

### *Task 2: A question poster*

If we think about the question poster task in terms of the same four questions, we get a very different set of answers. We can see immediately that the aim of the task goes far beyond language learning. While the students get exposure to and practice in using question forms (as in Task 1) they are also developing wider *educational* abilities: drawing on their own knowledge, formulating genuine questions, and researching. The task therefore *will continue to have value even if students are already proficient in question forms*. They also more personally involved in what is going on - the questions all come from them. This places the teacher in a different role. In the 'museum task', we can say that the teacher's role is mainly what I call 'the language policeman' - checking that the students are producing language correctly. In the question poster task, however, the teacher's role changes to one of supporting the students, helping them to say *what they want to say*. This means, then, that every time a class does the task, the outcome will be different: the task produces a 'unique classroom', shaped by the unique individuals who are in it.

By comparing these two tasks, we can see some key elements that we can use to judge how much 'value' a task has. When I look at tasks, then, I ask myself the following questions:

*Does the task have value beyond language learning?*

*Are students personally involved?*

*Is the students' personal contribution significant?*

*Will the task produce 'a unique classroom'?*

If the answer to most, or all, of these questions is 'Yes', then I know that I have a task that is probably worth doing more than another task that practises the same language point. Does this mean that tasks such as 'A trip to the museum' have no real value? Not at all, because with a little bit of imagination, it is possible to make simple changes to 'standardised' tasks that will turn them into 'unique' tasks. In the next part of this article, I want to show you how I think we can do this and also give you many more practical examples of tasks which provide language practice and, at the same time, have a wider educational value.