
Using Interconnected Texts to Highlight Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom

MAYA SMITH

University of Washington, Seattle

E-mail: mayaas@uw.edu

SLA research on foreign language pedagogy has long demonstrated that culture is essential to language learning. However, presenting culture in the language classroom poses certain problems. For learners, there is a tendency to stereotype others and to rely excessively on the teacher. For teachers, there is a tendency to transmit isolated facts without elaboration and to associate a target language with a single monolithic culture. This article presents a pedagogical approach to culture that not only exposes students to networks of authentic texts but also motivates them to research for themselves the many subtleties of the target culture. By learning how to approach a network of texts, students gain deeper insight into the target culture and develop their ability to interpret texts that they will subsequently encounter on their own. This approach will be illustrated by a detailed lesson plan as well as an analysis of the responses of students who engaged with these materials in an advanced intermediate level French class.

INTRODUCTION

By the time they reach intermediate level French study, students have learned basic grammar; they engage in oral debates about a range of issues; they write essays on a variety of topics; they read texts from many different genres. They are often surprised, however, to discover that knowledge of grammatical structures and vocabulary is not sufficient for understanding the texts they read. Comprehension requires that students also understand the perceptions, attitudes, and social norms of communities where the language is spoken. It has long been understood that teaching culture is imperative in the foreign language classroom, but a perennial question remains unresolved: how do we approach culture without essentializing or relying on stereotypes? How do we give our students insight into a foreign world while allowing them to make connections to their own lives? This article shows how exposing students to a network of authentic texts is one way to lead them to new insights into how different societies make meaning through culture.

RATIONALE

The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (2006) argue that “the United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad” (p. 7). In this statement culture and language are treated with the same level of importance. As one of the five content standards, culture is defined in terms of understanding the perspectives (meanings, attitudes, values,

ideas), the practices (patterns of social interactions), and the products (books, tools, foods, laws, music, games) of a society (p. 47). More importantly, the Standards highlight the relationship between perspectives, practices and products—the ways in which they affect and mutually influence each other.

Kramersch (1993) investigates the role of culture in the foreign language classroom, decrying the way pedagogy often enforces a dichotomy between language and culture, in which “culture is...seen as mere information given by language, not as a feature of language itself” (p. 8). She argues that if “language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching” (p. 8). In order to help students understand culture, Kramersch proposes that teachers show students how to interpret meanings by using texts in various ways. For instance, in aesthetic reading, students pay attention to associations, feelings, attitudes, and ideas, drawing upon prior experience and knowledge in order to understand others’ experiences.¹ In addition, exposing students to different voices in any given speech community allows students to gain a more nuanced view of different cultures. Through such approaches, students learn to read culture through discourse.

Presenting culture in the language classroom nevertheless poses certain problems. For learners, there is a tendency to stereotype others and to rely excessively on the teacher as informant. For teachers, there is a tendency to transmit isolated facts without elaboration and to associate a target language with a single monolithic culture. Sometimes teachers have various cultural points they want to raise but do not know how best to approach them. They might see something mentioned briefly in the textbook that they think deserves further discussion, or they may want to interest students in a current event that is happening in the target culture. In researching a topic, teachers will probably come across an array of different types of texts such as newspaper articles, news broadcasts, art, music, poetry, but not know how to integrate these texts into the course.

This article addresses this issue by presenting a lesson plan structure that can be applied to a wide variety of cultural topics.² It demonstrates a pedagogical approach to culture that not only exposes students to networks of authentic texts but also motivates them to research for themselves the many subtleties of the target culture. The use of a variety of interconnected texts promotes discussions about cultural, social, and historical topics. By learning how to approach a network of texts, students gain deeper insight into the target culture and develop their ability to interpret texts that they will subsequently encounter on their own.

GOALS

Students confront a wide range of texts in language courses. While many texts are specially designed to help students learn a foreign language, students also have access to authentic texts, taken from L2 cultures, which represent “real” language use. Authentic texts are

¹ Kramersch borrows Rosenblatt’s (1978) terminology of aesthetic reading to describe “what happens *during* the actual reading event” (Kramersch, 1993, p. 123). She argues that “although they must decipher the images, or concepts, or assertions, that the words refer to, readers also have to pay attention to the associations feelings, attitudes, and ideas that these words and their referents arouse within them” (p. 123). Aesthetic reading creates spaces for students to reflect on how they feel when they read a certain passage as opposed to what facts they take away from it.

² Appendix 3 presents an example of how the principles proposed in this article can help teachers create a wide range of lesson plans that are custom-tailored to students’ levels and interests as well as to current events.

valuable because they foster new perspectives about how foreign language cultures produce and transmit meaning. However, students sometimes find it difficult to analyze such texts and to comprehend the production of cultural meanings without having a detailed understanding of the context in which they were produced.

One way to highlight a text's surrounding context is to offer students a network of texts and explore with them how these texts interconnect to express meanings. Since students often need help in analyzing this interconnectivity, teachers should devise activities that highlight these relations. In other words, students should be trained to perform close readings of single texts and close readings of textual networks as well. This approach forces students to focus on the relationship between texts and history, cultural meaning, and other forms of expression. In looking at the contexts in which texts are created and reproduced, students begin to understand the cultures in which the texts exist.

The following section offers a detailed lesson plan that illustrates how teachers can present students with a network of texts and help them develop the tools needed to thoroughly analyze this network. A hip-hop song entitled "Le bruit et l'odeur" by Zebda and the accompanying music video are analyzed alongside a related political speech by Jacques Chirac, the video of the speech, and a news report about the speech. The goals in this lesson plan are the following: 1) students perform an aesthetic reading, drawing upon prior experience and knowledge in order to understand others' experiences; 2) students become aware of the cultural references contained in texts and learn how to look for these references; 3) students acquire ways of performing close readings of not only texts but also the context in which these texts are created and the network to which these texts belong; 4) students gain access to various voices and to foreign perspectives; 5) students get a nuanced view of the L2 culture and its diversity.

EXPLORING CULTURE THROUGH A NETWORK OF TEXTS: A SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

The following lesson plan was used in an advanced intermediate French language and culture class at the University of California, Berkeley.³ The lesson plan with accompanying handouts can be found in its entirety in Appendix 1. The course emphasizes "the development of oral and written expression to promote linguistic and cultural competences through an extensive grammar review and exploration of spoken and written texts, as well as film, multi-media, and other cultural artifacts."⁴ Since the course already makes use of multi-media technology, incorporating song-centered lesson plans into the curriculum was relatively easy. This particular lesson plan spans multiple days.⁵

³ While it has been written in English for the purpose of this article to benefit a wider readership, the series of activities was presented in French to an advanced intermediate class. The handouts in Appendix 1 are therefore entirely in French. However, in language programs that utilize multilingual resources, one could do aspects of the lesson plan in English, such as when students bring up comparative examples of music and political speeches in the United States.

⁴ The course curriculum can be found in detail through the 'Courses' tab at <http://french.berkeley.edu/>

⁵ The lesson plan can be modified to fit within the time constraints of the class, and the order of activities can be changed to suit the goals of the course.

The night before

Private viewing: Students are given lyrics (handout no. 2) and discussion questions to answer (handout no. 1). They watch the music video of Zebda's "Le bruit et l'odeur" twice—the first time without lyrics. In answering the first set of questions, students focus on their general impressions of the song, which allows them to respond to the video aesthetically and enjoy the music as a work of art. For the second viewing, students read along with the lyrics. The second set of questions helps students notice how Zebda's use of language compares to other texts they have seen in class. Students thus become aware of the different voices in a single speech community. For the third set of questions, students research the words highlighted in the lyrics, which are specific references to people, places, events, and other texts. A simple Google search of "le bruit et l'odeur" will most likely send students to former French president Jacques Chirac's speech in which he complained about the "noise and the smell" that immigrants produce. Students look up these references to become sensitized to how lyrics are often full of allusions. It can be hoped that students will begin to look for and question references in the various texts they read and then ask themselves why they are important.

Day one

Discussion: Students share impressions of the song in small groups, using the homework questions from handout no. 1 as a guide, before engaging in full class discussion.

By comparing their reflections with those of their peers, they not only witness different voices present in the French-language speech community but also gain a sense of the multiple voices in the classroom, since each student will have different reactions to and ideas about the music video. The teacher can also offer insight by explaining difficult parts of the lyrics, which include non-standard French linguistic features, and by offering terminology for discussing music, video, and this specific genre of music.

Reading activity: Students analyze a transcript of Chirac's speech (handout no. 3), which occurs at a Center-Right political party dinner.

Reading the transcribed text gives students a chance to perform a close reading in order to analyze rhetorical features, patterns, diction, tone and imagery. Students can then discuss the effectiveness of the speech. In addition to permitting close analysis, reading the transcript before seeing the actual footage lets students focus on the text alone, so that their first interpretations of the text are not influenced by the surrounding context.

Day Two

Viewing activity: Students watch news footage of Chirac's actual speech.

In the news clip, a newscaster introduces the topic before a reporter named Bradan contextualizes footage of Chirac's speech. In his speech, Chirac laments how a French person who works hard to earn money goes crazy when he sees his immigrant neighbor with four wives and twenty children living off outrageously generous welfare benefits. The speech receives cheers and applause by a sympathetic audience. Afterwards, Bradan shows the reaction of other political leaders by interviewing Jean Marie Le Pen, leader of France's extreme right National Front party, and Edith Cresson, the Socialist prime minister.

Students analyze different layers of the news report. They have already had a chance to discuss Chirac's speech in written form. As students see how it was received in the video, they gain a sense of what the speech means for Chirac's followers. With this added layer of context, students can reflect on the text and its relation to the original intended audience. However, there is another contextual layer: the placement of the speech in the newscast. Using the questions from handout no. 3, students examine how the newscasters approach Chirac's speech, how the reporter frames the speech, and how including interviews of politicians on both the left and the extreme right affect one's understanding of the speech. These types of questions demonstrate that discourse, once produced, can then be recontextualized. In addition, students get a chance to see how divisive issues such as immigration and multiculturalism were debated in the French political arena in the 1990s and can compare these debates to what they know about the issues in present-day France, and even in the United States.

With this cultural knowledge, students can revisit Zebda's song to better understand the group's need to write it as well as the importance of the song for Zebda's listeners. They can discuss the song's role in a larger social narrative in which the voices of marginalized communities in France speak up against derogatory and exclusionary rhetoric. They can analyze the dialogue created by these different voices and the reception of these voices. Students thus gain a nuanced understanding of how controversial issues are approached and how dissenting opinions are voiced in French society. They also use their own understandings of the world to make interpretations about how others view the world.

EVALUATION

Student feedback via a questionnaire was collected for this lesson plan to gain a sense of whether specific pedagogical goals were being met. There were 14 students of whom 10 turned in anonymous responses in English. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2, in which questions are numbered Q1, Q2, and so forth. The first goal was to give students a chance to perform an aesthetic reading of the text. One student highlighted the aggressive nature of the song, conveyed through the tempo of the music, the tone of the voices, and the close-up shots of the band members that seemed to encroach on the space of the spectator. Another student was struck by the color contrast in the video, reading the white clothing of the band members as a commentary on the homogeneity that some people associate with French culture while taking the splattered color from the paintballs to signify the multicultural underclass. Discussing their aesthetic reactions helped students ponder what these artistic choices meant for the overall message of the song.

The second goal was to show students the importance of looking up cultural references, a task that students seemed to enjoy. They mentioned an appreciation for the song lyrics. They were particularly impressed by "the breadth of knowledge and cultural facts that Zebda incorporated within the song" (Q4). The students appeared surprised that a hip-hop group would make references to historical figures and events or to literary works. In addition to sensitizing students to the fact that lyrics are often full of allusions and convey societal understandings of culture, the students also reflected on the nature of interconnectivity in their everyday experiences outside of the class. For instance, one student remarked, "It was enjoyable. It made me realize how I take for granted all the references made in American music" (Q7). This student recognized the subconscious connections we automatically make to other texts. This experience was eye-opening for many students, and it is likely that

students who engage in this type of activity will look for the interconnectivity of texts in other aspects of their daily lives.

Another pedagogical goal was to highlight the importance of placing text within a larger context. In seven of ten questionnaires, the importance of context was explicitly mentioned. One student wrote:

I appreciated that the actual viewing of Chirac's speech came after our initial view of the video and the lyrics; it helped me form my own impressions of the song's message and the content of the lyrics. After viewing Chirac's speech and incorporating that knowledge into my perspective of the song, I was able to further explore the song's significance and the unique context in which it was written and performed. I felt that we as a class were able to approach a controversial topic with maturity and depth as a result of our discussions and individual observations regarding both Zebda's video and Chirac's speech. (Q1)

This student demonstrated that the sequence of activities mattered, arguing that it was good for students to form their own conclusions about individual texts before complicating the picture with a network of texts. The order of the activities in which texts are decontextualized and then contextualized encourages students to broaden their reflections. For instance, a student commented, "Honestly, it surprised me to read what he said and then to see the video of the speech. It surprised me that you could get away with saying something like that largely unscathed" (Q1). He indicated how the reaction of the audience was a key factor in how he read the text. This student had expectations about how the text would have been received when reading the transcript and learned that the speech was received in an entirely different way. Consequently, he had to reformulate his understanding of the text when it was placed in its original context with its original audience. He was, therefore, forced to reevaluate the meaning of the text and to deepen his understanding of how texts acquire meaning.

The fourth goal of the activity sequence was to show how different cultural artifacts are part of a network of texts that allow members of a society to be in dialogue with one another. It is through this dialogue that meanings are formulated and expressed. One student wrote: "I thought it was interesting to see how these pieces of media were all interconnected, which was far more engaging than had we simply listened to the song or watched the speech because it felt like I was getting a much broader understanding of French culture" (Q1). Picking up on the theme of interconnectivity and its ability to provide students with access to culture, she argued that it was the body of texts in its ensemble that allowed for a broader understanding of French culture, which would have been lost if a text had been studied in isolation.

Dialogue between various members of a culture also ensures that students are exposed to multiple voices. This nuanced representation of the L2 culture constitutes the fifth goal. In the case of this activity sequence, the voice of the marginalized is presented, offering an alternate version to dominant discourse. By juxtaposing Chirac's speech with Zebda's song, students can see how one part of society responds to another. For instance, as one student noted, "I saw the kind of power that political speech can have to make a community feel degraded and alienated in society. Zebda picked up on the most degrading words of Chirac's speech for their chorus" (Q5). This student highlighted the discursive strategies of Zebda and analyzed the group's decision to reuse parts of Chirac's speech.

While students examined multiple voices, one student even noticed that not all voices were present: “I found it telling that the report did not include any street interviews with French citizens, whose opinions regarding the Chirac speech would have been interesting to hear” (Q2). This type of activity sequence helps prepare students to search for and expect the existence of various voices. Students thus gain a nuanced understanding of how French society approaches these issues and voices dissenting opinions. Students also use their own understandings of the world to make interpretations about how others view the world. Through the interconnectivity of authentic texts, students are witnessing multiple facets of the target culture.

CONCLUSION

Any song with its accompanying network of texts can be used to reduce the tendency to stereotype, which is the overarching goal of this type of cultural lesson plan. While this song is particularly useful in portraying a picture of multiculturalism and showcasing marginalized voices, it is actually the treatment of the song, not the song itself, that leads students away from making stereotypes. Through the activity sequence, students explore texts for meaning, look at texts from multiple angles, become aware of the multitude of voices expressed by them, and question how texts are interconnected. It is through this complex approach that I believe students are less likely to accept stereotypes or jump to facile conclusions.

The main aim in creating and evaluating the activity sequence has been to offer students the tools necessary to analyze authentic texts and to understand how these texts fit into a larger societal and cultural framework. Through networks of texts, students experience foreign ideological, cultural, and symbolic systems. Students’ questionnaire responses indicated that those who engaged with these networks of texts picked up on the various pedagogical goals that these activities had attempted to achieve.

Implications go beyond the foreign language classroom. Students realize that the various texts they come across on a daily basis play into a larger cultural fabric. They become more aware of how their own society understands and creates culture and how different segments of society contribute to the formulation of culture. They are more tuned in to the authentic texts and the various voices found in their own society and are cognizant of the existence of both dominant and less salient discourses. Seeing how texts are interconnected highlights how different discourses respond to each other. In the process, students learn that culture both in and out of the foreign language classroom is in fact multilayered.

REFERENCES

- Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (2006). *Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st century*. New York: Allen Press, Inc.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

RESOURCES

sites.google.com/site/frenchmusicdatabase/ (detailed song-related lesson plans for the UC Berkeley French Department)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Note: This lesson plan has been translated into English for the benefit of readers who do not understand French. The handouts that follow it have been left in the original French.

Lesson Plan for “Le bruit et l’odeur” (Zebda)

Tags: intertextuality, culture, politics, discrimination, immigration, national identity, multicultural, government, president, Chirac, francophone, rap, hip-hop

Level: Advanced Intermediate French

Difficulty: high

Duration: multiple days (you can use all or some of the lesson plan depending on time restrictions)

Known links to relevant videos:

Zebda: http://www.wat.tv/video/zebda-bruit-odeur-2005-1g3b6_2i3r1_.html

Chirac: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BxaVdu0hqU&feature=related>

Pre-classroom activities: (to be done the day before class at home) (~30 min)

Students watch the video of Zebda’s “Le bruit et l’odeur” twice.

Provide them with the French lyrics (handout no. 2) and have them write down answers to the provided questions (handout no. 1).

Questions to focus on while listening/viewing the first time (without the lyrics):

- 1) What are the general impressions you get from watching this video?
- 2) What is the tone of the song?
- 3) Describe the group members. How do they look and act? What are they wearing?
- 4) What images and colors are used in the video? Why?

What to focus on while listening/viewing the second time (with lyrics):

- 1) Underline words or phrases you don’t understand. Try to figure them out by looking in a dictionary or reference manual.
- 2) Are there uses of language you have not yet encountered in French class?
- 3) Are there uses of language that are different than what you have learned in class?

Post-listening/viewing activities:

- 1) Why is the title of the song “le bruit et l’odeur”? Do a Google search. What do you find? [they will probably find a Wikipedia article about the song and the corresponding text from Jacques Chirac’s speech. This is fitting because the text will be used in class the following day]
- 2) Look up the bolded items [Voltaire, Dolto, Garonne, Monte Cassino, Noah, Boli]. What cultural references are being made? How are they important to the message of the song? [It will be interesting to see what they find, particularly for Noah since the French word for Noah, as in the ark, is Noé.]

In class activities:

First day

Warm up (5 min): In small groups, students compare what they found from the Google search and their impressions of the song.

Clarifications (5 min): Review language and comprehension difficulties as a class. It might make sense to give an English translation of the lyrics.

Discussion (10 min): As a class, students share their thoughts about what is happening in the song and what they found out from their research, using the homework questions as a discussion guide.

Reading activity (10 min): Give students the transcript of Chirac's speech and have them answer the accompanying questions orally in small groups (handout no. 3).

Comment voulez-vous que le travailleur français qui travaille avec sa femme et qui ensemble gagnent environ 15 000 FF et qui voit sur le palier à côté de son HLM entassée, une famille avec un père de famille, trois ou quatre épouses et une vingtaine de gosses, et qui gagne 50 000FF de prestation sociale sans naturellement travailler. Si vous ajoutez à cela le bruit et l'odeur, eh bien le travailleur français sur le palier, il devient fou. Et ce n'est pas être raciste que de dire cela. Nous n'avons plus les moyens d'honorer le regroupement familial et il faut enfin ouvrir le débat qui s'impose dans notre pays qui est un vrai débat moral pour savoir si, il est naturel que les étrangers puissent bénéficier au même titre que les Français d'une solidarité nationale à laquelle ils ne participent pas puisqu'ils ne payent pas d'impôts.

- 1) Discuss the vocabulary, tone, patterns, images and structure of the speech.
- 2) Is Chirac's speech problematic? Why or why not? What is he arguing?
- 3) What are your impressions of his speech?
- 4) Why does he say « Ce n'est pas être raciste que de dire cela » ? What effect does using a negative statement have on the meaning?

Second day

Listening activity (20 min): Show students the *reportage* on Chirac's speech and have them answer questions (handout no. 3) in small groups or as a class discussion.

- 1) How is Chirac's speech presented by the newscasters?
- 2) How is the speech contextualized within the report? Within the political arena?
- 3) Who are the other protagonists? What other voices do we hear? What do they argue?
- 4) What is the audience's response to the speech? How is that different from the responses outside of the context of that dinner-debate?
- 5) What are your reactions to the audience's response?
- 6) Moving your attention to Zebda's song, how is Chirac's speech contextualized there?
- 7) What part of the speech do they focus on and use in their song lyrics?
- 8) What is the purpose of Zebda's song? What do they argue?
- 9) Go to Zebda's text. Name specific examples of arguments that they are making in their song? How effective are these arguments?

Transcript of *reportage*:

Présentateur: Les propos de Jacques Chirac sur l'immigration sèment donc le trouble et provoquent quelques remous dans la classe politique française. Tout le monde reconnaît que l'immigration pose un problème en France. Beaucoup pensent que les gouvernements successifs n'ont pas su maîtriser la situation mais aujourd'hui c'est d'abord le discours et les mots employés par Jacques Chirac qui engendrent la polémique. Déclarations et réactions rassemblées par François Bradan.

Bradan: Au départ, une réunion presque sans importance. Le RPR (Rassemblement pour la République) est à Orléans, dîner-débat devant 1 500 militants, et soudain entre la poire et le fromage Jacques Chirac passe à l'attaque, sa cible : l'immigration.

Chirac: Comment voulez-vous que le travailleur français qui habite à la Goutte d'Or où je me promenais avec Alain Juppé la semaine dernière il y a trois ou quatre jours et qui travaille avec sa femme et qui ensemble gagnent environ 15 000 FF et qui voit sur le palier à côté de son HLM, entassée, une famille avec un père de famille, trois ou quatre épouses et une vingtaine de gosse et qui gagne 50 000FF de prestation sociale sans naturellement travailler. Si vous ajoutez à ça, si vous ajoutez à ça, le bruit et l'odeur, et bien le travailleur français sur le palier, il devient fou. Il devient fou. C'est comme ça. Et il faut le comprendre, si vous étiez, vous auriez la même réaction. Ce n'est pas être raciste que de dire cela.

Bradan : Un discours musclé. Un style qu'on a de plutôt d'habitude de trouver du côté du Front National. Jean Marie le Pen apprécie :

Le Pen: Je constate que Jacques Chirac arrive à tenir le même discours que le Front National, tout en continuant à affirmer que le Front National est extrémiste et à le diaboliser. Il y a là une contradiction qu'il faudra bien qu'il lève ou qu'à défaut les électeurs lèveront pour lui.

Bradan: Est-ce que vous ne craignez pas que finalement le RPR ne finisse pas par vous couper un peu l'herbe sous le pied?

Le Pen: Et bien écoutez je ne le crois pas. Honnêtement parce que je crois que les électeurs préféreront toujours l'original à la copie.

Bradan: Ce matin à Matignon Edith Cresson s'est déclarée, choquée par les propos de Jacques Chirac. Choquée mais pas surprise.

Est-ce que ça ne vous donne pas rétrospectivement raison sur votre intervention XXXX celle de Jacques Chirac hier soir?

Cresson: Oui, j'avais dit que le langage de M. Jacques Chirac ressemblait beaucoup à celui de M. le Pen. J'ai dit ça il y a quelques jours. Ça a surpris et puis aujourd'hui tous les journalistes, tous les commentateurs disent la même chose. Donc, ce que j'avais dit je presentais ce rapprochement.

Bradan: Est-ce que ça vous choque ?

Désormais, au centre de la polémique, Jacques Chirac semble avoir trouvé une forme de dialogue particulièrement fracassante.

English Translation (my translation):

Newscaster: Jacques Chirac's remark on immigration creates confusion and causes a stir in French politics. Everyone recognizes that immigration is a problem in France. Many believe that successive governments have failed to control the situation, but today the discourse and words used by Jacques Chirac have generated controversy. Here are some statements and reactions collected by François Bradan.

Bradán: Initially, an almost irrelevant meeting. The RPR (Rally for the Republic) is in Orleans, at a dinner-debate for 1,500 militants, and suddenly between the fruit and the cheese courses, Jacques Chirac goes on the attack. His target: immigration.

Chirac: How do you expect the French worker who lives in Goutte d'Or where I was walking with Alain Juppé last week three or four days ago and who works with his wife and who together earn about 15 000 FF and sees on the landing next to his crowded public housing, a family with a father, three or four wives and twenty kids, earning 50 000FF from social benefits without working. If you add to that, if you add to that, the noise and the smell, well the French worker goes mad. He goes mad.

That's how it is. And if you were there, you would have the same reaction. It's not racist to say that.

Bradán: Tough talk. A style that one would more likely expect from the National Front. Jean Marie le Pen comments:

Le Pen: I note that Jacques Chirac has managed to use the same discourse as the National Front, while continuing to assert that the National Front is extremist and continuing to demonize us. There is a contradiction there that he will have to address or that the voters will make him address.

Bradán: Are you not afraid that eventually the RPR will steal your platform?

Le Pen: I do not think so because I honestly believe that voters always prefer the original to the copy.

Bradán: This morning in Matignon Edith Cresson expressed her thoughts, shocked by the words of Jacques Chirac. Shocked but not surprised. In retrospect, were you not right about what you said concerning Jacques Chirac last night?

Cresson: Yes, I had said that the language of Jacques Chirac was much like that of Mr. Le Pen. I said that a few days ago. It was surprising to people, but then today all the journalists and commentators are saying the same thing. So I had already sensed this connection.

Bradán: ...Now at the center of the controversy Jacques Chirac seems to have found a form of particularly sensational dialogue.

Handout No. 1 – Activités à la maison

Regardez la vidéo de Zebda “Le bruit et l’odeur”

http://www.wat.tv/video/zebda-bruit-odeur-2005-1g3b6_2i3r1_.html

Questions à répondre (sans les paroles):

- 1) Quelles sont les impressions générales que vous avez en regardant cette vidéo?
- 2) Quel est le ton de la chanson?
- 3) Décrivez les membres du groupe. Comment sont-ils? Comment se comportent-ils? Quels vêtements portent-ils?
- 4) Quelles sont les images et les couleurs utilisées dans la vidéo? Pourquoi?

Regardez la vidéo encore une fois (avec les paroles) et répondez aux questions:

- 1) Soulignez les mots ou les phrases que vous ne comprenez pas. Consultez un dictionnaire.
- 2) Y a-t-il des structures que vous n’avez pas encore apprises en classe?
- 3) Y a-t-il des structures qui sont différentes?

Autres questions:

- 1) Pourquoi est-ce que la chanson s’appelle « Le bruit et l’odeur »? Consultez Google. Que trouvez-vous?
- 2) Cherchez les référents en gras [Voltaire, Dolto, la Garonne, Monte Cassino, Noah, Boli]. Quelles sont les références culturelles? Comment sont-elles importantes pour le message de la chanson?

Handout No. 2

Zebda- "le bruit et l'odeur"

Si j'suis tombé par terre
 C'est pas la faute à **Voltaire**
 Le nez dans le ruisseau
 Y avait pas **Dolto**
 Si y'a pas plus d'anges
 Dans le ciel et sur la terre
 Pourquoi faut-il qu'on crève dans le ghetto ?

Plutôt que d'être issu d'un peuple qui a trop souffert
 J'aime mieux élaborer une thèse
 Qui est de pas laisser à ces messieurs
 Qui légifèrent, le soin de me balancer
 Des ancêtres

On a beau être né
 Rive gauche de la **Garonne**
 Converser avec l'accent des cigales
 Ils sont pas des kilos dans la cité gasconne
 A faire qu'elle ne soit pas qu'une escale

On peut mourir au front
 Et faire toutes les guerres
 Et beau défendre un si joli drapeau
 Il en faut toujours plus
 Pourtant y a un hommage à faire
 A ceux tombés à **Montécassino**

[Refrain] :
Le bruit et l'odeur
 Le bruit et l'odeur
 Le bruit du marteau-piqueur x4

La peur est assassine
 Alors c'est vrai je pénalise
 Ceux qui flinguent les mômes
 Qu'ont pas la pelouse en bas
 Je suis un rêveur
 Et pourtant ami j'analyse
 Je suis un érudit et je vous dis:
 Je suis serbo-croate et musulman
 Voilà le hic
 Un prêtre polonais républicain
 Et laïque
 Et si certains regrettent
 De pas être noir de peau
 Je n'ai qu'une réponse les gars

Vous avez du pot

L'égalité mes frères
 N'existe que dans les rêves
 Mais je n'abdique pas pour autant
 Si la peur est un bras qui nous soulève
 Elle nous décime
 J'en ai peur pour la nuit des temps

Elle aime Noah
 Mais faut qu'y gagne les tournoi
 Elle aime Boli mais a jamais rien aboli x2

[Refrain]

Qui a construit cette route?
 Qui a bâti cette ville?
 Et qui l'habite pas?
 A ceux qui se plaignent du bruit
 A ceux qui condamnent l'odeur
 Je me présente

Je m'appelle Larbi, Mamadou Juan et faites place
 Guido, Henri, Chino Ali je ne suis pas de glace
 Une voix m'a dit « Marathon » cherche la lumière
 Du gouffre j'ai puisé un combat « la bonne affaire »

J'en ai bavé de la peur que j'ai lu dans les yeux
 De ceux qui ont trois fois rien et qui le croyaient
 précieux
 Quand j'ai compris la loi, j'ai compris ma défaite
 Intégrez-vous disait-elle, c'était chose faite

[Refrain]

Le bruit du marteau-piqueur dans tes oreilles
 Tu finis ta vie, elles bourdonnent les abeilles

Handout No. 3 – activités en classe

La lecture:

“Comment voulez-vous que le travailleur français qui travaille avec sa femme et qui ensemble gagnent environ 15 000 FF et qui voit sur le palier à côté de son HLM entassée, une famille avec un père de famille, trois ou quatre épouses et une vingtaine de gosses, et qui gagne 50 000FF de prestation sociale sans naturellement travailler. Si vous ajoutez à cela le bruit et l’odeur, eh bien le travailleur français sur le palier, il devient fou. Et ce n’est pas être raciste que de dire cela. Nous n’avons plus les moyens d’honorer le regroupement familial et il faut enfin ouvrir le débat qui s’impose dans notre pays qui est un vrai débat moral pour savoir si, il est naturel que les étrangers puissent bénéficier au même titre que les Français d’une solidarité nationale à laquelle ils ne participent pas puisqu’ils ne payent pas d’impôts.” (Chirac, 1991)

- 1) Parlez du vocabulaire, du ton, des motifs, des images et de la structure du discours.
- 2) Est-ce que le discours de Chirac est problématique? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas? Quel est son argument?
- 3) Quelles sont vos impressions de son discours?
- 4) Pourquoi dit-il « Ce n’est pas être raciste que de dire cela »? Comment est-ce que l’usage d’une déclaration négative influence la signification?

En regardant le reportage:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BxaVdu0hqU&feature=related>

- 1) Comment est-ce que les journalistes présentent le discours de Chirac?
- 2) Comment le discours est-il situé dans le contexte du rapport? Dans l’arène politique?
- 3) Qui sont les autres protagonistes? Quelles sont les autres voix que nous entendons? Quels sont leurs arguments?
- 4) Quelle est la réaction du public au discours? Quelle est la différence entre cette réaction et celles hors du contexte de ce dîner-débat?
- 5) Quelles sont vos réactions à la réaction du public?
- 6) En regardant la chanson de Zebda, comment est le discours de Chirac contextualisé là?
- 7) Sur quelle partie du discours se concentrent-ils et quels mots du discours utilisent-ils dans les paroles de la chanson?
- 8) Quel est le but de la chanson de Zebda? Quel est son argument?
- 9) Regardez le texte de Zebda. Nommez des exemples précis d’arguments qu’ils font dans leur chanson. Quelle est l’efficacité de ces arguments?

Appendix 2

Questionnaire

Q1: What did you think of the sequences of activities concerning “Le Bruit et l’odeur,” Chirac’s speech, and the *reportage*? What sort of feelings did you experience when performing these activities?

Q2: What did you learn from these activities in terms of language? Culture? Media? Political discourse?

Q3: Did what you learn from these activities differ in any way from what you learned about immigration in the textbook? What new perspectives do you have about French culture?

Q4: Did you like the song? Was there anything surprising or different about the lyrics? Have you listened to similar music before?

Q5: What connections did you make between Zebda’s song, Chirac’s speech, and the news report?

Q6: What message do you think the song’s performers were trying to express? Chirac when giving his speech? The news reporters when producing the *reportage*?

Q7: Did you enjoy collecting background information on the songs and exploring the references made in the song? Why or why not?

Q8: Do you want more activities such as these? Would you suggest any changes in the lesson for future teaching?

Appendix 3

Using this approach as a template

This treatment of a network of texts can be used in any foreign language classroom and about any cultural, political, social, or historical topic. The framework allows for versatility and the incorporation of a large range of texts. By following the principles of this type of textual treatment, one can create a lesson plan without much prior knowledge or time. Below are the steps needed to create an activity sequence. This example is different from the one that was presented in the article.

Example: Lesson plan for 2012 Presidential elections in Senegal, West Africa

1) Begin with a focal text.

A colleague shared a news report he had seen about the “Y en a marre” movement, a popular movement comprised mainly of musicians and artists whose main purpose was to call attention to a political system that they feel is unjust.

2) Do an internet search of related terms.

In this case, I Google-searched “Y en a marre,” which pointed to music videos, news articles (printed and oral), artwork, and political speeches.

3) Decide which texts to use and in what order. Create discussion questions. Provide visual materials such as lyrics or transcripts if desired and possible.

I had the students listen to a song that the “Y en a marre” movement had produced entitled “Faut pas forcer” (or “Faux: Pas Forcez” depending on how it is transcribed) and then read an article about the movement.

I asked if they understood anything from the song. Only the refrain was comprehensible to them. I intentionally did not give them the lyrics in order to force them to focus on the tone of the song.

I had them look at the article and ask questions about vocabulary before delving into a discussion of the use of music in political movements.

I then asked them to make parallels between the use of music in politics in Senegal and in the United States, leading to a discussion of President Obama’s 2008 campaign.

4) Use your personal experience to create lesson plans and engage students.

Because I had lived in Senegal and had done research concerning Senegalese immigration, I was equipped to answer some of the questions the students had and to direct the conversation down many different paths.