

Teachers Share: Resources for social change

Webinar handout

Idea 1: Problem cards for social action

by **Carlos Daniel Caballero Barragan**

In many English language classrooms, social issues are addressed through large projects that can feel abstract. They are often disconnected from learners' lived realities and experiences. As a result, students may talk about inequality without developing a sense of agency or responsibility towards their community. This activity offers a low-resource, flexible way to engage learners with real social challenges while developing speaking and writing skills.

<p>Context</p> <p>Can be adapted for use with teenagers/young adults at various levels. Lower levels (A2-B1): Provide sentence starters. – oral discussion instead of writing. Higher levels (B2-C1): Structured debates – Short written proposals or reflective paragraphs.</p>	<p>Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6-8 problem cards - Board or paper for notes. - No technology required.
<p>Planning stage</p> <p>Prepare 6-8 problem cards, each describing a short, realistic issue relevant to learners' context. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital exclusion for students without internet access. - Unsafe public transport for young people. - Lack of green spaces in the community. 	
<p>In class: The problem card task cycle</p> <p>1. Describe the problem Learners read the card and explain what is happening in their own words.</p> <p>2. Question causes and consequences Learners discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why does this problem exist? - Who is affected, and how? <p>3. Propose realistic actions Learners suggest small, feasible actions that individuals, schools or communities could take.</p>	

4. Reflect on feasibility and responsibility

Learners reflect on:

- What is realistic? - Who should be responsible for change?

Activities can be done in pairs, small groups or whole-class discussions.

Outcomes

- Speaking and writing tasks rooted in real social inequities.
- Development of critical thinking and ethical reasoning.
- Learners practice agency rather than charity.

Idea 2: An activity to teach Critical Visual Literacy

by Gopika Jayachandran

Images shape how we see our world and make sense of people, places, and experiences. They do not present reality as it is, but shape meaning through the use of colours, symbols, and perspectives. When learners see how visual meanings are created, they will be aware that different interpretations are possible. This helps them respect multiple viewpoints and develop a more inclusive way of thinking. Such inclusive thinking can contribute to positive social change.

Practical activity (Secondary, B1+)

Step 1: Give a broad, thought-provoking, open-ended theme (for example, 'A Moment of Change', 'Between Two Worlds', 'Crossroads' which encourage symbolic and reflective thinking) to the class. Ask learners to make an image based on that theme. Allow students 3-4 days to paint/click pictures/generate AI images (with appropriate parental consent when required).

Step 2: After all learners are ready, form pairs and ask them to discuss their pictures with each other. Each student should explain their own image to their partner, describing how it connects to the theme, their choice of colours and subjects, and the story or idea behind it.

Step 3: Meanwhile, collect learners' images (paintings, photos, or AI-generated images) via email or another method so you can save them on your laptop and project them on the screen. Set up the laptop and projector and check that everything is working properly.

Step 4: Call a pair and ask one learner to explain the other's image to a group/the class. Project the respective images on the screen. Ask guiding questions (*What do you think is happening in this image?*, *How does this image connect to the theme from your point of view?* *What emotions or ideas do you see in it?* *What details helped you arrive at your interpretation?*) to keep learners talking and help them elaborate.

Step 5: After 4-5 pairs have explained their images, make a collage of all the presented images, and lead a short class discussion on how the same meaning (theme) is expressed differently based on one's life experiences, culture, value system, identity, etc.

Idea 3: A translanguaging activity to teach idioms

by Urbashi Raha

This activity for teaching idioms uses translanguaging to embrace learners' cultural and linguistic identities. Learners discuss idioms using their full linguistic repertoire.

Principles of using translanguaging pedagogy

- Socially and culturally inclusive approach for teaching by acknowledging learners' cultural and linguistic identities.
- Moves away from the pressure of producing monolingual-like language. Balances the power imbalance between English as a dominant language and marginalised languages.
- Allows learners to use language authentically by accepting the fluid nature of language use in bilingual/multilingual social contexts.
- Focuses on meaning-making and creativity rather than on accuracy and fluency.
- Views learners from a strength-based lens.

Teaching idioms using translanguaging (Secondary/adults B1+ level)

- Divide your learners into similar language groups (if possible).
- Allow learners the fluid use of English and their L1(s) as they work on the task together.
- Provide four to five English idioms to your learners.
- Ask learners to look up the meanings in English, followed by a discussion of the meanings in their own language using the equivalency criteria (see below).
- Learners should write an example sentence in their own language, followed by an example sentence in English.
- Ask learners to go back to the equivalency criteria again and add further details.

An example:

The English idiom '*apple of the eye*' can be expressed in Hindi as such: - आँख का तारा - *aankhon ka tara*.

Sentence in English - *She is the apple of her grandmother's eyes.*

Sentence in Hindi - *Woh dadi ki aankhon ka tara hai.*

Fully equivalent	The meaning and usage is exactly the same in both languages.
Partially equivalent	There is slight variation in the sentence structures. The word <i>grandmother</i> in English and <i>dadi</i> in Hindi are placed in different positions.
Not equivalent	Not applicable for this idiom

A recording of Carlos, Gopika and Urbashi's webinar can be watched here:

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/teaching-equality-webinars>

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