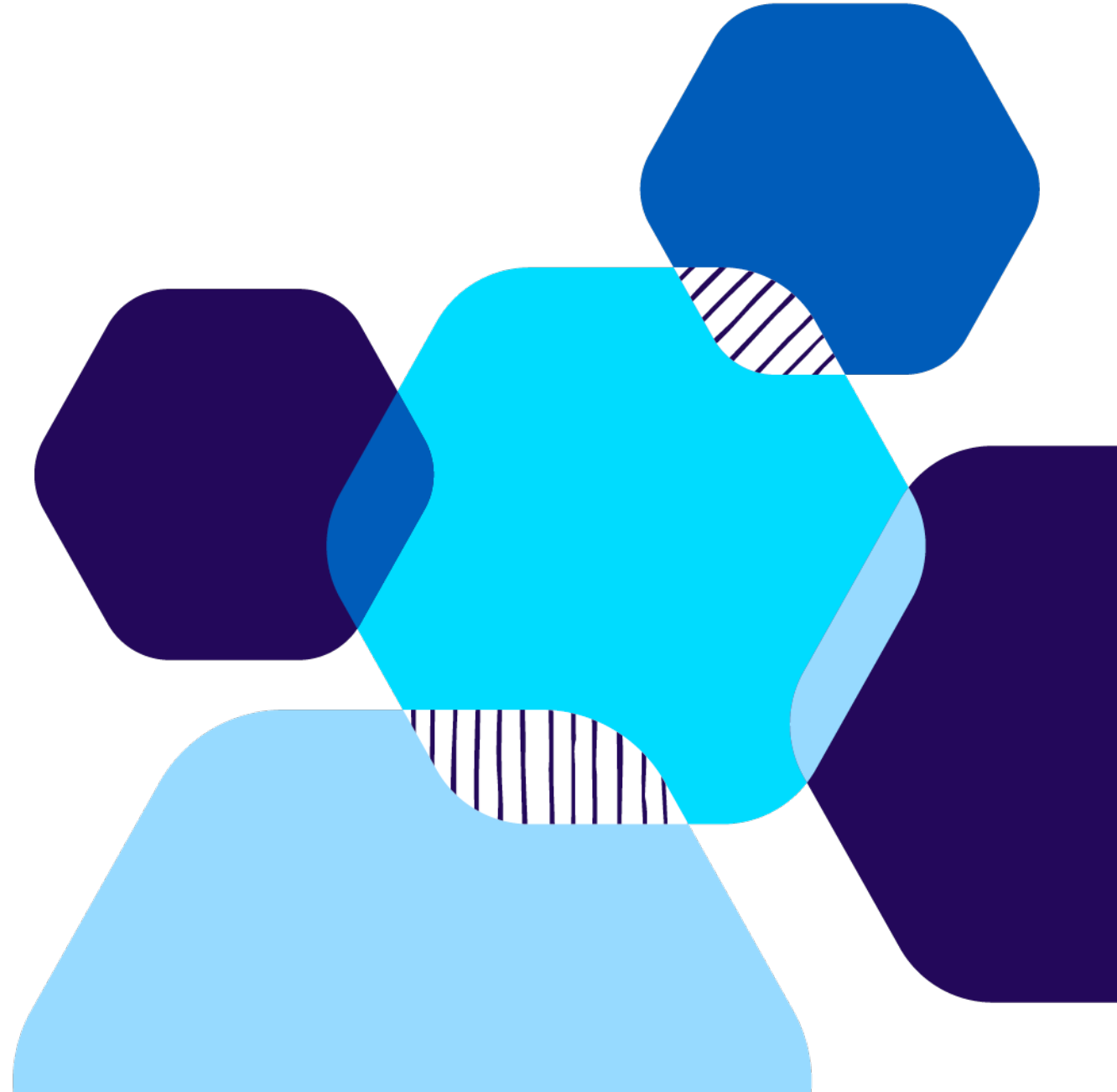


TeachingEnglish

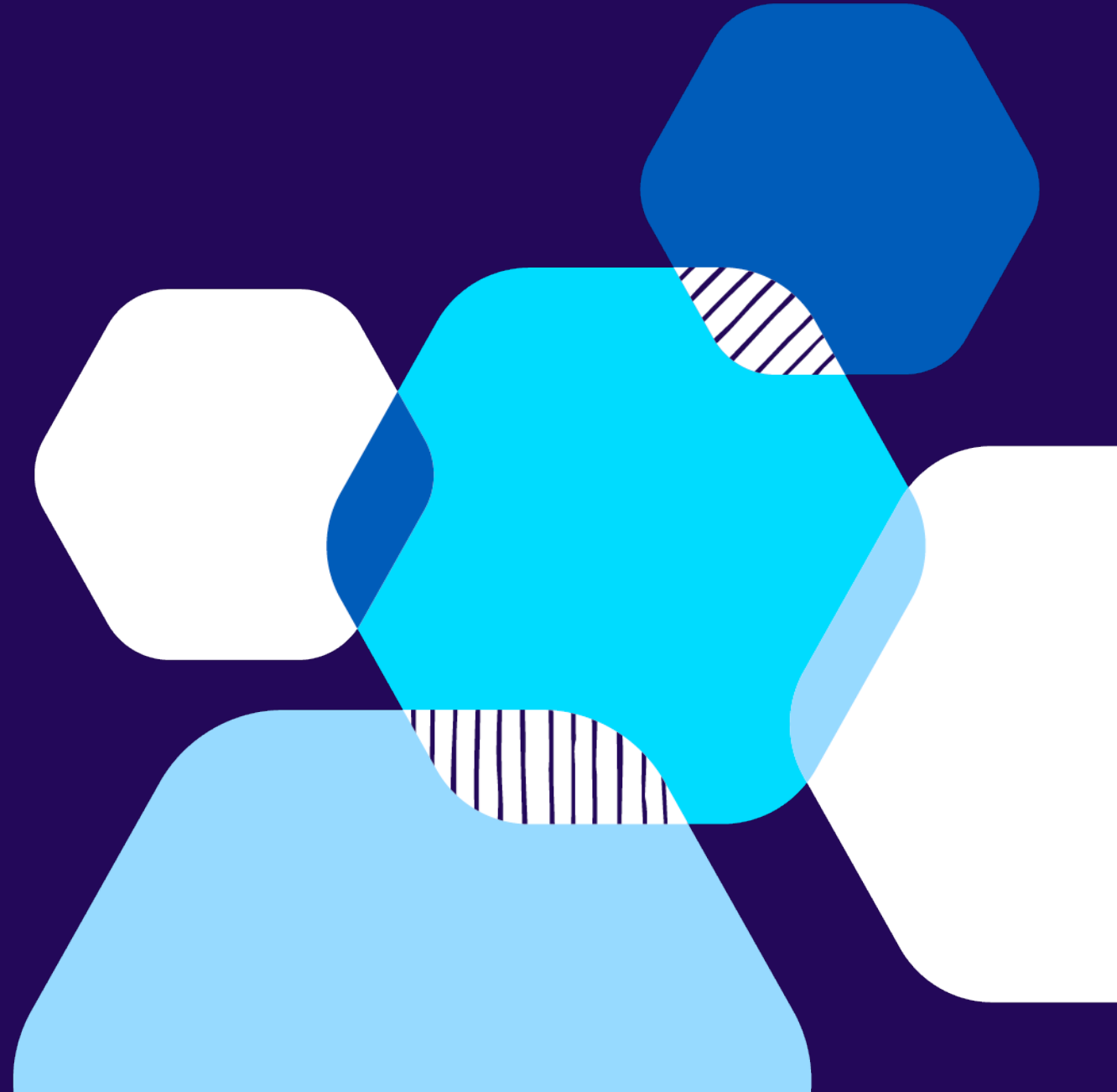
Difficult and taboo subjects

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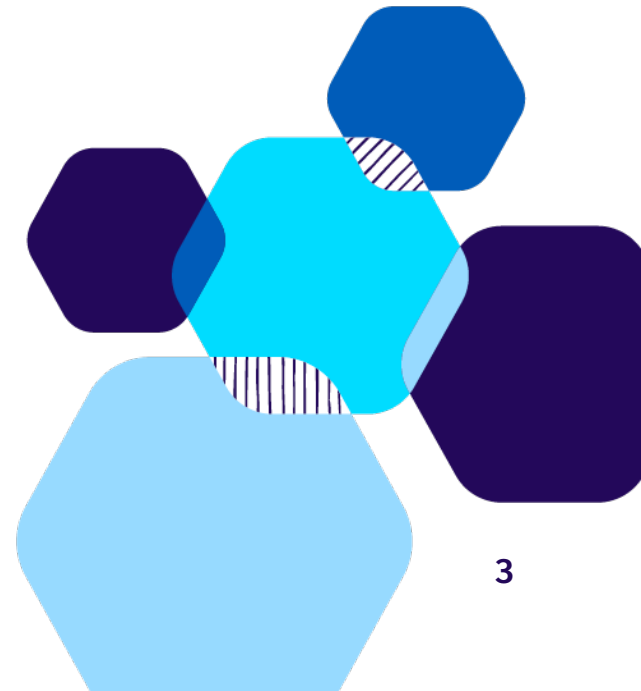
1. Speaking Task



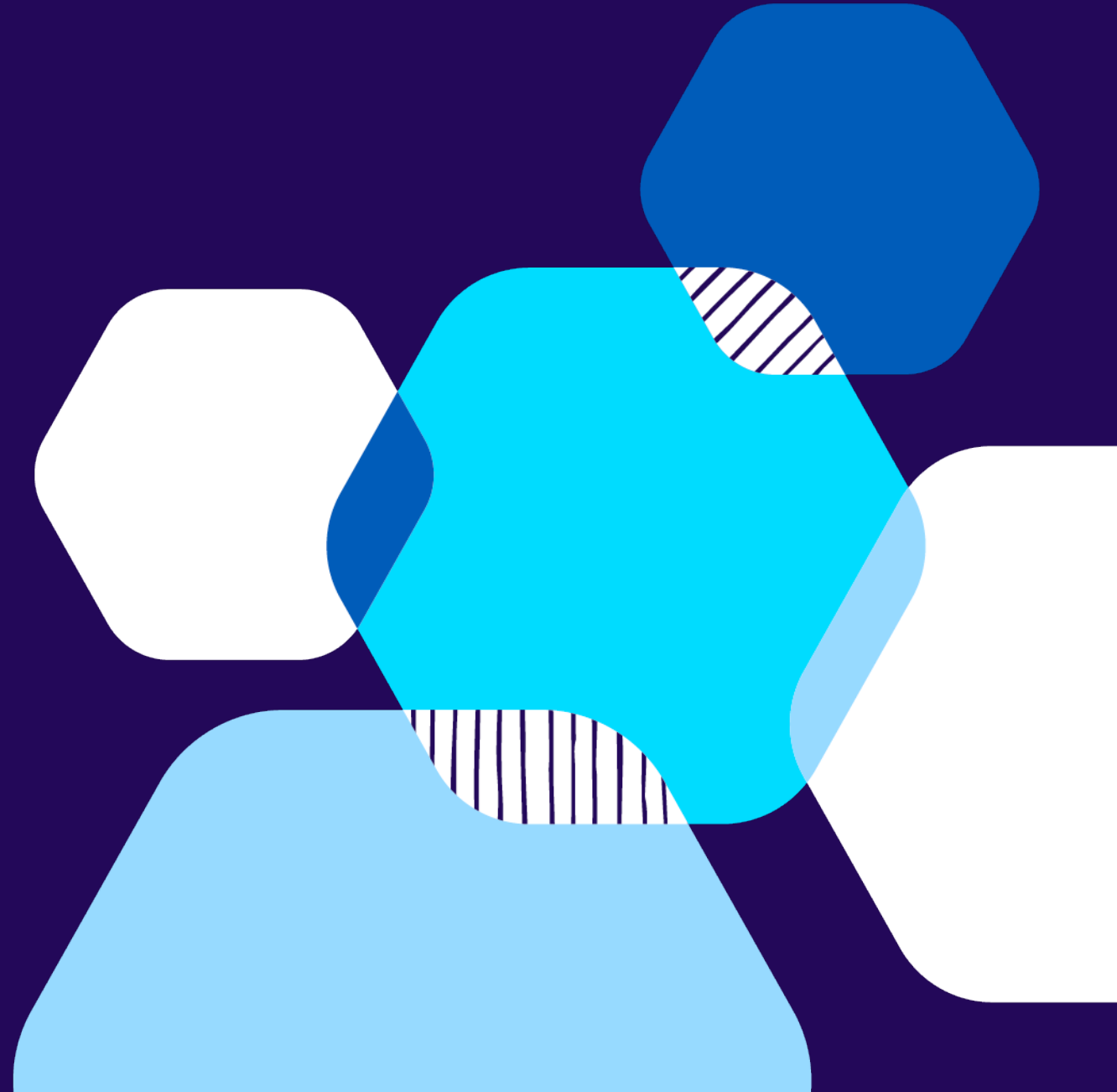
1. Speaking task

Discuss the following questions in small groups.

- Do you think the English language classroom is a good place to talk about difficult or challenging issues?
- What difficult or challenging issues have you talked about in your English language classroom? Was the discussion useful? How did people react?
- How can you teach difficult issues sensitively in the classroom, when people may hold very different opinions?
- Which type of difficult / taboo issue do you think it would be most difficult to discuss in the classroom?
- What topics would you like to talk about which you don't find in your textbooks or coursebooks?



2. Grammar task



2. Grammar task

Adverbs and their use

1. Some of them arrive with **really** a very low level of English. **Obviously**, a lot of them have come from quite traumatic circumstances.
2. They're coming here **partly** for language and **partly** for friendship
3. I think good teachers [are] aware ... how people are feeling – if someone you know who's **normally** a bit chatty has gone a bit quiet.

Questions about Adverbs

1. “There was an issue with one of our other teachers who is qualified but not **terribly** experienced.” *Is ‘terribly’ a negative word here? If not, why is it used?*
2. “After the Ukrainian conflict had quite **recently** broken out.” *What, grammatically, is happening to the adverb ‘recently’ in this sentence?*
3. “... Are you an **early** bird or a night owl ...” *Ending in –ly, ‘early’ looks like an adverb, but is actually an adjective. Do you know any other adjectives like this?*

2. Grammar task

Adverbs and their use

1. Some of them arrive with **really** a very low level of English. **Obviously**, a lot of them have come from quite traumatic circumstances.

Really is being used quite informally here, to emphasis how low the level is. Obviously is used as a stance adverbial at the start of the sentence to link the sentences together, and to make a general comment about the sentence which follows.

2. They're coming here **partly** for language and **partly** for friendship.

Laura creates a nice 'echo' effect using repeating the same adverb.

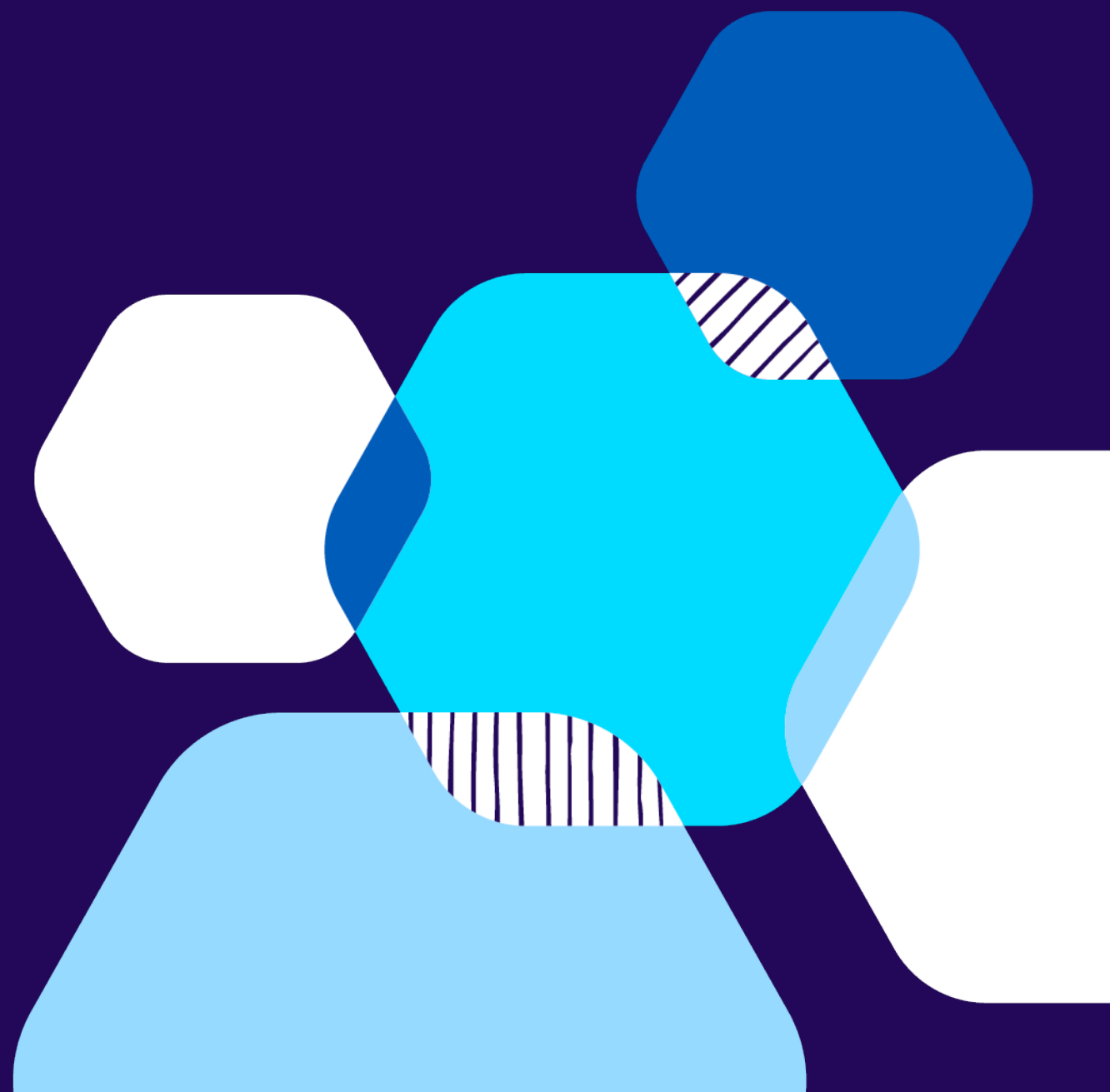
3. I think good teachers [are] aware ... how people are feeling – if someone you know who's **normally** a bit chatty has gone a bit quiet.

2. Grammar task

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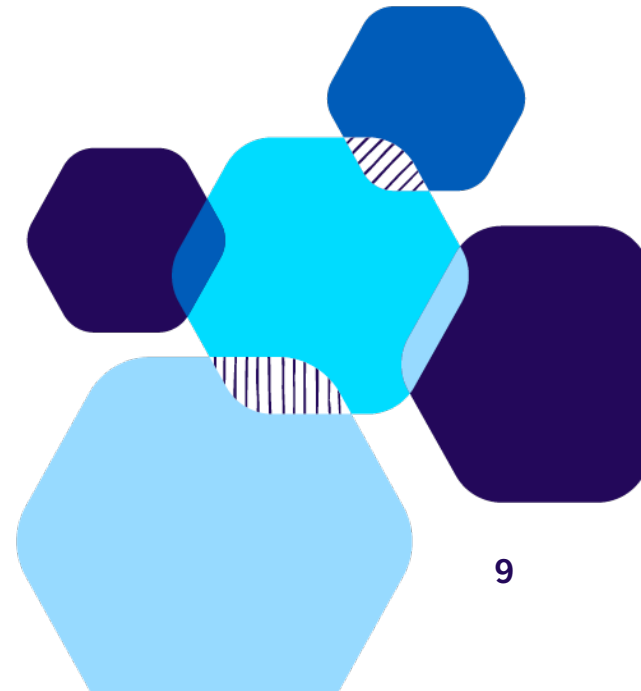
3. Language task



Synonyms

What is a synonym? What are the similarities and differences of the following pairs of words?

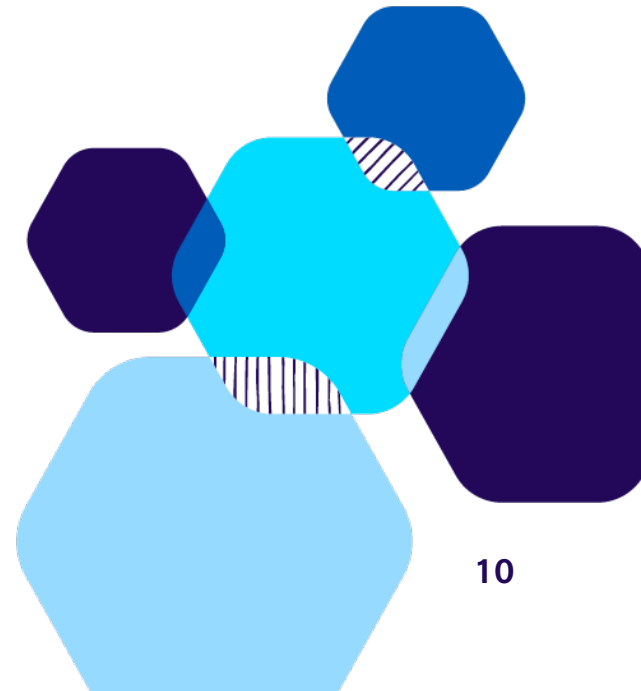
1. **Refugees** / asylum seekers
2. **Clients** / customers
3. **Not always very strong** / poor
4. **Volunteer** / unpaid
5. **Multicultural** / mixed
6. **Lexis** / vocabulary
7. **Chatty** / talkative
8. **Conflict** / war



Synonyms

Suggested answers

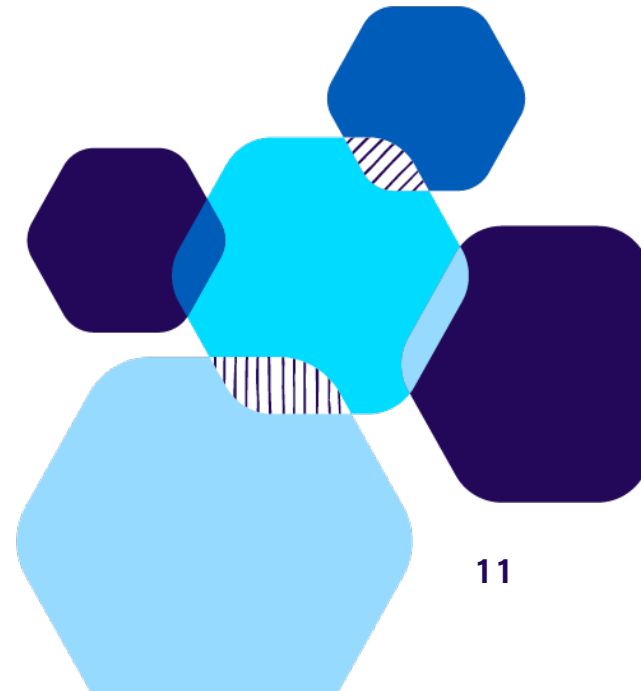
1. **Refugees / asylum seekers** – both groups have left their own country due to fear for their lives. Refugees have been given official status in the new country where they have settled. Asylum seekers have not yet been given this official status, and are awaiting a decision.
2. **Clients / customers** – a ‘client’ is someone who receives a particular service or type of support from an organisation – they have a deep and meaningful relationship. A ‘customer’ is simply someone who buys something (e.g. in a shop, or online).
3. **Not always very strong / poor** – ‘not always very strong’ is a more polite, and less offensive way of describing someone whose literacy skills are not that good. ‘Poor’ would be an offensive term.
4. **Volunteer / unpaid** – both ‘volunteer’ and ‘unpaid’ teachers do not receive money. The term ‘volunteer’ is more positive, however, and suggests that the person is doing the work because they really want to.



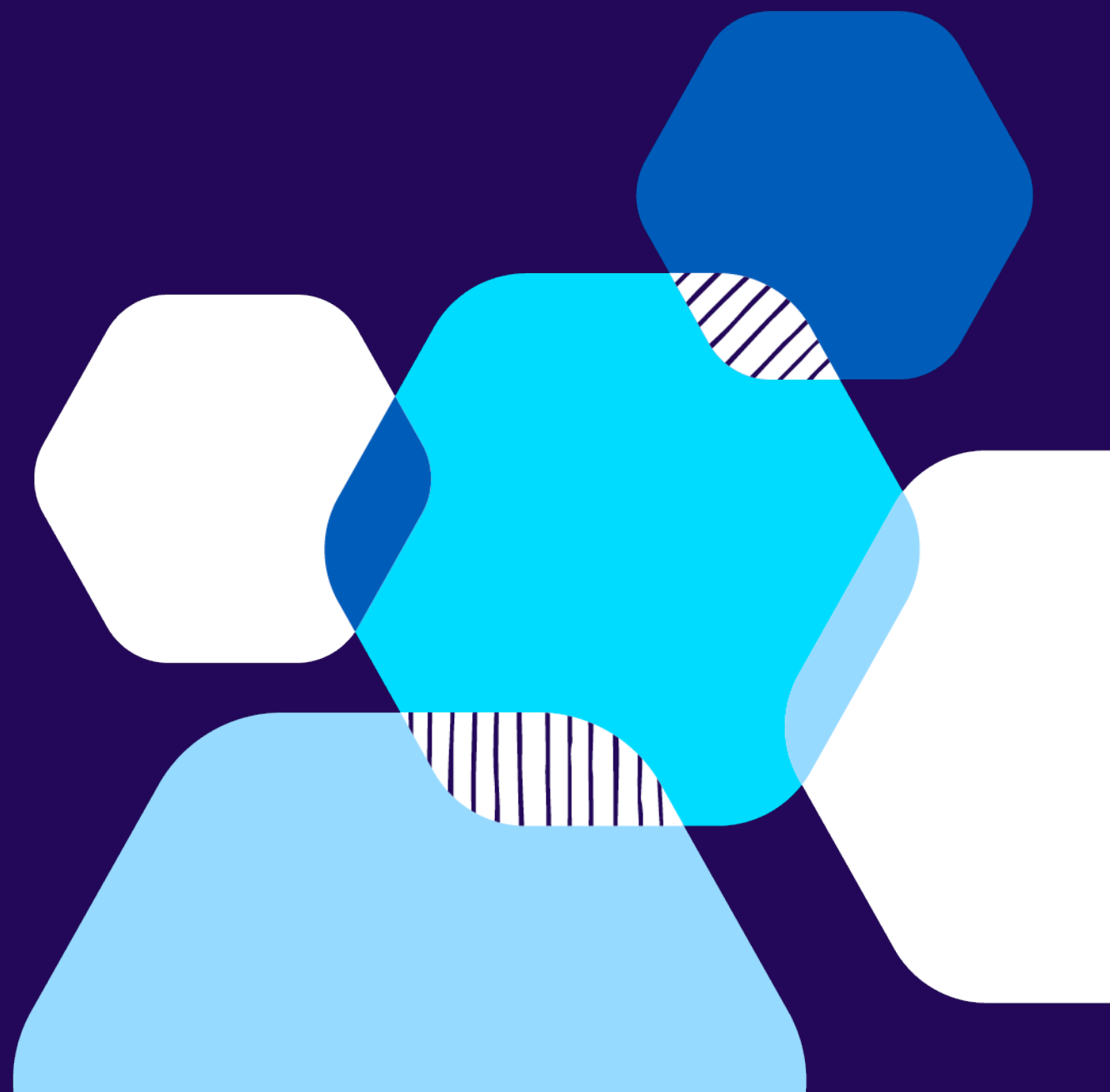
Synonyms

Suggested answers

5. **Multicultural** / mixed – describing a city as ‘multicultural’ rather than ‘mixed’ suggests that you see this as something positive, rather than as something neutral (or even potentially negative).
6. **Lexis** / vocabulary – ‘lexis’ is a more formal and specific word than ‘vocabulary’, which is appropriate for Laura to use in this context as she is drawing on her educational knowledge and expertise.
7. **Chatty** / talkative – ‘chatty’ is a less formal and kinder word in this context than ‘talkative’.
8. **Conflict** / war – ‘war’ is a much stronger word than ‘conflict’, and people are often uncomfortable about using it – especially for events which are still happening (rather than events which took place a long time ago).



4. Listening task



Listen to the following extract from the podcast, and answer these questions.

1. What does the abbreviation PARSNIP stand for?
2. How is the concept of PARSNIP an important one in the world of ELT?
3. Why does Rose not like the term 'taboo'?
4. How does Rose use 'climate emergency' as an example?

We'am: So when talking about taboo subjects, we often hear the word PARSNIP used to describe topics which should be avoided when teaching English language. Could you firstly explain what is PARSNIP and secondly, your thoughts on whether these topics should be avoided?

Rose: PARSNIP is like an acronym. It's used to describe common topics that are often omitted from globally published coursebooks. And what potentially shouldn't be included in these materials that are written for an international market. So you might be wondering what each letter of the acronym stands for: the first P in PARSNIP is for politics. A is for alcohol. R is for religion. S is for sex or sexuality. N is for nudity or narcotics. I is for Israel or isms. This can include political movements like feminism or discrimination like racism, political ideologies, like fascism or communism. And finally, the second P is for pork. And I think it's worth saying that there's obviously an overlap between some of these different categories, like alcohol and narcotics, for example. I think this concept of PARSNIPS is now quite widely known, and I think it's been discussed more and more as global citizenship education is becoming more mainstream, and both teachers and students in many countries are increasingly contemplating like social justice issues and actively bringing them into their classrooms. And in answer to the second part of your question, whether I think these topics should be avoided or not, the short answer is absolutely not. Personally, I don't think that there are any topics that are inherently taboo. I actually try to avoid using the term taboo because I think it sort of suggests to me at least that, that there are topics that can't be discussed anywhere and I don't think that's the case. So no matter how difficult a topic is for teachers and students to talk about, I think you can guarantee that it's been touched upon in a classroom somewhere in the world. I think what makes the topic controversial or not, is actually who is discussing it. And among one group of people a topic like the climate emergency might not have the potential for much disagreement, but in a completely different group of people, it might actually lead, that discussion might lead to conflict.

Difficult and taboo subjects

