Designing for voices

South Asia TeachingEnglish conference 2026 - Webinar handout

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Why voice matters: Voice is more than speaking. It is the opportunity to think, contribute, question, create, and be heard. When we design for voice, we create conditions where all learners can participate, regardless of language proficiency, confidence, gender, or ability.

1. Multilingual strategies for voice

Strategies	Description
Bilingual brainstorming	Learners generate ideas using English and their home language before sharing with the class.
L1 discussion, reporting in English	Groups discuss a topic in their first language (L1), then prepare and share a brief summary in English.
Multilingual vocabulary walls	Display key vocabulary in English alongside learners' languages.
Local proverbs and idioms	Invite learners to share sayings from their own languages and compare meanings.

2. Strategies for more equitable participation

Strategies	Description
Think–ink–pair–share	Think individually- Write ideas- Discuss with a partner- Share with the class
Wait time	Pause for 5–8 seconds after asking a question.
Random selection	Use name cards, sticks, or digital tools rather than relying on volunteers.
Allow learners multiple ways to respond	Speak- write- draw- act out- use visuals

3. Activities that amplify student voice

Strategies	Description
Four corners	Learners move to different corners of the room based on their opinions and explain their choices
Gallery walk	Groups create posters and respond to each other's ideas.
Story circles	Each learner contributes one sentence to build a collective story.
Role play from different perspectives	Learners explore issues through multiple viewpoints and identities.
Community problem solving	Groups identify a local issue and propose solutions.

4. Promoting gender equity through classroom design

Strategies	Description
Rotate leadership roles.	Ensure all learners have opportunities to: • lead discussions • report ideas • manage materials • facilitate participation
Monitor participation patterns	Track who speaks and who remains silent.
Use inclusive examples	Include diverse characters, occupations, and experiences in classroom materials.
Challenge stereotypes	Invite learners to question assumptions about gender roles and expectations.

5. Further links

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/teaching-resources/teaching-secondary/activities/pre-intermediate-a2/motivating-speaking-activities

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications/resource-books/access-gender-balance-toolkit-teachers

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A recording of Rabia's webinar can be found here: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/south-asia-online-conference-2026