

Analysis of the effects of group work activities on the teacher's and students' joint action

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Outline of the presentation

- Presentation of the theoretical framework
- Methodology
- Analysis of a significant episode
- Results and conclusions



Theoretical framework

- Didactics of foreign languages and cultures (Aden, 2006; Puren, 2002; Gruson, 2006; Zarate, 2001)
- The notion of culture
- Comparative approach in didactics (Sensevy et Mercier, 2007; Brousseau, 1998; Chevallard, 1988; Sensevy, Mercier & Scubauer-Leoni, 2000)
- Sensevy's work on the Joint Action Theory in Didactics (JATD)



Essential notions

- The didactic contract
 - defined by Brousseau and Chevallard.
- The milieu
 - described by Brousseau and Sensevy.



Methodology

- Video recordings of English lessons
- Transcriptions of the lessons and of interviews with the teacher
- Synopses of the lessons built from the transcriptions
- Preliminary analysis of the documents used for the lessons
- Analysis of significant episodes



Analysis of a group work situation in a CM2

- 5th grade class of 28 students (11-year-old children)
- 7 groups of 4 students, working for 22 minutes on a file of documents → dealing with English, Scottish and Irish history, geography, politics...
- Knowledge at stake for the observed group: cultural facts about Ireland

The documents used by the teacher and the students





Histoire

Après une guerre d'indépendance débutée en [1916](#) entre l'[Armée républicaine irlandaise \(IRA\)](#) et le gouvernement britannique et des émeutes unionistes (notamment [Pâques sanglantes](#)) dans le nord, [Londres](#) accepta de négocier avec l'IRA (notamment [Michael Collins](#)). [Londres](#) proposa un traité aux Irlandais :

- Les [unionistes](#), majoritaires des 6 comtés du nord (voir ci-dessus), auraient leur parlement et leurs ministères mais resteraient dans le [Royaume-Uni](#). C'est ainsi que naquit l'*Irlande du Nord*.
- Les nationalistes majoritaires du sud auraient un [État libre](#), appartenant au [Commonwealth](#), avec parlements et ministères en échange d'un serment d'allégeance à la [couronne britannique](#). Ce nouvel État comprendrait 26 comtés (les comtés de la République actuelle). Le désaccord sur ces conditions fut à l'origine de la [guerre civile](#) qui débuta en [1921](#).

L'île fut ainsi divisée en deux entités. Le nouvel État nord-irlandais dirigé par des politiciens protestants élus par la majorité protestante du pays et relégués à la condition de citoyens de seconde zone n'ayant pas le droit de vote. Cet État traversa le [XX^e siècle](#) au rythme des affrontements sectaires et des tensions intercommunautaires. (De [1921](#) jusqu'en [1972](#)).

À la fin des [années soixante](#), les nationalistes irlandais (catholiques) demandèrent des droits égaux à ceux octroyés à leurs comparses protestants, par la suppression des droits de votes basés sur la propriété des moyens de production. Le gouvernement unioniste (protestant) vit dans ces demandes une menace envers son pouvoir et son emprise sur tous les leviers de la société (justice, police, logement...). Les rassemblements furent interdits tandis que les policiers (majoritairement composés de protestants) réprimaient de plus en plus violemment les manifestations pacifiques.

- A history of Ireland
- A chronology of Ireland (16 dates) 
- A summary of Irish economical and social facts 
- A list of Irish symbols 
- A short description of Ireland's geography 



The series of questions

- 1/ What's the capital of this country?.....
- 2/ Which language are people speaking?
- 3/ What's the name of the national anthem?
- 4/ Who's the head of the government?
- 5/ Who's the Prime Minister?
- 6/ What's the currency?
- 7/ How does the flag look like?
- 8/ What's the name of the cross on the flag?
- 9/ Give the names of 2 or 3 Irish symbols.
- 10/ A bit of history...
Why is March 17th an important date?
- What happened in 1541?
- And in 1800?**



How the teacher defines the task

36	Teacher	<p>So let's stop with France, Vincent, otherwise we are going to spend the whole ... lesson talking about France, whereas now we're going to talk about some other countries. (<i>T. is moving between the rows</i>) For each group I've prepared a little file of coloured written documents... and I'm also handing out a series of questions about the documents. So for the questions I'm putting, you'll find the answers in the documents... if you need to check any words, you can look up in the dictionary. All right, everything's clear? There are 6 groups of you, and 2 groups are working on each same files of documents. I've made two of the same file. You'll have to be no more than 4 in each group, otherwise you won't all be able to discuss... So I'm handing you out one file of documents (<i>T. hands the files and the series of questions</i>). So you need to organize yourselves so that there is one of you reading, another one asking the questions, , well several readers... Any questions? Go! Sh sh sh sh.</p> <p>(Video camera is focusing on one particular group)</p>
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Significant episode

126	Teacher	Hey, Julien! It's now 11.25 past, you now have 5 minutes left, so now those who are ... a bit slow, you have to get going... Ok? Go.
127	Julien	<i>(Teacher is coming)</i> So what about 1800?
128	Ben	1800, there! <i>(Showing his paper)</i> Here, I see 1800!
129	Teacher	So...? Go on!
130	Ben	<i>(Reading)</i> 1800... August 1st... Union Act. Ireland becomes part of the United Kingdom.
131	Clement	It actually means that Ireland is one of the United Kingdom countries! <i>(T. goes away, Julien starts writing)</i> . But there was no need to read this one <i>(showing one of the documents on the history of Ireland)</i> . But in fact we have cheated because the aim was to read everything and to answer after that! <i>(all laughing)</i>



Results

- Too long and complex documents do not produce the expected knowledge
- Group work does not develop skills because of avoidance strategies
- The definition of the task is not clear enough
- Group work can be efficient with novice students if:
 - The level of guidance is well defined
 - The milieu is appropriate



Thank you for your attention
