

> ***Group Brainstorming:*** Introductions, politeness; instructions; asking for directions; asking about others, places, complaints; describing people; doing house chores/the washing up; making new friends, shopping, completing forms, worshiping and praying, playing, sleeping, watching TV; Toilet, classroom, office, infirmary, staffroom, dining shed, kitchen, bedroom, living room; Teachers, traders, friends, politeness, open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, critical thinking, team spirit/collaboration, generosity, respect, sincerity & honesty, self-esteem, self-awareness, awareness of environment; developing the 'self' to interact with other learners; greetings; saying thank you or bye; introducing oneself; introducing a friend, classmate; talking about one's family members; name titles; exchanging personal information: name, age, nationality; talking about close family members and extended family members; asking for and giving directions; etc.

NB: You must not complete each column as some activities overlap. E.g. activities for picture analysis can overlap into writing and reading, etc. We're going creative, as we're looking at local life in 'Our Environment'. Do not forget worksheets are activity-based and mostly build on the local experience of the learners especially in the case of young learners.

Everyday engagements in the environment	Topic	Spoken and written expressions	Reading	Listening	Game/puzzle or class activity
Shopping	At the (Mokolo) market	How much? 2 litres of... etc.	Short texts on different commodities sold in various places and in different markets accompanied with pictures (note that this could also be pictures/drawings)	Listen to a 'buyam-sellam': communicative event between a buyer and seller *(Main product here is to have a complete bidding discussion cut into pieces for a member in each group of learners to read aloud to other members of the group who listen to identify where that fits in a real time market scenario)*	Where to get it: *Here, I will get multiple pictures of small sizes of different elements sold in our local markets; Get bigger sizes flash cards carrying the labels 'cold store, clothes shop, grocery, butcher'; group the learners and ask them to pick each picture from a bundle and decide where to place it. In groups they decide which is correct*

Framework task

The framework described above was intended to give participants a sense of direction while they were creating the worksheets.

4.2 Creating the worksheets proper

A new calendar of work (see below) was created to enable participants to take active responsibility for completing the work we had agreed on.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="5">CAMELTA RESEARCH GROUP MEETING
A brief meeting was held on 7 February to read and endorse the proposed calendar of activities in preparation of the subsequent CAMELTA workshops/seminars and the grand conference with Hornby. The new information brought up during this meeting is recapitulated in the table below.</td></tr>
<tr><th>Item</th><th>Task</th><th>Rationale</th><th>Date</th><th>Concern</th></tr>
<tr><td>F2F</td><td>Pool leaders schedule and work in their respective pools; complete the form given to them; think of ice breakers we can use at different levels.</td><td>inclusive and use of graphics</td><td>any day between 8 and 13 February</td><td>pool leaders</td></tr>
<tr><td>Online meeting</td><td>presentation of tasks completed by the different pools</td><td>feedback on how members are faring with the tasks and what they made of the task</td><td>14 February</td><td>everyone</td></tr>
<tr><td>F2F</td><td>assembling the works presented online</td><td>to see if feedback from the online meeting was productive</td><td>27 February</td><td>everyone</td></tr>
<tr><td>Schools</td><td>trial in school</td><td>to enable participants to test the responsiveness to tasks in various classes</td><td>1–6 March</td><td>everyone</td></tr>
<tr><td>F2F</td><td>harmonisation of the work</td><td>to study the feedback from trial in schools</td><td>13 March</td><td>everyone</td></tr>
<tr><td>Conference</td><td>showcasing our project</td><td>to let other teachers appreciate what we have been doing</td><td>3 April</td><td>everyone</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">NB: May – a grand virtual conference with Hornby; produce a bank of ice breakers</td></tr>
</table>

New calendar of work for competing the worksheets

The first set of worksheets was created, and in a face-to-face meeting, we analysed their appropriateness, providing feedback based on the following checklist:

Checklist for the CAMELTA Research Group worksheet project
1. Is there something holistic the learners can do upon completion of a task or sequence of tasks? What is it?

2. Do tasks link, provide a basis for the next tasks or build from previous ones?
3. Are grammar and vocabulary treated as a means to an end or for their own sake?
4. Do the tasks meet curriculum requirements?
5. Are the tasks at the right level of learning for the learners?
6. Is there an intensive relationship between the tasks and the graphics?
7. Are the graphics clear enough to be accessed by the learners?
8. Are the instructions for each task clearly written?
9. Do the graphics reflect the social worlds of the learners?
10. Do the tasks require creativity or simple regurgitation of knowledge?
11. Are all the language skills and sub-skills equitably handled?

Management
1. Are the pages all numbered?
2. Are the levels/classes specified?
3. Are the modules for each task clearly stated?
4. Have the tasks been grouped to build specific competences?

*Some of the pool leaders reviewing the first worksheet samples*

From the first samples, we noticed that members generally downloaded pictures from Facebook to use as reflective/illustrative graphics, and one of our major recommendations was to use instead local pictures reflecting the kinds of things students commonly do. Another serious issue that needed attention was the quality of tasks. Most were recall tasks and not production activities, so members agreed to revise the worksheets to meet the recommendations.

Following recommendations from the group, 57 worksheets were created on a variety of topics reflecting the syllabus content of module 1 of Grades 7, 8 and 9. Given that they were created based on the same framework, most of them were quite similar in terms of content and language, so pool leaders agreed to revise them following the recommendations agreed upon. The guidelines for revising the worksheets were as follows:

- They are authentic (we described authenticity to mean materials that reflected the normal social lives of the learners).
- They reflect the actual level of the learners.
- They reflect the target module.
- They reflect the real life situations in the module.
- Learners can access them independently of the teacher.

The Doula Pool revising their worksheets led by Dr Nicole Menoh
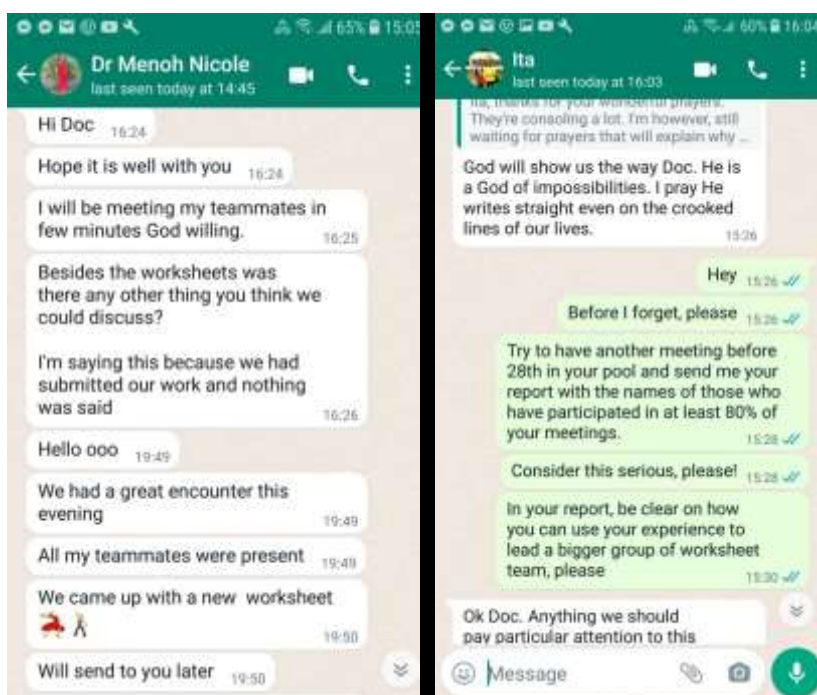
Conversation with a leading pool leader (Mrs Ita Ndifon in Yaounde)

Pool leaders were given a report form (see below) to fill in upon completion of the revision process.

CAMELTA Research Group
Creating context-relevant worksheets for EFL learners in Cameroon
Hornby Project

Pool meeting report form

Please, complete the form, providing all necessary details relating to your pool meeting
I/Introduction
Pool Leader: ....
Total number of meetings held ....
Dates of meeting ....
Place (s) of meeting ....
II/ Participation

Pool Members present	Institution	Tel	email	Signature

III/Work profile

You examined all the worksheets in your meeting	Yes	No

If 'NO', briefly explain
why..

Did you encounter any major challenge with the worksheets	Yes	No

If 'Yes' above, clearly explain the challenges

Clearly state what you practically did, how you did it, and how you found the experience working on the project with your pool members.

IV/ Provide any further necessary information, please (feel free to extend the page)..................

Blank report form

REPORT ON WORKSHEETS

Meetings were organized in the course of which participants were drilled on the writing of worksheets. Thereafter, the coordinator assigned individuals to build samples of worksheets. Individual worksheets were then presented to the different pool coordinators for compilation.

I compiled the various worksheets which amounted to approximately 35 in number, with some repeating themselves. They were then distributed to leaders of the various pools/groups for possible modifications with regards to checklists that were put at their disposal to serve as guide

In my pool all the worksheets were brought together, evaluated and graded under the following categories; good, average and not good with respect to the checklist. A meeting was held during which a detail report on the evaluation of worksheets was given. Participants were advised to involve learners in the constitution of worksheets

In view of this, we decided to take them to the classroom for implementation. It should be noted that, the worksheets that were implemented in the classroom, were selected according to the categories of good, average and not good. At the end of the practice sessions in the classroom, the following observations were made:

- Learners do not like lengthy and bulky exercises. Exercises on some worksheets were too many that at one point learners lost interest in them.
- Some graphic organisers are difficult to interpret. For instance some of the images did not reflect our local environments.
- Learners love interactive and communicative exercises. We realized that some of the exercises on some worksheets were more of filling of gaps and completion of sentences.
- Some instructions are ambiguous for the learners. We noticed that some instructions did not correlate with graphics.
- Learners desire to be given the latitude to showcase their creativity.

Having assembled the observations of learners, we then proceeded with the adjustment and modification of the various worksheets

Extract from a report by pool members

4.3 Trial phase

After the revision stage, a face-to-face meeting was called during which the worksheets were reviewed and members agreed to individually try them in their respective classes to determine how responsive the learners were. Copies of all the worksheets were made available to all participating members for this phase of the project. The purpose was to allow participating members to assess the content and the nature of the tasks in the worksheets. After the trial, members agreed to share their experiences in a local hybrid meeting. This generated a lot of interaction (with feedback) from teachers teaching the target classes.

F2F meeting reviewing the worksheets

An online international conference was then scheduled to create a space for members to share their experiences of the project. This was made open, specifically to other Hornby Teacher Association Scheme awardees, promoted via the Hornby Projects WhatsApp group and other forums, and resulted in participation and positive feedback from India, the UK, Argentina, Iraq and Brazil.

4.4 Structuring phase

The last phase of the project was to select and structure the worksheets into usable formats. Pool leaders agreed to meet and structure the worksheets following the guidelines below:

- There should be 10 worksheets with varied tasks per module for all classes.
- There should be 3 worksheets for each module unit and 4 for the heavier unit.
- All the real-life situations in the syllabuses should be represented.
- All worksheets should be numbered in order with the real-life situations described in the module.

5. EVALUATION

The project became a learning opportunity for us as we were developing tasks for pool members, based on existing experiences and challenges. At the start of the project, barely 10–20 per cent of our members had any idea of what a worksheet was. By the close of the project, those involved could analyse a worksheet bringing out its strengths and weaknesses. Most of the tasks in the earlier worksheets were recall tasks, and through collective assessment and peer feedback, participants were able to revise the tasks to include productive activities. We agreed to working in pools as a result of Covid, but this turned out to be a huge benefit as pools were able to work autonomously following the framework provided. From a group perspective, the process kept participants committed, not necessarily because they felt the need to belong to our TA, but because they created the materials and wanted to share their experiences of how useful their materials were in meetings. Many other teachers opted in and were allowed to join the scheme mid-way due

to the perceived benefits of being part of the project. Two new pools emerged: one very active pool in the Litoral Region (Douala); and another in the Far North of Cameroon. While the process of creating the worksheets generated agency in CAMELTA Research Group, the project itself benefited the wider CAMELTA structure greatly since many of our TA members decided to join the Research Group. We strongly believe that increasing membership in the Research Group is one way through which we cultivate agency and give value to our TA. Our group for the most part functions on identified projects through which teacher identities are constructed across time with opportunities for reflection on their perceptions of the beneficial effects of the projects or initiatives. We believe that CAMELTA members who opt to join are attracted by the new identities we recreate in the group.

The comments below from the pool reports bear testimony to the invaluable impact of the project:

> *We found the work interesting and challenging and we enjoyed those moments we had to brainstorm to come up with a sentence, a question, or an answer. It's unfortunate that we could not include other colleagues who desired to be part of the research group…I think we can have more pools in Douala, making sure that teachers do not travel to come together. Not only do we need pools in Douala, we also want them larger...*

> *We found the worksheet project very relevant in the context of Cameroon as many students can't afford official textbooks*. Besides, some of the official textbooks don't focus on the local context thereby making learning very far-fetched...*

* In Cameroon, it is teachers who pay for textbooks if they are able, whereas for the most part, learners can download and photocopy the worksheets they want since they are open access, which is not the case with books that are copyrighted. Additionally, teachers can easily access the worksheets via WhatsApp, where they circulate quickly, and they will also soon be available via the official CAMELTA Facebook page. Teachers can then make them accessible to learners, e.g. one rural teacher member reported having printed some out to distribute among his learners.

6. EXPENDITURE

Description	Breakdown	Total cost
Hiring of meeting/workshop venues (including venues for pool leaders)	£54.39 x 6 meetings	£326.34
Lunch for 35 participants (distributed among respective pools)	£3 x 35 x 6 meetings	£630.00
Paper for six face-to-face meetings	£3.40 x 6	£20.40
Transport for participants attending two different face-to-face meetings (in fact there were more than two meetings, but we only covered the cost of two)	£2.72 x 35 x 2 meetings	£190.40
Printing of drafts for review	£20.40 x 5	£102.00
Tea and water for four meetings	£20.00 x 4	£80.00
Payments for 14 Zoom meetings/conferences		£132.00
Total		**£1,481.14**

Notes:
1. Expenditure was redistributed to different pool leaders for them to run meetings in their respective pools.
2. We had not made provision for Zoom meetings, but it turned out to be a necessary requirement, and I personally covered the cost.
3. Since we were learning as the project evolved, we had many more mini-meetings than we had planned for to support pool leaders in effectively managing their pools and that resulted in some minor extra costs.

7. DISSEMINATION TO A WIDER AUDIENCE

Two major meetings were organised with the intention of sharing the outcomes of the project. In the first online meeting, the larger CAMELTA body was invited to presentations made by project participants from different pools. The purpose was to get a wider segment of teachers using the syllabuses to appreciate the work done and provide local feedback. The rich feedback obtained enable participants to revise their work. For example, a worksheet initially conceived to cover the contents of the Module 1 of Grade 7 was identified as more suitable for Module 2 by a teacher not involved in the project.

The second online meeting was organised to share the outcomes of the project with a wider audience and all other TA awardees were invited to participate. The purpose of the meeting was to enable participants from different contexts to appreciate both the process and the product. This meeting generated a lot of interesting discussions from leaders of the different TA projects funded by Hornby. Dr Mayamin shared her experiences of working with female teachers in Iraq while Kuheli Mukherjee shared her experiences in India. Prof Paula Lopez talked about the APIBA experience and Dr Miriam López Serrano, Professional Development Officer for ALC-GELI, spoke of their TA's experiences.

During the Hornby Trust 60th Anniversary Conference – 'Decentring ELT: Opportunities and Challenges', a major pool leader, Ita Ndifon Frinwie, shared the project milestones in addition to other projects run by CAMELTA Research Group.

8. OVERALL REFLECTIONS

One of the most interesting things I learnt while running this project was to avoid being mechanical – working with teachers organically, building further actions on existing constraints and opportunities proved to be very productive in fostering agency. Another significant learning opportunity that emerged was the development participants experienced. Commitment during the project was driven by the participants' sense of completing tasks generated from their own actions rather than the need to belong to the TA. In a similar way, we uncovered the power of dissemination – participants attested they felt different exchanging ideas with other (local and international) peers. We also realised that allowing teachers to create pools and work with peers based on social and proximity bonding increased their sense of autonomy, although that came with cost, i.e. more work for the leader.

Building on the lessons learnt, we are now:

➢ developing a new framework for pool leaders to support them run their pools with increased autonomy;
➢ developing a framework for participants engaged in the project to map their development during the process/project;

- ➢ readjusting time frames to organise meetings with specific deliverables within and between the pools;
- ➢ planning a wider online conference in which teachers of Grades 7, 8, and 9 will be invited to share their experiences upon presentation of the worksheets for Module 2.

9. GOING FORWARD/LOOKING AHEAD

We are already developing a road map for working on the next modules with intentions of widening the scope of participation, building on our experiences and on recommendations from different pool leaders. Following the framework for plotting individual participation in the project, we hope that participants will end up having systematic data which they can use for presentations in conferences, where they can explain the transformative potential of the project from personal experience. We have planned to organise a meeting during which we will present the worksheets to major ELT stakeholders in Cameroon and use the occasion to launch the call for wider participation in the second phase of the project. There is also the prospect that the project may be recognised by our local Ministry of Education.

Eric Ekembe