

Activity 6: Your Voice, My Voice

Activity aim:	Learners pay attention to punctuation indicating dialogue and consider ways to make a distinction between the voices of the narrator and the characters.
Time:	20 - 30 minutes
Delivery:	<p>This activity is aimed at learners working at Entry 3 and above. They will work in small groups of four. You can use the materials provided (<i>Lexy's story</i>) or any other story that you think is appropriate for your group. Ensure that your story is illustrated. Below are the delivery steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Put the learners into groups of four. Ask them to consider if they can recognise each other from their voices alone. If time permits, they could try this short warm-up activity: A learner in the group closes their eyes. One of the other learners stands directly behind them and speaks to them. They have to guess which of their classmates it is. If they are correct, can they say how they know? Is it the pitch of the voice, or another quality they are recognising? Explain to the learners that when they are reading a story out loud, they may sometimes have to alter their voices to let the listeners know who is speaking. Each character in a story might have a different voice. Put up the first paragraph and picture from <i>Lexy's story</i> (or from your chosen material). Ask the learners to identify how many characters there are, and who they are. In <i>Lexy's story</i>, there are three characters: a boss, Lexy and Cally. In groups, learners should discuss what they think their voices might sound like: deep, high, loud, quiet? Do they speak quickly or slowly? They should then each take a character and give them a voice. Show the next slide, which is the text of what the boss says. Ask the learners to look carefully and see if they can identify which bits he is saying, and which bits are the background, the narrative. Explain that we need these bits in a text, because we don't have the full picture, as we do in a comic. Point out the speech marks ("—") that surround a bit of speech, showing us where we might need to use a different voice. Give each group a copy of the text of the story and a copy of the comic version. Ask them to focus on page 1 to start with. They should go through the text and highlight the bits that are spoken, using the speech marks to help them. Afterwards, they can check that the text they have highlighted matches the speech bubbles in the comic version. Monitor closely to make sure that everybody is getting it right. If possible, it would be helpful if they could highlight the different characters in different colours – perhaps blue for Lexy, green for the boss and orange for Cally.

6. When they have identified the speech in page 1, they should have a go at performing the first part of the story within their groups. Three of the learners will be a character and one person will be the narrator. Once they are happy that they can do that much, they should proceed to page 2.
7. Working from the page 2 text, rather than the comic, they should again highlight the parts where somebody is speaking, noting who it is. They should be working more independently at this stage. Again, they can check that what they have highlighted matches the comic speech bubbles.
8. Once they have prepared that section, encourage them to practise performing the story as a group, each talking a different voice. When they are ready to perform to the whole class, make sure that everybody else is listening and responding as engaged audience members.

**Differentiation:**

- Learners working at a higher level may be able to do this in pairs, each taking two voices. Eventually, they could take another short story and work on it individually before performing to the class.
- Learners working at a lower level might welcome the support of a buddy to help them voice their character. In that case, put them into bigger groups, and double up the parts (e.g. two learners for the boss, two learners for Cally, etc.).