

March 2025

PEP Newsletter #2

We are proud to announce that, by the end of 2024, with the completion of the oral courses of English, the PEP project has reached its fifth important milestone!

Six parallel courses in Oral English Communication were delivered between October and December in the three West African partner countries, and the response of both the students and the teachers was exciting.

Before the beginning of the courses, a preparatory meeting for the teachers was held in Uppsala in September, which was the third PEP meeting.

In February 2025 during a zoom meeting, the oral course was summarised.

The entire PEP team has grown very close, with daily communication between teachers and other participants taking place via social media platforms like WhatsApp. This interaction was particularly lively during the courses, and all PEP members could follow the teachers' comments and pictures in real time.

In the present Newsletter we will describe the events of the last six months, and give an overview of what's next for the PEP team who will meet soon again in Galway, Ireland in May 2025.





The group of English Teachers during the September meeting in Uppsala hosted by Christine Mackay Tircomnicu.

PEP Teacher Training, Uppsala, Sweden, September 2-6, 2024

The PEP teachers were back to Uppsala, this time during the slightly warmer month of September, for the third PEP meeting focused on teacher training. The goal was to enhance teaching capacity in order to develop Professional English course programs at their institutions. A total of nine teachers from the West African countries were able to travel to Uppsala, while four of them were stopped due to visa problems. However, the latter were nevertheless able to join all the sessions of the meeting online.

After the opening by the project coordinator Ms Ulrica Ouline, the PEP coordinator, and the welcome by Dr Christer Larsson, Head of Department of English at Uppsala University, an intensive week of training was led by Dr Christine Mackay Tircomnicu, Lecturer at of the Department of English at Uppsala University.



The teachers discussing course literature in English.

Every day of the meeting, the teachers met from 9 to 16 (and often later) and intensively worked with the main issues of the WP3 of PEP – Oral communication, i.e. the design and planning of the Pilot oral courses to be given during the months of October to December 2024. Their work included the development of the materials for the course, and the preparation of the teaching strategies to be used in the coming seminars.

The work was carried out in groups, allowing teachers from the various universities to collaborate and share experiences and ideas, and learn from one another. They developed the key pedagogic aspects of the oral communication course to be given, including feed-back and assessment strategies, final examination and grading criteria. They also prepared a set of standardised lesson plans, teacher instructions and teaching material.

The teacher training in Uppsala included a visit to a lecture at the Department of English at Uppsala University. This provided the opportunity for academic exchange, as they could follow a lecture given at the local Institution.

The African partners had the opportunity to review several English teaching books, and they prepared a wish list for resources they need. The Steering Committee in a subsequent meeting, discussed about the possibility of collecting or donating books to support the African Institutions. For example, books in English that are no more in use at the Department of English, will be donated to the partners, addressing their urgent need for English literature materials. The plan is that at the Galway meeting in May 2025, the European partners will make an effort to collect books in English from their colleagues in Sweden and Ireland.

The teachers expressed great satisfaction with both the meeting and the training, as also reflected in their evaluations. The organisers of the Uppsala meeting feel that the participants in this teacher training were indeed able to enhance their skills to develop professional English courses at their home universities. Moreover, they are now well positioned to serve as role models as English teachers.

During the training, the teachers efficiently completed the work started at the meeting in Côte d'Ivoire in March 2024, of finalising a common backbone for the oral course. They prepared the 8



The PEP teachers and Ulrica enjoying a lunch break and discussing the Uppsala Meeting.

units, two seminars per week, that would be the very ground of the lectures. The target group of the courses were planned to be 15 students per each of the six West African institution, with a total of about 90 students.

The PEP pilot course in Oral Communication, Fall 2024

Between September and December 2024, each African partner in the PEP project conducted a pilot course in Oral Communication. The course was carefully planned in all its aspects during 2024 with a series of zoom meetings and was finalised at the Uppsala meeting in September. This marked a particularly important moment for the PEP project, since the teachers could finally see the results of their hard work in preparing and delivering the course.

A common call for master’s and PhD students was issued at each African institution, and a common course structure was developed, consisting of 16 two-hour seminars to be given over 8 weeks. The student selection was carried out through online testing, performed by the University of Galway in June. About 14 to 18 students were chosen per university, with a total of 92 students, with 23 female and 69 male students.

The course was evaluated by both students and teachers, consistently yielding very positive feedback. Both groups demonstrated strong engagement and a highly favorable attitude toward the course. A general very gratifying statement from the students was that after attending the course, they felt more confident in speaking English.

One of the most appreciated aspects of the course, was the opportunity for the students to actively engage in English conversations, debating in small groups several topics related to their studies or real life situations. This gave them the possibility to practice and refine their skills in English communication, as well as a means to overcome the barriers to start speaking this language. By improving both vocabulary and pronunciation, they gained confidence in their ability to communicate in English.



Students at the INP-HB – Institut National Polytechnique Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Côte d'Ivoire, practising their English at a lecture.

During the courses, the teachers kept in touch via social media, sharing experiences and pictures of the courses, showing the enthusiasm and strong connection of the PEP team. Some of the pictures are shown below.

Burkina Faso

UJKZ – Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo



The teachers Harrouna Malgoubri, Ben Hatim KIEMTORE and the students with Bruno Korgo visiting the class.



The teacher Ben Hatim Kiemtore and the students at UJKZ.

UNB – Université Nazi Boni



The teachers Auguste Pierre BAZONGO and Vinkoun Jean Baptiste DABIRE.



Students at UNB practicing their English.

Ivory Coast

USP – University of San Pedro



The San Pedro University teachers Koffi Noel Brindou, Mamadou Quattara and Kouadio Pascal Koffi and the students at the Pilot oral Course.

INP-HB – Institut National Polytechnique Félix Houphouët-Boigny



From left Souleymane DIARRASSOUBA, Bi Boli Dit Lama Berté GOURÉ and Natalia SIAKA aka The Yamoussoukro team and some of the students in the Language Lab 246, at INP-HB, Yamoussoukro.

Mali

ULSHB– Université des lettres et des sciences humaines de Bamako



The teachers and contact person from ULSHB, Mali: Bourema Konate, Kadidiatou Touré and André Koné with the students.

USTTB – Université des Sciences, des Techniques et des Technologies de Bamako



Teachers team (Pierre Claver Bakoroba Traoré and Nouhoum Koné) and students at the Pilot course at USTTB.

What's next in PEP

In May there will be the fourth and last PEP meeting. The teachers and the Steering Committee will meet in Ireland, hosted by the University of Galway, and the preparation of the Pilot Course in Written Communication in English will start. The next course will in fact be given during the Fall of 2025, as part of the PEP WP 4, under the leadership of Galway.

We are looking forward to this important new Milestone!

The Authors



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