Lesson ideas to stimulate discussion among learners (simplified)

Below is a scaled-down lesson idea for language teachers which is based on the framework used for collecting the views of language learners during the 'learners' voices' survey run in May-June 2022. It is intended for those teachers who may want to organise an action-research lesson (or more than one) to find out how their group of learners felt and still feel about their learning experiences during the Covid restrictions. It can also be used to encourage learners to express constructive suggestions about changes they might wish to see in classroom practice, in the use of digital tools, flexibility in learning arrangements and so on. The activity follows a classic task-cycle framework.

Pre-Task

Introductory brainstorming and collection of thoughts on the topic based on questions such as:

- What did you dislike during the Covid pandemic?
- What did you like?
- Think about the activities in language lessons that did NOT help you to learn
- Think about language learning activities that DID help you to learn, and which might be helpful in the future

To support brainstorming and record the points that learners raise, you may want to use a tool such as a Padlet or Mentimeter in its 'open-ended' mode

Task-Cycle

Step 1: Groups of learners are asked to select <u>one</u> of the statements[2] below to work on together in more detail. Their task is either to:

A. Work together to discuss and prepare a written text on the chosen statement (maximum 1000 words)

or to:

B. prepare a group presentation on the statement they have chosen. The format and presentation tool to be used should ideally be chosen by each group.

    a. With remote learning I don't feel as motivated and don't work as hard as in face-to-face lessons. I do better when I'm in normal lessons.

    b. With remote learning it was sometimes difficult to understand the content and know how to really learn it.

    c. The most difficult part of learning remotely was being isolated from my classmates and teachers.

    d. My classmates supported me during lockdowns by checking up on me and staying in touch virtually.

    e. My teachers/my family were really supportive and helpful during periods of lockdown.

    f. Access to technology and/or the way the technology worked was a real challenge.

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[2] The statements were derived from media coverage on this issue, mainly from an article available online at https://www.teachforamerica.org/one-day/top-issues/9-students-share-how-they-really-feel-about-going-back-to-school This text or other texts that might be available could be used as preparatory reading activity.

g. I think that my grades were not fair and did not really reflect the effort I made when working remotely.

h. I prefer remote learning because it's less stressful than classroom learning.

i. I enjoyed working from home because I got more individual attention from the teacher.

j. I liked remote learning because I wasn't disturbed by all the noise in the classroom.

k. When learning at home I was easily distracted by people around me and other things I could do which were more interesting.

l. I wouldn't like to work from home all the time, but one day a week would be great.

m. A mixture of learning both in class and remotely is more convenient and offers more variety.

Note: as regards the selection of statements by groups, you might either want to ask groups to select one of the above and allow for more than one group to work on a given statement or you may prefer to guide groups to each choose a different statement. Using the first option might allow for some insight into which issues truly are of concern to the learners.

Step 2: Each group discusses their choice of statement, then reflects and discusses the issue(s) raised and plans and prepares their text or presentation.

Step 3: Each group either:

a) submits their text and shares the key points raised in it with classmates

or:

b) delivers their group presentation to their classmates

In both cased there should be opportunities for questions and plenary debate on the points raised.

Post-Task

The steps above can be followed by a language-focused feedback session, e.g. on arguing a point, presenting and sharing an opinion, agreeing and disagreeing etc. There should also be a plenary 'wrap-up' discussion on general aspects and conclusions that might, from the learners' perspective, be relevant for future classroom practice in (language) learning contexts. These will also no doubt be of interest to teachers. Questions addressed in the pre-task can be revisited, e.g.

- Think about the class activities and practices that did NOT help you to learn
- Think about class activities and modes of classroom practice that DID help you to learn, and which might be helpful in the future.

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