The Treaty of Versailles – Explaining Opposition among the German Population

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General academic language (GAL) and cognitive academic language (CAL) share many characteristics. CAL can be directly linked to the concepts found in the curriculum guidelines, for example 'photosynthesis' carries with it a range of phrases which 'express' this process in science. GAL may not be quite so identifiable in the curriculum document but still be considered a somewhat 'standard' language requirement for a subject. For example, imagine a learner is required to write an explanation of the opposition of the German population to the terms in the Treaty of Versailles. In the treaty we can identify a number of conditions and demands on the people of Germany which would make life difficult, others which strike at their pride. What academic language, what general academic language, which we are unlikely to see hinted at in the curriculum guidelines will learners need in order to write this explanation?

This article deals specifically with this question, but also can be considered an approach to investigating other aspects of general academic language, indeed in other subjects too.

Figure 1: Investigating resources from curriculum to test – The Treaty of Versailles.

An investigation of the learning documentation for this area of secondary History can be seen in Figure 1: Investigating resources from curriculum to test – The Treaty of Versailles. First, let's contextualize the topic within broad history curriculum objectives (1) and then take a look at the specific objectives referring to this area (2). From here, we'll jumpt straight to a test item (3) and indiciative mark scheme (4), to get an idea of concepts and, if actually indicated, language. Next we'll consider sample study materials on this topic (5) and finally we'll consider what we can do to activate the necessary general academic language, whether it is in a content task, or as a separate language focus activity (6).

<u>1 Curriculum Objectives (broad and specific)</u>

2 *Demonstrate understanding of the past through explanation and analysis of:*
- *key concepts: causation, consequence, continuity, change and significance with a historical context*
- *key features and characteristics of the periods studied and the relationship between them.*
This means organising your answer in order to:
- show the ability to **analyse** when this is asked for, rather than to describe what happened
- show understanding of **why** things happened and **how** and **when change occurred.**

Figure 2: Broad Historical Curriculum Objectives

Learners are asked to follow specific events that happen as a result of the war and the consequences for the German people of the conditions of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. While doing this, learners will be engaged in describing and explaining the causes and consequences of these events and conditions as well as their significance for the German people.

Option 31: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39

Key topic 1: The Weimar Republic 1918–29	
1 The origins of the Republic, 1918–19	• The legacy of the First World War. The abdication of the Kaiser, the armistice and revolution, 1918–19. • The setting up of the Weimar Republic. The strengths and weaknesses of the new Constitution.
2 The early challenges to the Weimar Republic, 1919–23	• Reasons for the early unpopularity of the Republic, including the 'stab in the back' theory and the key terms of the Treaty of Versailles. • Challenges to the Republic from Left and Right: Spartacists, Freikorps, the Kapp Putsch. • The challenges of 1923: hyperinflation; the reasons for, and effects of, the French occupation of the Ruhr.

Figure 3: Specific Historical Curriculum Objectives

We can see that the theme of German opposition to the Treaty of Versailles fits clear in this specific history objective.

<u>2 Testing and marking (test item and mark scheme)</u>

Let us now take a look at a test item for this history topic so we can begin to discuss the academic language demands.

2 Explain why there was opposition in Germany to the Treaty of Versailles (1919).

You may use the following in your answer:
· military terms
· territorial terms
You **must** also use information of your own.

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA

Figure 4: Test item on German opposition to the Treaty of Versailles.

The learner is instructed to write an explanation of German opposition to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles with the invitation to refer to the military terms and the territory terms but with a stress on including their own ideas.

If we now turn our attention to the indicative mark scheme, we can see where the points are.

| 4 | 10–12 | • An analytical explanation is given which is directed consistently at the conceptual focus of the question, showing a line of reasoning that is coherent, sustained and logically structured. [AO2]
• Accurate and relevant information is precisely selected to address the question directly, showing wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of the required features or characteristics of the period studied. [AO1]
No access to Level 4 for answers which do not go beyond aspects prompted by the stimulus points. |

Figure 5: Indicative mark scheme for Versailles Treaty test item

It's curious that this mark scheme descriptor makes no specific reference to either 'military', or 'territory' and the reference to the learners' 'own' ideas is encompassed in 'beyond aspects prompted'. The other aspect of this descriptor which is consistent across the score levels, is that the 'degree' of success is indicated by terms such as 'consistently', 'precisely', 'directly', 'wide-ranging', 'required'. Lower level scores use other terms: 'limited', 'unsustained', 'some development', 'not sustained', 'accurate, relevant', 'some knowledge and understanding'.

It's important to point out that these terms are only helpful for CLIL teachers for judging success 'to a certain extent'. By this I mean that they suggest that answers cover what is expected 'by degrees'. I'm not going to go into this in detail here, my focus is on language and I'll stick to that, but it's enough to say that when a person marking is asked to work with 'limited' (for example) and move to 'consistently'. It has to be assumed that the 'ideal', the 'standard' is housed in the head of that person doing the marking, so that they are able to consider what 'limited' is, or what is 'consistent'. In terms of CLIL, a teacher marking can be well served by a batch of sample answers representing each of the levels for the simple reason that they can see what represents a 'limited' answer, or a 'consistent' answer.

The reference to 'logically structured' is a slight reference to language (perhaps without knowing it) as a learner's written attempts at answering this question can 'show' logic in grammatical structure. What is completely missing in terms of language though is the entire area which is necessary for 'explaining the dissatisfaction' of the German people. We need reference to 'feelings', 'anger', 'upset', among others. We also need reference to 'explanation' phrases such as 'because', 'this means', and phrases which suggest possibility such as 'it's likely that', 'it's quite possible that', 'it may be that', 'a reason for this could be'. In short, in identifying language needed for meeting the specific curriculum demands, a teacher can provide for the general academic demands of test items. And while mother tongue contexts may tend to overlook this need, in CLIL it can be essential for learner success.

3 Teaching and learning resources (materials and language)

CLIL History textbooks may be just that - books of texts. In contexts where the English-medium study materials are translated from the mother tongue to the target language, I've found examples of books that have been literally translated word for word from the original into the target language AND the illustrations and pictures have been left out. Just imagine that! In the context of the Treaty of Versailles

and opinions and reactions of the German people, we might hope to find materials from the period given as visuals with translation as 'context' for the unit of study.

For the purposes of this discussion, I've used a PPT which is freely available at WorldofTeaching.com (accessed 21.01.19). The title of the presentation is 'Was the Treaty of Versailles too Harsh?' and the presentation gives information for and information against the argument and draws conclusions. Whether you have a textbook text, a PPT slideshow, copies of original documents or simply a talk from the teacher, it can be useful for learners to have a task to do that combines a conceptual task with a linguistic one. Alongside the PPT referred to, a simple job for the learners to do could be to listen/watch for terms of the treaty as well as opinions expressed by the German people. Clearly, it would help further if the learners were provided with an instrument to enable them to follow the structure of the presentation (or text, or realia talk) and take notes. If we can embed language within such instruments where needed then we have materials that take on a CLIL identity.

Figure 6: Versailles Treaty - Language for answering a test item writing task

The language support in Figure 6: Versailles Treaty - Language for answering a test item writing task provides a range of structures which are useful for presenting 'opinions (and feelings) of others' and for giving 'explanations' for these opinions (and feelings).

Language like this can be made visible by the teacher at the board/screen, can be made visible during a PPT in that it can be made to appear in a different colour on screen during slides. The language can be given in handout form alongside tasks. Learners can also be given this language as part of other, supplementary tasks.

thought this
was unfair

felt particularly
angry about this

considered this a
further insult
to their pride

angered many
ordinary Germans

felt a loss of pride

felt vulnerable
to future attack

**German reactions
to the Treaty of
Versailles**

hated the treaty

did not accept this

was possibly the most
hated part of the treaty

did not think they
had been defeated

blamed their own
politicians for signing
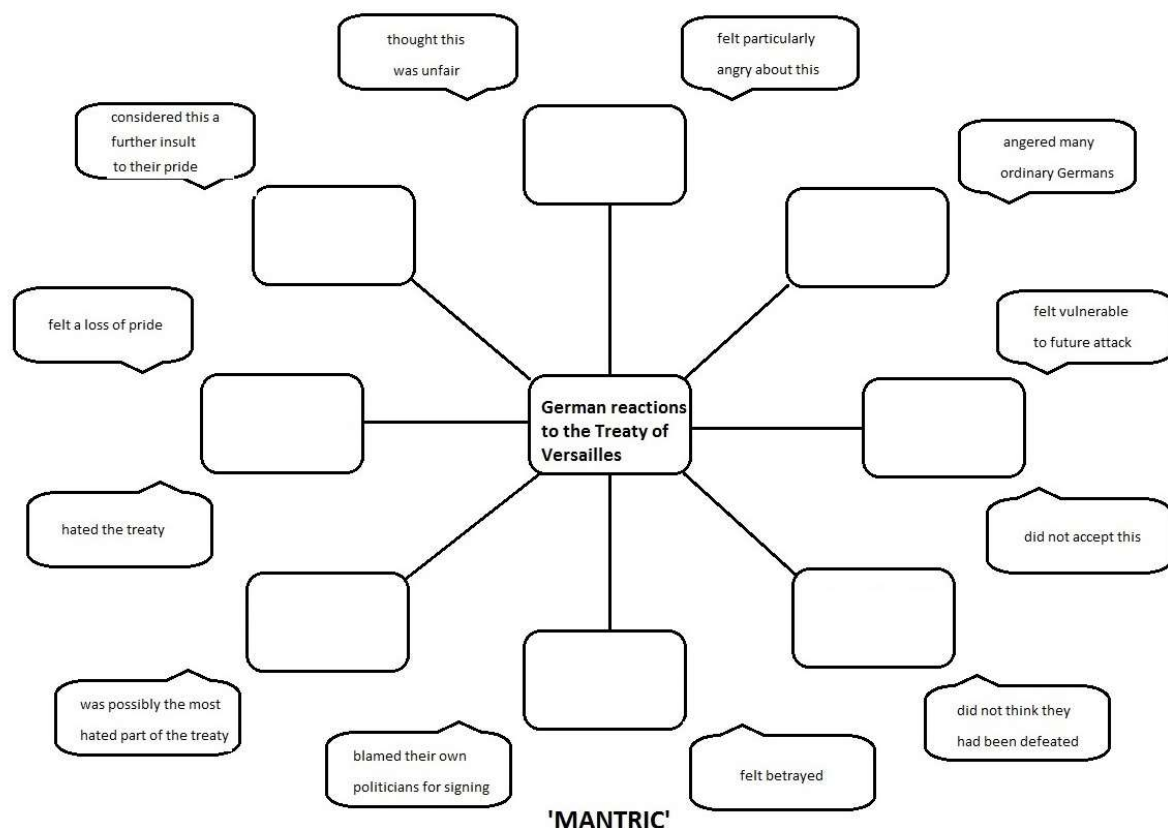
felt betrayed

'MANTRIC'

Figure 7: Versailles Treaty task integrating content and language

Tasks which embed language within content tasks needn't be overwhelming in terms of language, they don't need to be pure language tasks. What they can do is make language visible to learners, to make learners aware of it, and awareness is the first step for learners to reach out to take this language and make it their own. Figure 7: Versailles Treaty task integrating content and language offers such an example. Imagine learners are given the resource to work on during the teacher's PPT slideshow.

The resource has a blank structure labelled 'MANTRIC' which gives an acronym representing the aspects of the treaty which Germans object to. There are many things teachers can get learners to do with a similar resource. The objectionable factors can be listed: loss of colonies; loss of German territories; loss of industry; military restrictions; not allowed to unite - 'Anschluss'; not participate in conference - 'Diktat'; reparations; the war guilt clause. While listening/watching imagine learners are instructed to write in the factors in the spaces in their handout. Additionally, the handout offers sample opinions too. After watching/listening and filling in the gaps and checking with a neighbour, learners can then be asked to match the factors of the treaty with opinions/feelings on the handout. It may also make sense here for a secondary resource to be handed out, such as a reading text so that two different media are exploited during this 'content input' stage of the lesson. Here, learners are creating a 'summary' in visual form of the key aspects of the treaty along with the opinions of the German people. We can then imagine learners talking through their 'complete' structures with a neighbour by way of checking what they finally have. At this stage, it would be a very strong consolidatory task for learners to then have a written task, much like the test item along with language support and be asked to compile a longer

written answer to the question in draft form which they should then swap with a partner among a group of four learners for the partner to check and give notes and feedback (while learner A does the same with learner B's draft). Once this has been done, A1 and B1 swap their texts with A2 and B2 and give further notes and feedback. Lastly, the writing is returned to its owner for writing out in final version.

Concluding words and thoughts

It's only by knowing what language is needed and how much is needed for each of our learners, that we are really able to prepare learners for any test. I repeat often 'we shouldn't test what we haven't taught', and I argue that this maxim makes best sense when put in a CLIL context (though is valid in all learning contexts). Teachers may decide, may choose, not to focus on any of the language, but it IS a choice and as long as it's an informed choice, then all well and good. Knowing what language is needed is the least we can do, before making such a decision. After all, some of our learners may need ALL of the language support.

References:
https://worldofteaching.com/ (accessed 21.01.19)
Treaty-Versailles-language.doc – Word version of the languge support given for the written task

Appendix:
Sources

A great place to find lots of informative input to curriculum objectives, exam questions, sample answers and much more is on the exam board and publishers' websites. The example I use above with the Treaty of Versailles has a map of my own creation. But the idea came from the source below, a sample answer to the question you can see. Unfortunately, this is no longer available on the Hodder & Stoughton website (https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/revision) that I used, but nevertheless, there is plenty more of the same 'kind' of thing available there today and I'm sure that it is constantly updated.

Source 1

Unit 1: Aspects of International Relations, 1919-2005

Chapter 1: Were the peace treaties of 1919-1923 fair?

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1. How far were the German people dissatisfied with the terms of the Treaty of Versailles? (10 marks)

Sample answer: *The treaty presented to the German Delegation was imposed on them. They had not been allowed to take part in the Conference and considered the Treaty a 'Diktat'. Some German delegates even considered refusing to sign it.*

There were many aspects of the treaty that were hated. The Loss of territory including Alsace-Lorraine, for example angered many ordinary Germans. Other countries were allowed self-determination but the Treaty of Versailles forced some Germans to live under foreign rule (e.g. Polish rule in the East). Germany was also not allowed to unite (Anscluss) with Austria. Military restrictions were also placed on Germany and many Germans felt vulnerable to future attack as well as loss of pride. Members of the German armed forces felt particularly angry about this aspect of the Treaty.

The new Weimar Government had to pay the Allies huge reparations. Many Germans, including business leaders and politicians thought this was unfair and designed to bankrupt the German economy and keep it weak. Germany was also not allowed to join the League of Nations (finally joined in 1926) and many Germans considered this a further insult to their pride.

Germany was forced to accept responsibility for starting the War. Most Germans did not accept this and many in the German Army did not think they had been beaten but betrayed by politicians in Berlin who seemed to accept defeat and signed the Treaty of Versailles. This was possibly the most hated part of the treaty.

Finally, most of the German people hated the treaty of Versailles and many blamed their own politicians for signing. Most of the German Army thought that France had had its revenge and some even wanted to restart the war. Germany had been forced to take responsibility for starting the war, been humiliated

by the victorious powers, made to pay reparations, lost one tenth of its territory, most of its military strength and could not unite with Austria.

Comment: The candidate shows that the Germans hated the Treaty of Versailles but is able to demonstrate how different groups in German society resented certain aspects of the treaty more than others – e.g. the loss of territory, or reduction in armed forces.