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TeachingEnglish

Developing classroom culture in ELT

Iyabo Akintola

Saturday 10 January 2026

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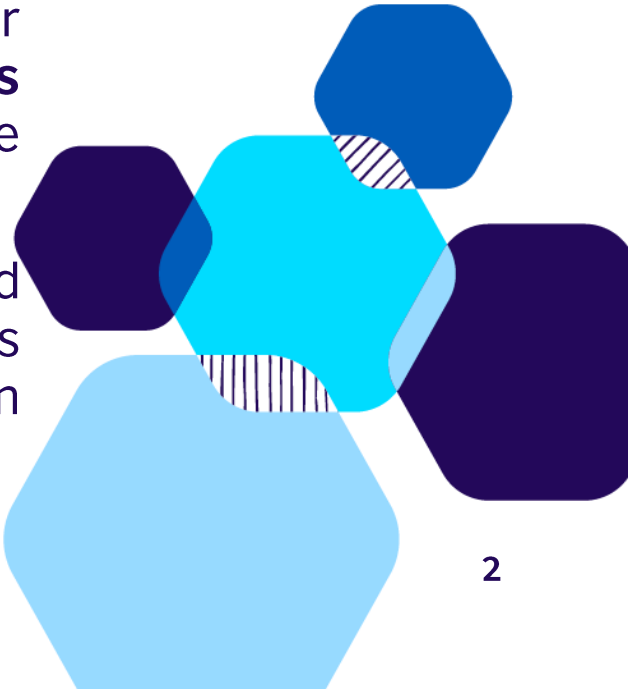

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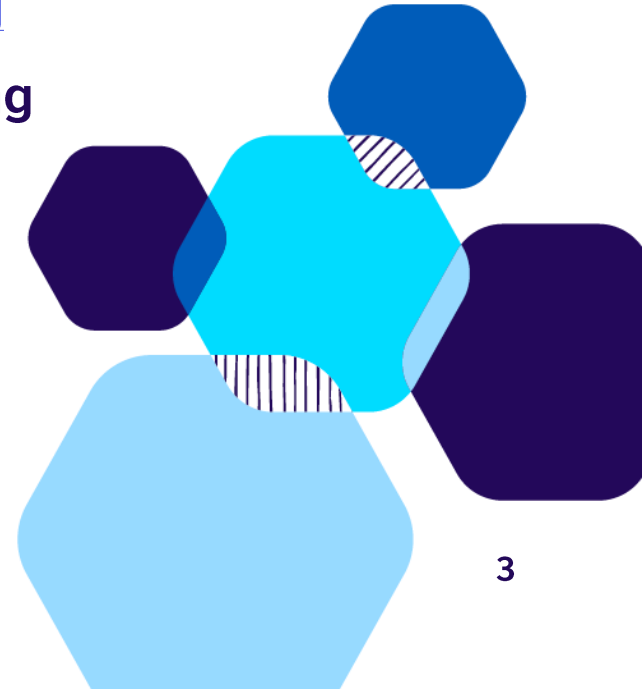


Pre-webinar polls:

1. How do you usually create a positive atmosphere in your English classroom?

A. Setting clear rules and routines 22%

B. Using group work and discussions 44%

C. Encouraging respect and participation 30%

D. I struggle with this 4%

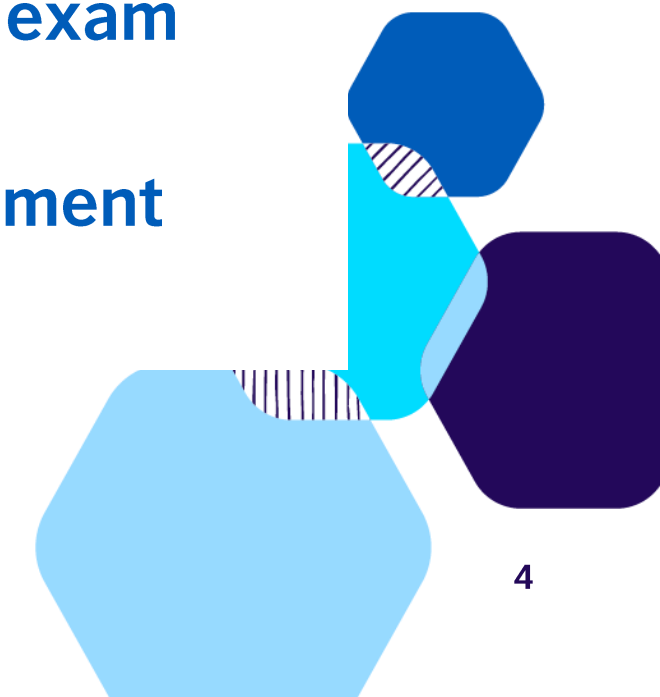
2. What's is your biggest challenge in building classroom culture during English lessons?

A. Large class size 37%

B. Students' low motivation 33%

C. Time pressure and exam focus 11%

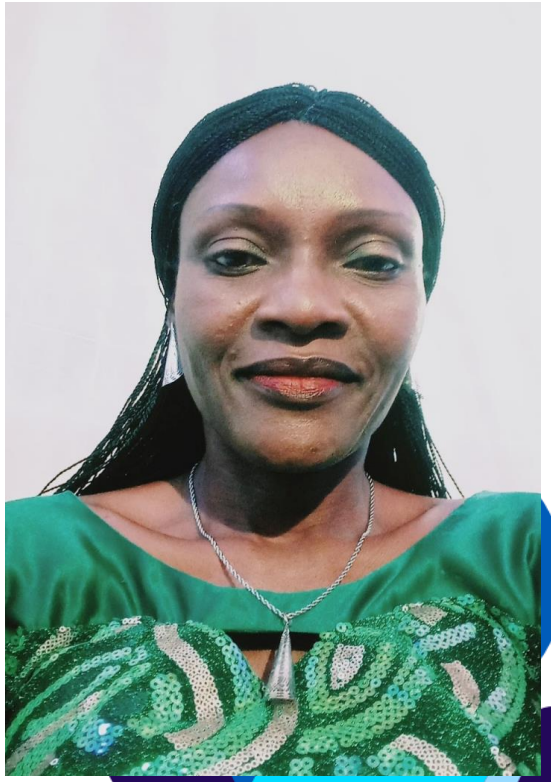
D. Classroom management issues 19%



About the speaker

Iyabo Akintola is an enthusiastic English teacher at Baptist Girls' College Senior Ogun State Nigeria. She holds a bachelor's degree in English and is a teacher educator. She has taught for over twenty years, and has impacted her community, as a stickler for practical teaching.

On a local and global scale she has led presentations during webinars. She is a member of ELTAN, AfricaELTA, an alumni of AfricaELTA FLMP and Mentor, a British Council Teacher Champion 2024, Master Trainer Prelim Project by Edinburgh College UK, and a 2023 Teach for Nigeria Alumni.



Credit: Iyabo Akintola

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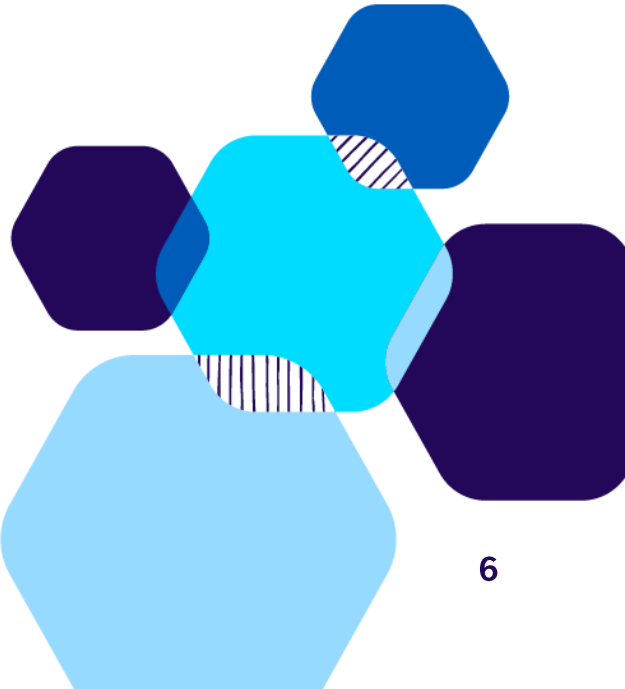
Objectives

To discuss:

- How to create safe learning environment for learners
- Fostering student-teacher interaction
- Pragmatic ways to develop respect for inclusiveness in classroom



What comes to mind when we say ‘classroom culture’?

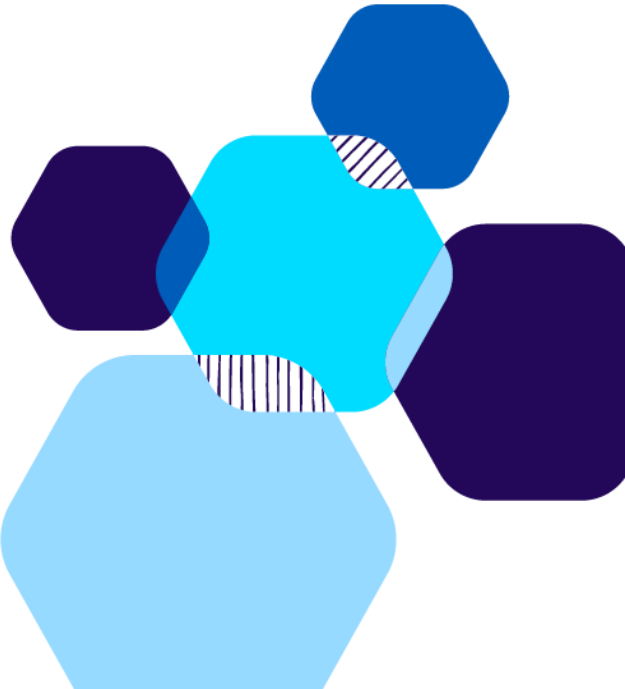
Kindly respond in the chat.

Credit: Getty

Definition: Classroom Culture …

… refers to the overall atmosphere and social dynamics within a language learning environment, encompassing aspects like student-teacher interactions, peer collaboration, respect for diverse backgrounds, and a shared sense of purpose. To actively engage in language learning, where culture is often integrated to enhance understanding and communication competence.

In a word or two state how you have you integrated classroom culture in your classroom practice?



What do you know about these learning theories?:

A. Social Learning Theory

B. Constructivist Learning Theory

C. Sociocultural Theory

D. Humanist Learning Theory

And which seems most like your classroom culture?

A) Social Learning Theory— Albert Bandura

Students learn by observing others (modeling), imitating behaviors, and seeing the consequences of actions

B) Constructivist Learning Theory— Jean Piaget

Students construct knowledge through experiences.

C) Sociocultural Theory — Lev Vygotsky

Learning happens through social interaction, language, and cultural tools

D) Humanistic Learning Theory— Abraham Maslow (Hierarchy of Needs) Carl Rogers (Learner-Centered Education)

Learning occurs when students feel safe, valued, and respected.

Harmer (2007),Vygotsky (1978), Brown (2007), Johnson & Johnson (1999)

Importance of classroom culture

Motivation and engagement

A positive classroom culture can significantly boost students' motivation to learn and actively participate in class.

Freedom of expression

A supportive environment where students feel comfortable speaking and making mistakes is essential for language development.

Cross-cultural understanding

By incorporating cultural elements into lessons, students can develop intercultural awareness.

Have you experienced this?

Please share in the chat.

Credit: Getty and Noory Taha

Key elements in classroom culture

A. Inclusivity
B. Active participation
C. Positive feedback
D. Collaborative learning
E. Respectful communication
F. Cultural awareness
G. Error correction
H. Student autonomy

Which do you pay more attention to in class?

How to cultivate a positive classroom culture in ELT

Get to know your students
Take time to learn about their cultural backgrounds, interests, and learning styles to personalize instruction

Integrate cultural content
Incorporate authentic materials and discussions about the target culture into lessons.

How to cultivate a positive classroom culture in ELT cont.

Facilitate peer interaction
Design activities that encourage students to interact with each other and learn from one another.

Use positive reinforcement
Acknowledge and praise students' efforts and achievements regularly.

How do you do all this? Please share in the chat
Should we limit our students' scope to their immediate culture or expand their horizon?

Some Class practice on classroom culture

Creating Class Rules Together

Students help set classroom rules

- Rules for speaking, listening and teamwork
- Builds ownership and discipline
- Skills Writing and Speaking

Group Story Building

Students create a story together

- Each learner adds one sentence
- Encourages teamwork and creativity
- Skills: Grammar, Vocabulary, Writing & Speaking

Some Class practice on classroom culture cont.

Classroom Debate

Class divided into two opposing teams

- Students defend different viewpoints
- Encourages critical thinking
- Skills: Speaking and Vocabulary

Peer Feedback on Writing

Students exchange written work

- Check grammar, punctuation and ideas
- Builds trust and supportive culture
- Skills Writing and Editing

Takeaway tips - before our Telegram follow-up, please look at and think about / try out some of these:

a. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/understanding-learners/sociocultural-awareness-elt

b. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/teaching-knowledge-database/d-h/group-dynamics

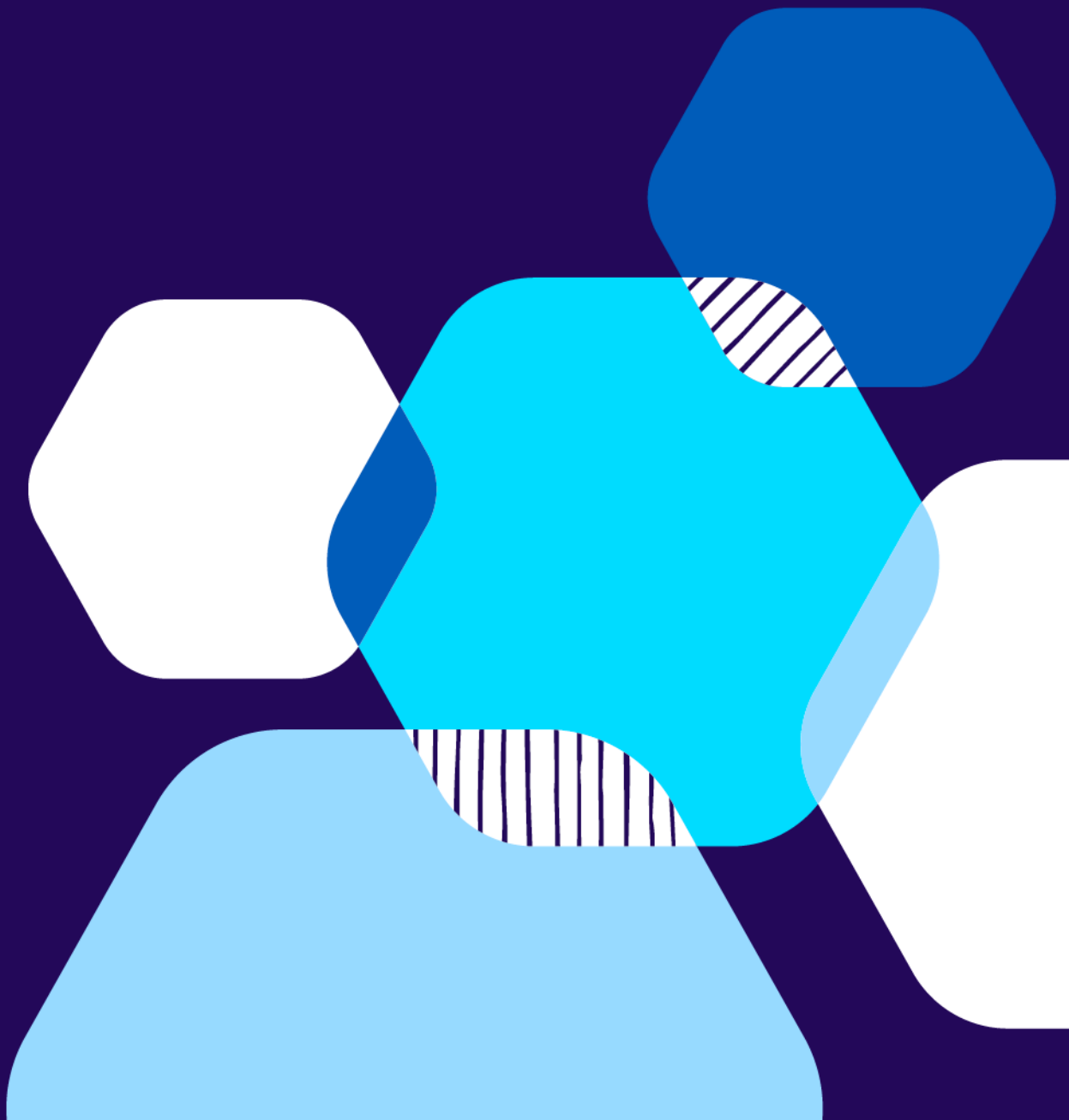
c. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/intercultural-communicative-competence

d. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/making-culture-happen-english-language-classroom

References:

- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Piaget, J. (1952). The origins of intelligence in children. New York: International Universities Press.

Thank you
Any questions?



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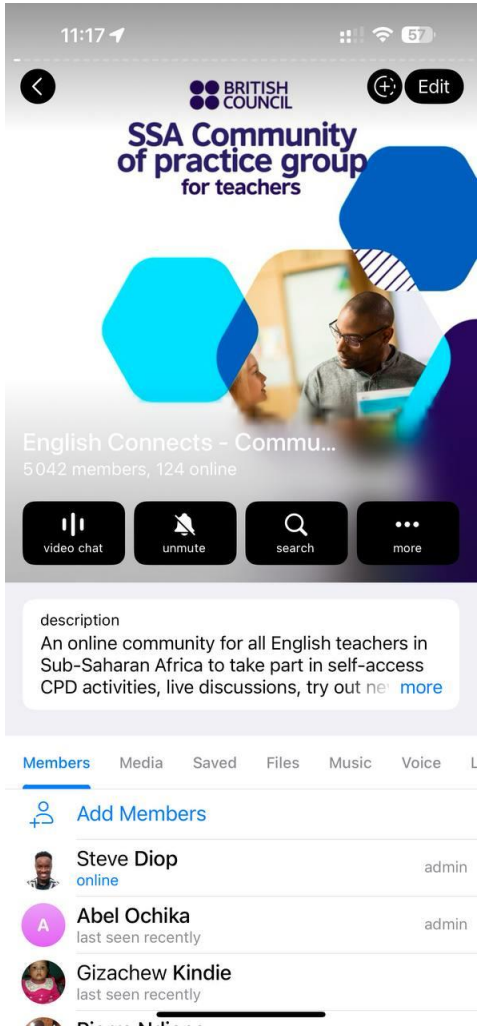

Next webinar

Join us on Saturday **24 January 2026** to explore practical strategies to keep learners engaged, foster interaction, and overcome resource challenges in diverse teaching environments. Register today: https://africa.teachingenglish.org.uk/managing-communicative-tasks