

## THOUGHTS ON TEACHING HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY THROUGH A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Question: How to set up and plan a History or Geography lesson in English? What are the specific stakes to the teaching of History and Geography through English?

- q Variety of teaching conditions in History and Geography lessons through English :

The main aspects of the topic are studied with the whole class in French: the History lesson in English is an opportunity to discover the same events through a different perspective particularly an Anglo-Saxon point of view.

- q Is there a specificity to the teaching of a subject through a foreign language?

First of all, we notice that:

- Students are asked to use the same strategies to analyse the documents as in the History and Geography lessons
- the History or Geography exam in English meets the requirements specific to the French educational system

However, we have to take into account that:

- as we use a foreign language, it is necessary to have linguistic aids and specific decoding activities to get familiar with the document
- as it is an oral exam, it is necessary to set up activities that encourage students to express themselves; it is then possible to use British educational methods based on British studies on bilingual education.
- we can focus on a critical approach of the document

- q Aims of the lessons of History through English are linked to the specific test for the Baccalauréat:

- Developing the student's autonomy when analysing a document (of any kind)
- Encouraging oral expression

## PLANNING AND ORGANIZING A LESSON ABOUT THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

### 1) Aims

- q Cognitive:
  - a reflection on the central notion of “point of view”: to examine a question, a same event, through different angles or viewpoints. It allows the student to become aware of the different national perception of the treaty but also of the discrepancies in each national viewpoint.
  
- q Methodological:
  - topic:                   to find, classify and confront information  
                                  to have a critical approach of the sources by working out the difference between facts and interpretations
  
  - language:           written comprehension  
                                  oral expression

### 2) Choice of the documents

- q Texts: authentic materials or extracts from textbooks

- authentic materials:

A stylistic study helps the students to understand better the speeches of statesmen, for example, by giving a further meaning to the content.

They require specific linguistic aid in order to facilitate and make possible the written comprehension.

- extracts from textbooks:

They encourage the students to think about the British viewpoint and vision of History. Moreover, they are usually easier to understand.

- q Iconographic documents (painting, photograph, map, caricature)

The documents are visual aids helping to encourage thought and are not considered as simple illustrations.

The iconographic documents have an important, if not essential, place in a History lesson through English. As a matter of fact:

- Access to the meaning is easier and direct: no language obstacle and it is an efficient incentive to make the students speak
- it is polysemic: when there are several ways of interpreting the document, the students are led to question their legitimacy

The iconographic documents take on particular importance in a History lesson through English:

- the picture is a cultural document, created by an author and a context, which allows to know differently the Anglo-Saxon culture.
- a document provides a multiplicity of viewpoints and conveys explicit and implicit meanings.
- a document frequently used in British education: so a way to take into account the British educational methods and to make the students think about it.

q Video documents

Advantages:

- lively document appreciated by most of the students because they are familiar with television reports.
- unique opportunity to listen to native speakers in class

Difficulties linked to the oral comprehension:

- foreign fluent language and rapid delivery: it supposes a mastery of standard and specific vocabulary
- moving picture associated with a commentary: the decoding of the coincidence between the text and the picture calls for more time than in the mother tongue

Therefore, for all these reasons, it is necessary to use aids and specific activities in order to facilitate comprehension. These aids have to be written and are essentially visual.

## LINGUISTIC AIDS

Two main aims:

- to make comprehension easier
- to make oral and written expression easier

1) To make comprehension easier:

To avoid translating the word into English, it is possible to give an explanation or a synonym in English.

Examples:

- for the extract of J.M.Keynes  
*to stultify sth: to cause sth to get/be blocked*  
*settlement: agreement*

2) To make oral and written expression easier:

- q Referring to principles and proposals (Wilson's 14 points):
  - according to ..., there should be...
  - point ... declares that ...; suggests that ...; proposes (+ verb-ING)
  - under point ..., it is suggested that ...
- q Evaluating a situation:
  - the sources relate to the subject of...
  - the materials cover a time-span of ...
  - the reasons are firstly ..., secondly ....., and finally
- q Comparing
  - ... is like / similar to ...
  - ... is as ... as
  - likewise; similarly; in the same way
- q Contrasting
  - ...is different from...
  - is more .... than
  - whereas; but
  - nevertheless; however; in contrast
  - on the one hand ... on the other hand...
- q Predicting / Hypothesising
  - to assume; to make assumptions; to imagine; to suppose
  - may; might; would
- q Drawing conclusions / Deducing
  - to deduce; to infer from...

## WORKING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MOBIDIC TRAINING

### Aims of the teacher:

To set up a 2 or 3 hours lesson on the Treaty of Versailles which would focus on the multiplicity of viewpoints.

A critical analysis of the treaty to underline the expectations and reactions of the protagonists.

### Processes:

The teachers working in small groups have to:

- 1) Choose some documents, out of 45 sources, which would be used to confront different national viewpoints and to take into account the level of difficulty of each document.
- 2) Define a clear question (or problem) that can easily be found by the students using the documents.
- 3) Propose a lesson plan based on the exploitation of some documents.
- 4) Clarify the aims the students are supposed to reach:
  - historical aims: which historical knowledge has to be mobilized in order to understand the documents?
  - linguistic aims: which linguistic tools or aids are necessary to exploit the documents?

## **The Versailles treaty: a fair or dictated peace?**

QUESTION: WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES? IS IT A DICTATED PEACE OR A FAIR AND LASTING PEACE?

### I. Expectations

Questioning to guide the students in the selection and confrontation of information.  
Summary of the main points filling in a table.

The aim is to make appear the diversity of the expectations:

- between different national representatives
- within each national public opinion

Work in pair or in small groups. Presentation of each position by one group.

### II. Terms of the treaty

Analysis to make appear:

- the terms of the treaty, the influence they convey and their implications
- the controversies
- the contradictions between official positions and negotiations in progress

Assumptions (made by the students) dealing with the receipt of these decisions by the different countries concerned.

Individual work.

### III. Interpretations and criticisms

Work in 4 groups. Each group makes an oral presentation of one position (France; Britain; USA; Germany) and tries to convince the others using precise arguments or quotations taken out of the documents.

## The Versailles treaty: a fair or dictated peace?

### I. Expectations

#### A. The 14 points of Wilson and the American position

Documents: the 14 points of president Wilson

- 1) What are the main principles which have to lead the world? (art 1-4)
- 2) What are the principles which have influenced the articles 5 to 13?
- 3) Say what this was a reaction against:

à *Notions: political and economic liberalism  
self-determination for the people*

#### B. Clemenceau and the French position

Documents: extracts of a British History textbook about Clemenceau

- 1) Explain how Clemenceau sees France's and Germany's future positions in Europe.
- 2) Is he representative of the French public opinion? (Compare with other leaders).

à *Notions: hegemonic temptation of France  
will to ensure its sovereignty and security*

#### C. Lloyd George and the British position

Documents:

- Lloyd George speaking to the House of Commons
- Extract of a speech of Sir Eric Geddes in December 1918
- Cartoon of the British Empire Union in 1919

- 1) Would you say that Lloyd George is in the "middle ground" between Wilson and Clemenceau? Why?
- 2) Are his ideas representative of British public opinion?

à *Notions: balance of power in Europe*

To conclude, fill in the following table:

<b>Leaders</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Attitude towards Germany</b>	<b>Main aim</b>	<b>Feeling about the treaty</b>
Wilson				
Clemenceau				
Lloyd George				

à *Discrepancies between the attitude of statesmen, political leaders and the feeling of the public opinion.*

## **II. Terms of the treaty**

Documents:

- terms of the treaty of Versailles + article 231
- maps showing the frontier changes

- 1) Classify the different clauses:
- 2) List the terms imposed by the treaty aimed at:
  - preventing Germany from going to war again:
  - punishing Germany for starting the war:
  - returning territories taken by Germany in the past:
  - rewarding the Allies for fighting against the Central Powers:
- 3) Which decisions satisfied French and British security interests?
- 4) Does the new shape of the European map reveal the influence of Wilson's 14 points? Justify your answer.
- 5) What can you conclude? Which point of view has mainly influenced the treaty?
- 6) Make assumptions about the reception of the treaty in France, GB, USA and Germany: how would their statesmen and public opinions react to it?
- 7) Fill in the last column of the table answering the following question: 'how did they feel about the final terms of the treaty?'

### **III. Impact: interpretations and criticisms**

Which are the main arguments used to criticize the Versailles treaty?

#### **A. The French position**

Document: a short sentence of Marshall Foch

à *One point of view: not representative of the whole French position.*

#### **B. The Anglo-Saxon position**

Documents:

- GB: Extracts from Keynes, Lloyd George and Churchill
- USA: caricature of Hitler coming out of the Versailles treaty

à *Discrepancies between two British points of view*

à *the USA refused to ratify the treaty*

#### **C. The German position**

Documents:

- a short sentence from F.Ebert (Socialist president of Germany)
- an extract of *Mein Kampf*
- a German cartoon of 1919 showing starvation

à *the Versailles treaty: a difficult legacy for the new Weimar Republic*

### **Conclusion**

The Treaty of Versailles provoked discontent and left many problems in abeyance. Was it a fair peace or a "diktat"? The perception of the treaty is different and depends on national points of view even if some discrepancies can be noticed within each nation.