

## Teaching English

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# Managing communicative tasks in large low resource classrooms: Meaning and Practical Strategies

**Presenters:** Tiberius Barasa, Elizabeth Odhiambo  
and Constance Okwiya

Saturday 24 January 2026

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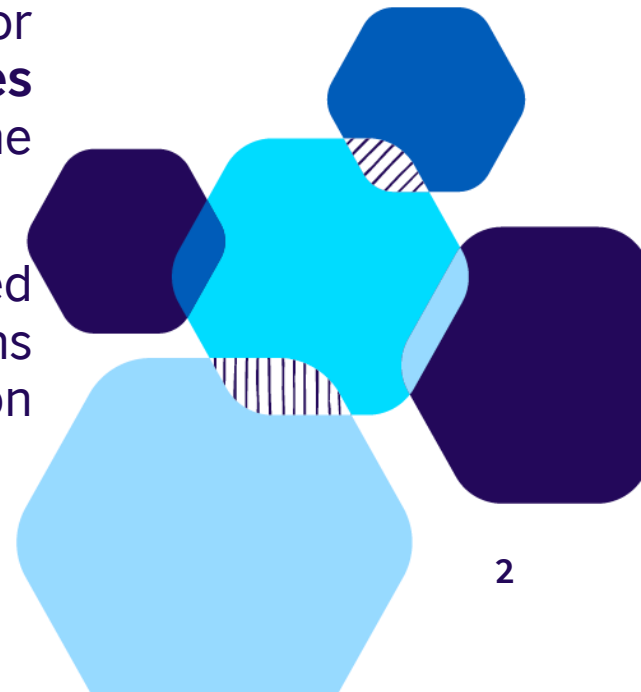
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These will be dealt with in the **strictest confidence** in line with our **safeguarding policies** for children and adults.

## Pre-webinar polls:

| 1. What usually limits communicative tasks in your classroom?                   | 2. How do you usually handle limited resources during communicative tasks? |
|---|--|
| A. Too many learners in one class <b>66%</b>                                    | A. Use talk-based activities that need no materials <b>23%</b>             |
| B. Lack of teaching materials or technology <b>0%</b>                           | B. Create simple materials from available resources <b>65%</b>             |
| C. Unequal participation (some students dominate, others stay quiet) <b>17%</b> | C. Share few resources among many learners <b>6%</b>                       |
| D. Pressure to finish the syllabus <b>17%</b>                                   | D. Avoid communicative tasks due to resource constraints <b>6%</b>         |

# Our speakers

**Tiberius Barasa is a teacher of English and Literature with over 16 years of classroom teaching. He is the vice chairman of English Language Professionals Association of Kenya (ELPAK) having been involved as a presenter and organiser in both national and international teacher conferences. He has also organised and presented in several British Council Professional Webinars. He is also a Fulbright Scholar Fall 2024 having completed 6 weeks of professional training and practice at Kent state University, USA.**



# Our speakers

**Elizabeth Odhiambo is a teacher of English and literature with over 15 years classroom experience. She is also a Teacher Trainer, Trainer of Trainees (ToT) and CBE champion with a passion for promoting advances in the delivery and teaching of English in diverse classroom environments. She holds various certification in Open Courses, 1 Million teachers' movement and is a mentor with affiliations to Wings to Fly, Elimu scholarship and leadership organisations like Leap Africa and 1MT.**





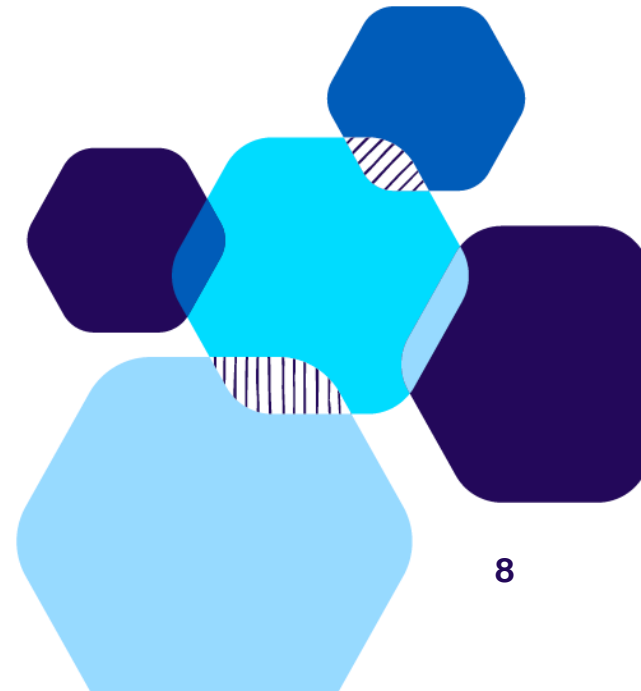
# Our speakers

Constance Okwiya is a highly accomplished Secondary English and Literature Teacher at Shariff Nassir Girls Secondary School in Mombasa, bringing two decades of dedicated experience to her classroom. She serves as the Treasurer of ELPK and has been instrumental in organising numerous Teacher Professional Development (TPD) workshops and webinars for her peers. She has done many courses, including the OPEN Spring 2025 Course on Fostering Student Motivation and Engagement from the University of Oregon, and the Professional Development for Teacher Trainers OPEN course (2023) from Arizona State University; and previously served as an English Access Micro-scholarship Teacher (2018-2019) and participated in the Lake Zone Access Curriculum Development Workshop in Tanzania in 2018.



# Objectives

- Define communicative tasks in language teaching.
- Identify practical communicative activities suitable for large classes.
- Describe effective ways of managing communicative tasks in large, low-resource classrooms.
- Identify common challenges in implementing communicative tasks in such classroom contexts



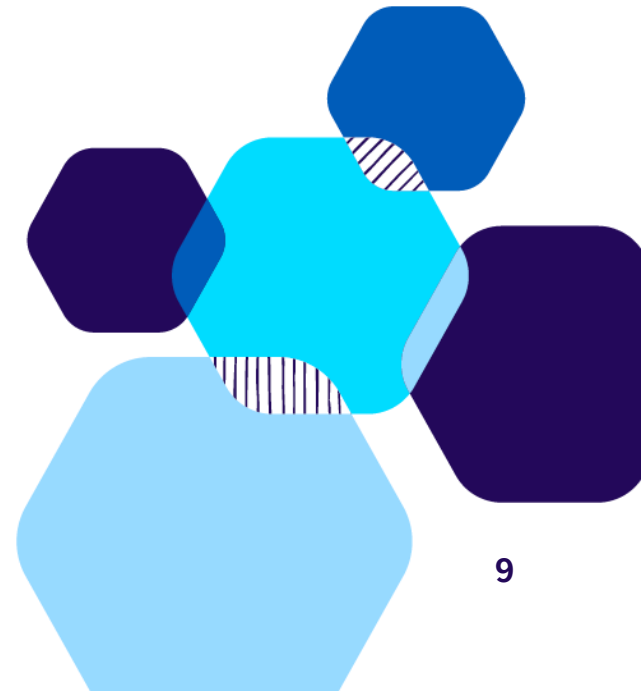


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## Questions to start:

1. How do you define a ‘communicative task’?
2. What is your biggest challenge when teaching a large class?

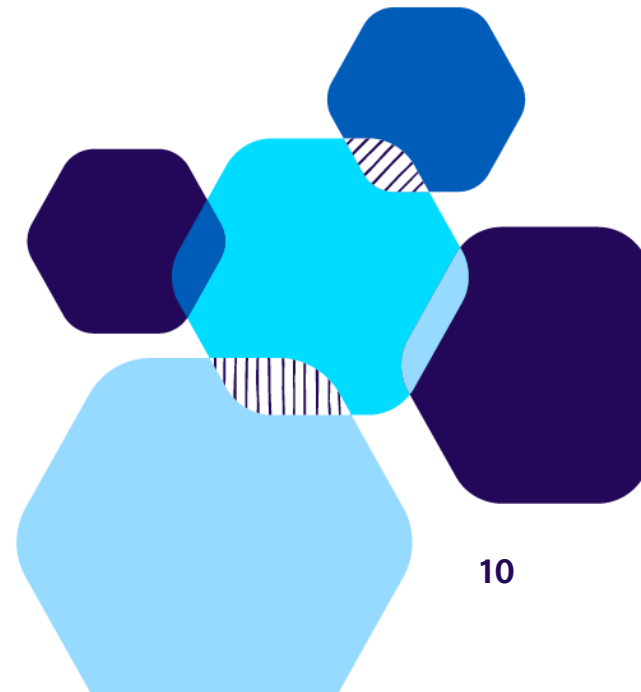
Share your thoughts on the  
above in the chat



# Definitions

- **Communicative task:** An activity where learners use language to achieve a real purpose (e.g., solve, plan, explain, request).
- **Managing communicative tasks:** Organising, supporting, monitoring and concluding activities to enable learners to communicate meaningfully.

[Article: Teaching large classes](#)

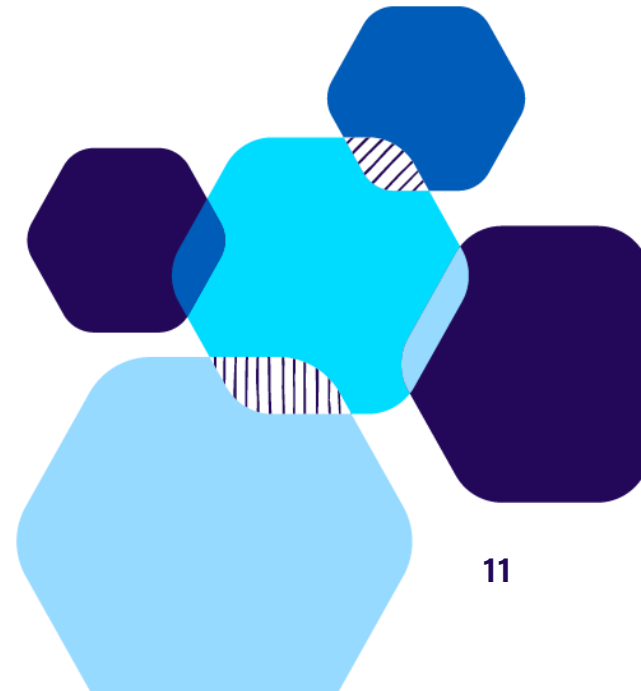


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**“Good teaching is not about having fewer students,  
but about engaging every learner.”**

**How do we engage *all* learners  
when numbers are high in our  
individual classrooms?**

**LET US SHARE IN THE CHAT**



# What does managing communicative tasks involve?

1. Identifying the purpose and expected outcome in the task to be carried out.
2. Choosing modes of presenting the task. (pair/group)
3. Preparing supporting material (prompts, visuals)
4. Giving simple and clear instructions while managing the tasks.
5. Modelling briefly what to do in each task.
6. Choosing groups and assigning roles strategically.
7. Setting time limits for each task.
8. Using space wisely.
9. Thinking of monitoring techniques.
10. Dealing with differentiation.



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# Principles for large, low-resource classes

- A.** Use student-generated materials instead of printed handouts.
- B.** Use mixed-ability grouping for stronger learner support
- C.** Use movement and classroom space to manage energy and focus
- D.** Build learner confidence before correction.
- E.** Use peer correction before teacher correction.
- F.** Use real-life contexts familiar to learners.
- G.** Break tasks into short cycles (5–10 minutes) to maintain focus
- H.** Assign clear roles in groups
- I.** Use the board as your main tool.
- J.** Recycle old papers or books.

# DISCUSSION

What practical tasks do you engage your learners with?

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# Practical examples of tasks:

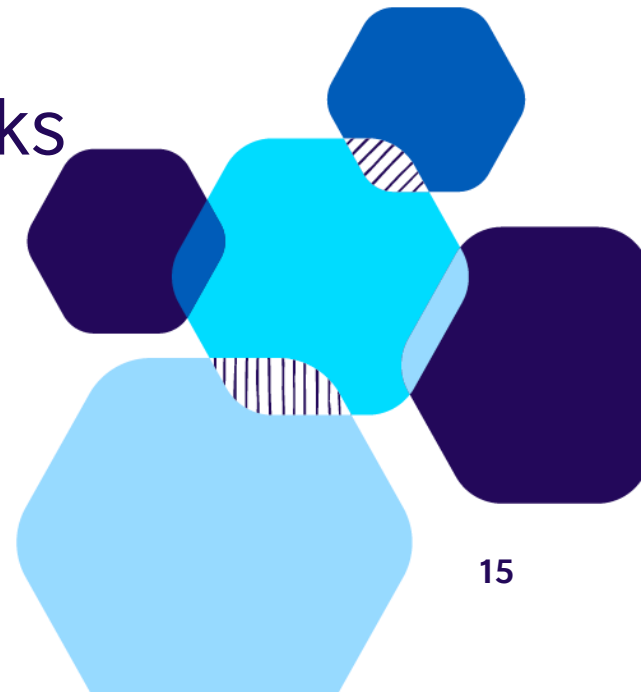
## Pair based

- Think–Pair–Share
- Role plays (brief, structured)
- Question chains
- Pronunciation drills in pairs
- “Find someone who...”

## Group-Based

- Jigsaw reading/listening
- Problem-solving tasks
- Debates in rotating groups
- Information gap tasks
- Group storytelling / picture sequencing

[Communicative approach](#) | [TeachingEnglish](#) | [British Council](#)





# Examples

## Role Play

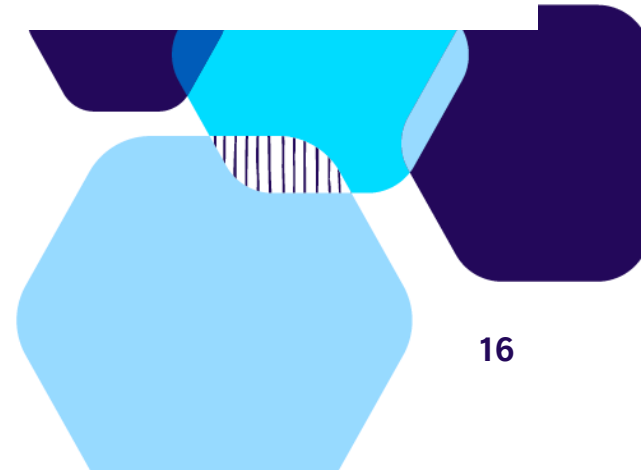
- Purpose-driven roles with simple prompts
- Teacher focus: language frames (e.g., “I think... because...”), set prep time, short performances

### Management Tips (Integrated)

- Give time limits
- Use visual cues for noise control
- Provide language support cards
- Keep groups small for maximum talk time
- Rotate roles to protect shy learners

### Activity 2: Problem-Solving Task

- E.g., decide how to use a class fund or plan an event
- Teacher focus: ensure negotiation, prevent dominance, assist low-confidence learners



# Examples

## Pictorial Charades

**Materials:** Chalkboard, simple drawings.

### Steps :

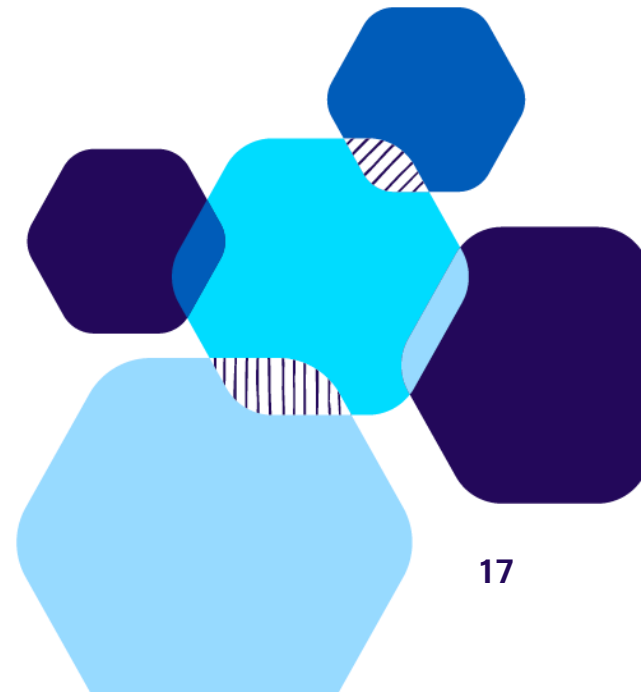
- Teacher draws simple pictures.
- Groups guess vocabulary, actions, or sentences.
- Or learners generate drawings.

## Group Story-Building

**Materials:** None or one piece of paper.

### Steps:

- First student writes/says a sentence.
- Next adds another.
- Continue around group.
- Present final story.



# Examples

## Opinion Corners

### Steps:

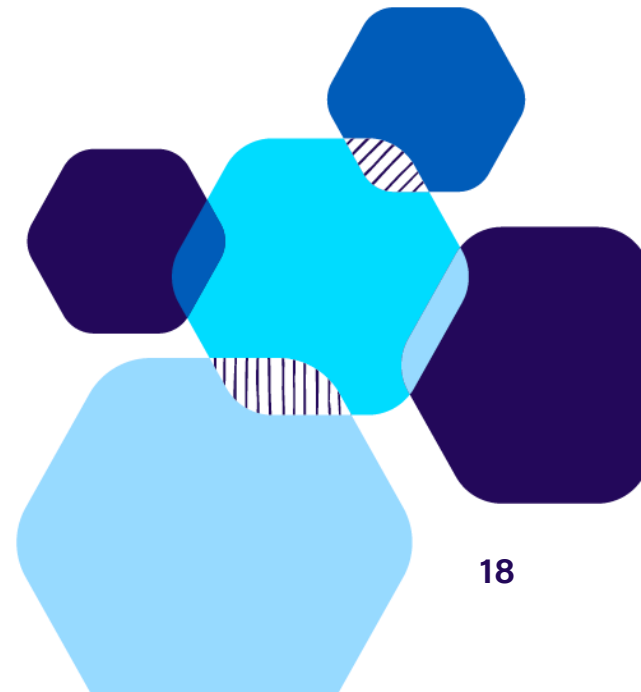
- Label corners: Agree / Disagree / Not sure.
- Read a statement.
- Students move and explain reasons.

## Whisper Chain

### Steps:

- Teacher whispers a sentence to first student.
- Message passes along the row.
- Last student says it aloud.

**Focus: Listening accuracy and pronunciation.**

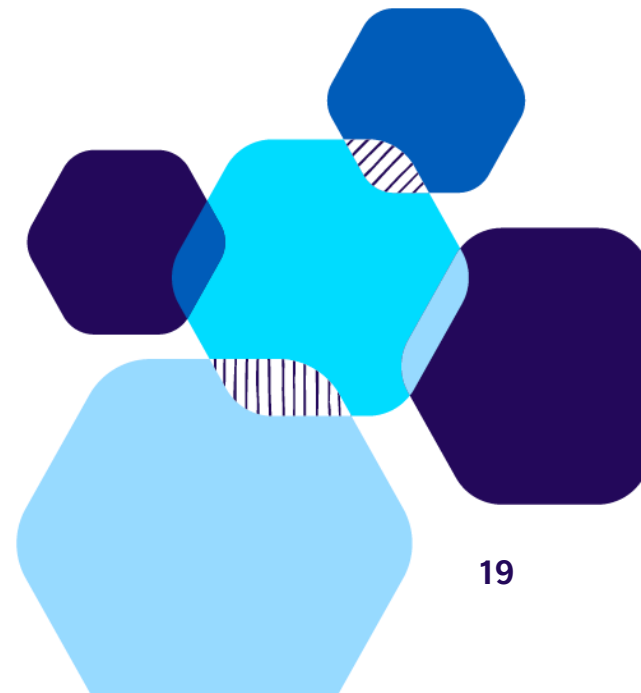


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**Let's do this together**

**What is your personal  
experience with teaching  
communicative tasks in  
large, low resource  
classrooms?**

**Share with us in the chat box**



# Common challenges and quick solutions: - please match

1. Noise levels become difficult to control.
  2. Monitoring individual learners or groups is harder.
  3. Unequal participation (stronger learners dominate).
  4. Limited space for movement or grouping.
  5. Time management (giving instructions + feedback takes longer).
  6. Learners switching to mother tongue.
  7. Vocabulary gaps
  8. Learners unsure of what to do
- A. Use turn-taking roles or speaking tokens
  - B. Provide key phrases; set purpose clearly
  - C. Non-verbal signal; group spacing
  - D. Use modelling + check understanding
  - E. Word banks, prompts, sentence starters

# Common challenges and quick solutions (answers)

- 
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Noise levels become difficult to control.                      | A. Use turn-taking roles or speaking tokens |
| 2. Monitoring individual learners or groups is harder.            | C. Non-verbal signal; group spacing         |
| 3. Unequal participation (stronger learners dominate).            | B. Provide key phrases; set purpose clearly |
| 4. Limited space for movement or grouping.                        | C. Non-verbal signal; group spacing         |
| 5. Time management (giving instructions + feedback takes longer). | D. Use modelling + check understanding      |
| 6. Learners switching to mother tongue.                           | E. Word banks, prompts, sentence starters   |
| 7. Vocabulary gaps  | D. Use modelling + check understanding      |
| 8. Learners unsure of what to do                                  | C. Non-verbal signal; group spacing         |

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## Take away tips:

**Before our discussion in the Telegram English Connects group on Friday, try the following and/or look at the resources on the next slide:**

1. Using reusable task cards to save time.
2. Rearranging desks in a U-shape or “clusters” where possible.
3. Training learners on routines: “How we move”, “How we discuss”, “How we report”.
4. Using visual cues (pictures, diagrams) to reduce explanation time.
5. Displaying language support on the board for communication tasks.



# TeachingEnglish resources

Article: “Your learners as a resource,” which gives ideas for tasks that promote *genuine communication*.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/managing-lesson/your-learners-resource>

including:

- Storytelling
- Evaluative questions
- Discourse completion tasks
- Problem solving
- Ranking tasks

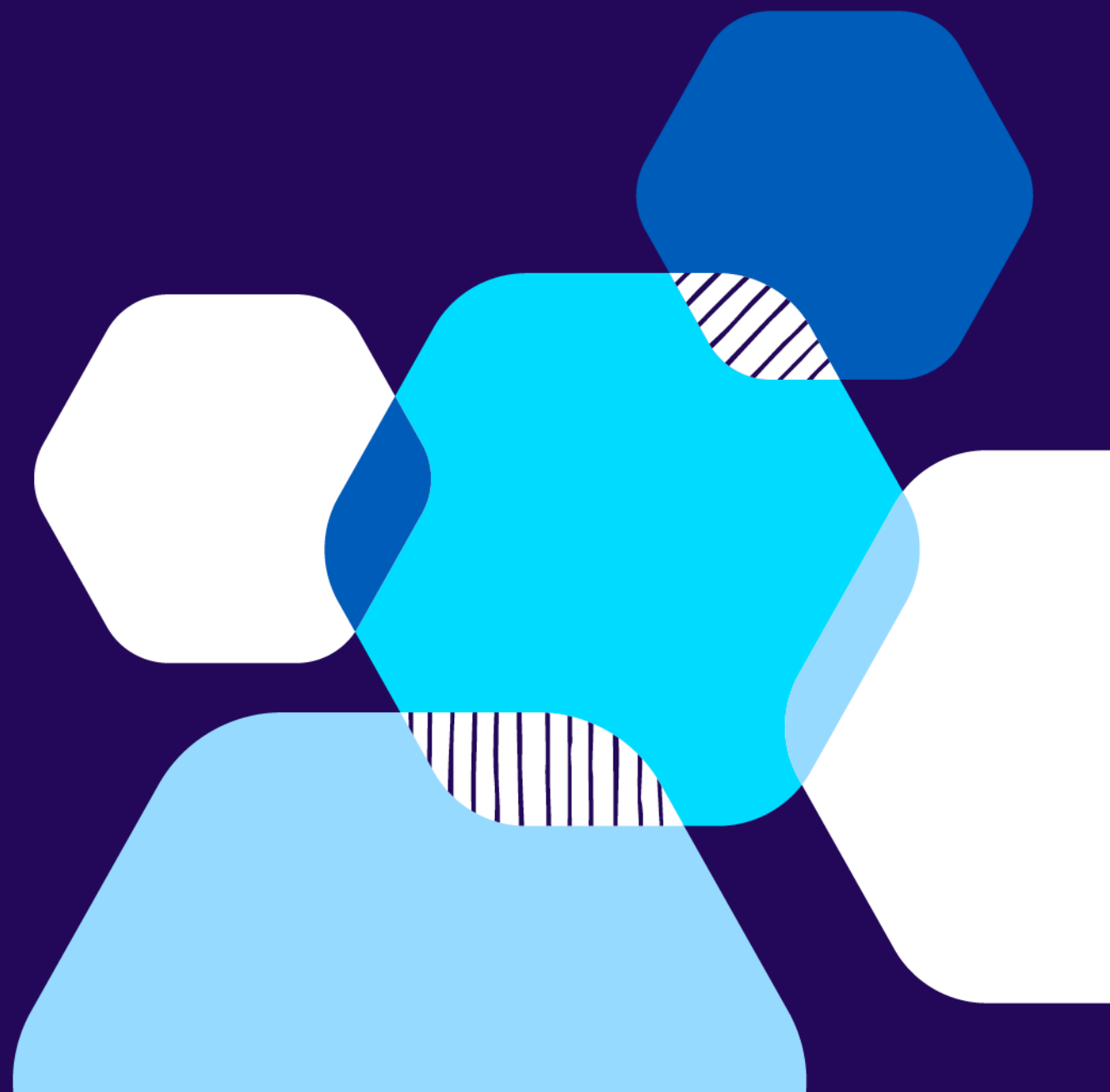
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[Article: Teaching large classes](#)

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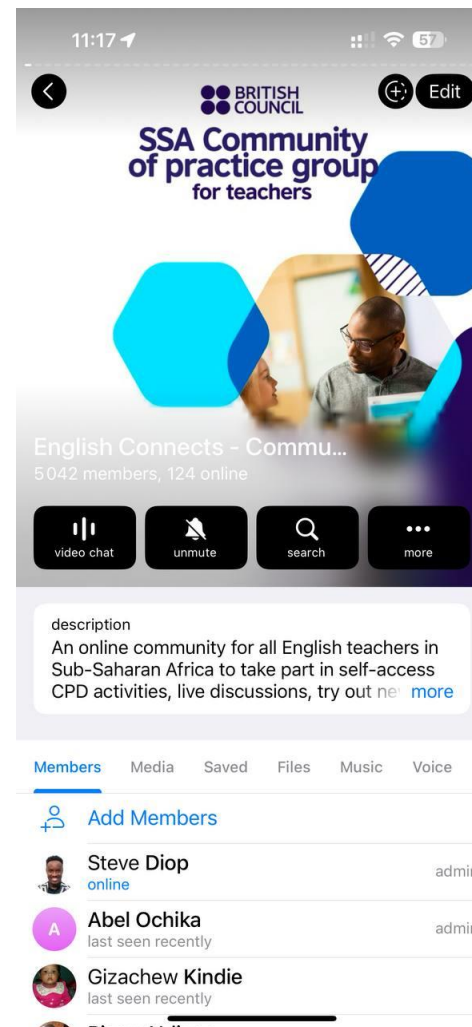
[Article: Teaching large classes](#)

**Thank you!**  
**Any questions?**



# Take part in next Friday's Q&A session with Tiberius, Elizabeth and Constance

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<https://bit.ly/4lgZMm8>



# Next webinar

Join us on Saturday **7 February 2026** to explore modern, positive approaches to managing learning through social-emotional skills, co-created routines, positive discipline, and intentional use of technology. Register today: <https://africa.teachingenglish.org.uk/events/managing-lesson-modern-approaches>

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TeachingEnglish

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**Saturday  
7 February  
2026**

**15.00 GMT  
16:00 Lagos  
17:00 Khartoum  
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18:00 Addis**

