
Bringing social justice into diverse English classrooms

Webinar handout

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Why social justice in ELT?

Social justice means:

- Promoting **equity, diversity, and inclusion**.
- Giving all learners **voice and participation**.
- Connecting language learning to **real-world issues**.
- Helping learners develop **confidence, empathy, and agency**.

Learners learn languages best when:

- Anxiety is low
- Learning is meaningful
- Their identities are respected

Bringing social justice themes into ELT lessons

Teachers can integrate themes such as:

- Gender equality
- Environmental justice
- Human rights
- Inclusion and diversity

Through meaningful activities such as:

- Reflective writing
- Multimodal advocacy projects
- Translanguaging
- Critical textbook analysis (see the next page for an example of this)

A sample activity: 'Voices that are Missing'

This **critical textbook analysis** activity brings social justice in ELT to the classroom by allowing learners to notice representation and gender issues in literature. This activity is recommended for students aged 15-16 years old (CEFR B2 level) and aims to develop analytical reading, critical thinking, and empathy.

The teacher starts the activity by asking learners, *When we read a story or poem, do we always hear everyone's voice?*

After a short class discussion, the idea of bias and missing voices is presented. Learners are asked to read a text like *Aunt Jennifer's Tigers* (a poem by Adrienn Rich), *My Mother at Sixty-Six* (a poem by Kamala Das) or *Porphyria's Lover* (a monologue by Robert Browning). Learners then discuss in small groups: *Who is speaking? Who is not speaking? Whose voice is missing?*

Then, each group chooses a voice that is missing and writes a diary entry, a short monologue, or a dialogue from that voice, which they will later present to the class.

The activity ends with a reflection question: *How was the story different when you heard the missing voice?*

This activity is a great example of making learners aware of social justice issues in ELT because it integrates language learning, creativity, and critical thinking, while providing learners with valuable opportunities to use English.

Further reading

- Watch an IATEFL conference plenary talk about including social justice in ELT classrooms: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/iatefl-online/2017/plenary-session-jj-wilson>
- A project from Turkey promoting social justice in ELT: <https://www.socialjusticeinelt.com/>

Secondary lesson plans with social justice themes

- A lesson plan for B2 secondary learners on gender reporting in the news: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/teaching-resources/teaching-secondary/lesson-plans/upper-intermediate-b2/gender-reporting-news>
- A lesson plan for B1 secondary learners on racism in sport: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/teaching-resources/teaching-secondary/lesson-plans/intermediate-b1/give-racism-red-card>
- A lesson plan for B1 secondary learners on the environment: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/teaching-resources/teaching-secondary/lesson-plans/pre-intermediate-a2/how-green-are-you>

A recording of Yasmin's webinar can be watched here:

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