

AGREGATION INTERNE D'ANGLAIS

SESSION 2010

Epreuves orales

EXPOSE DE LA PREPARATION D'UN COURS

The logo consists of the letters 'I' and 'B' in a bold, serif font, enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Ce sujet comprend 3 documents

- Document 1 : *Linguistic Class Codes*, extrait de *Watching the English*, Kate Fox, 2004
- Document 2 : *Are we all middle-class now?* (*The Times*, 2008) + tableau Wikipédia
- Document 3 : *There's no way up*, article du *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 2007

Compte tenu des caractéristiques de ce dossier et des différentes possibilités d'exploitation qu'il offre, vous indiquerez à quel niveau d'apprentissage vous pourriez le destiner et quels objectifs vous vous fixeriez. Vous présenterez et justifierez votre démarche pour atteindre ces objectifs.

Linguistic Class Codes

5 One cannot talk about English conversation codes without talking about class. And one cannot talk at all without immediately revealing one's own social class. (...) All English people, whether they admit it or not, are fitted with a sort of social Global Positioning Satellite computer that tells us a person's position on the class map as soon as he or she begins to speak.

10 The first class indicator concerns which type of letter you favour in your pronunciation –or rather, which type you fail to pronounce. Those at the top of the social scale like to think that their way of speaking is 'correct', as it is clear and intelligible and accurate, while lower-class speech is 'incorrect', a 'lazy' way of talking –unclear, often unintelligible, and just plain wrong.

15 Exhibit A in this argument is the lower-class failure to pronounce consonants, in particular the glottal stop –the omission (swallowing, dropping) of 't's' – and the dropping of 'h's'. But this is a case of the pot calling the kettle (or ke'le, if you prefer) black. The lower ranks may drop their consonants, but the upper class are equally guilty of dropping their vowels. If you ask them the time, for example, the lower classes may tell you it is "alf past ten", but the upper classes will say 'hpstn'. A hankerchief in working-class speech is "ankerchief", but in upper-class pronunciation becomes 'hnrchf'.

20 Upper-class vowel-dropping may be frightfully smart, but it still sounds like a mobile-phone text message, and unless you are used to this clipped, abbreviated way of talking, it is no more intelligible than lower-class vowel-dropping. The only advantage of this SMS-speak is that it can be done without moving your mouth very much, allowing the speaker to maintain an aloof, deadpan expression and a stiff upper lip.

25 The upper class, and the upper-middle and middle-middle classes, do at least pronounce their consonants correctly whereas the lower classes often pronounce 'th' as 'f' ('teeth' becomes 'teef', 'thing' becomes 'fing') or sometimes as 'v' ('that' becomes 'vat', 'Worthing' is 'Worving'). Final 'g's' can become 'k's' as in 'somefink' and 'nuffink'. Pronunciation of vowels is also a helpful class indicator. Lower-class 'a's' are often pronounced as long 'i's' –Dive for Dave, Tricey for Tracey. (Working-class Northerners tend to elongate the 'a's', and might also reveal their class by saying 'Our Daaave' and 'Our Traaacey'.)

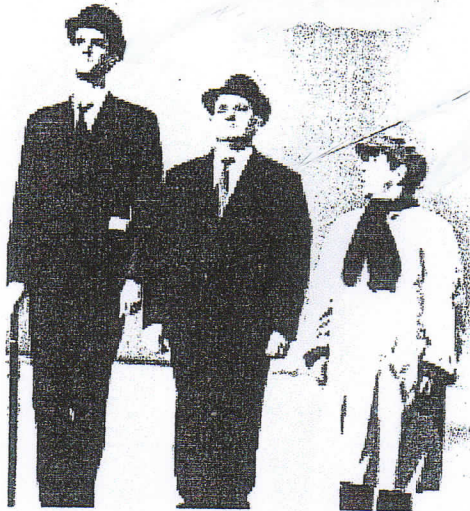
30 Working-class 'i's', in turn, may be pronounced 'oi', while some upper-class 'o's' become 'or's' as in 'naff orf'. But the upper class don't say 'I' at all if they can help it. One prefers to refer to oneself as 'one'. (...) Despite all these peculiarities, the upper classes remain convinced that their way of speaking is the only proper way : their speech is the norm, everyone else's is 'an accent' – and when the upper classes say that someone speaks with 'an accent', what they mean is a working class accent.

Kate Fox,
Watching the English. 2004

doc 1

Are we all middle-class now?

Have Britain's old social divisions really disappeared - and if not, what is the basis of class today: money? Education? Attitudes? From The Times March 19, 2008



Doc 2

Understanding Class. The Frost Report, BBC, 1966

Social Grade Classification

(source : Wikipedia)

The social grade classification created by the National Readership Survey over 50 years ago has achieved widespread usage during the 20th Century including in government reports and statistics.

Grade	Status	Occupation
A	Upper middle class	Higher managerial, administrative or professional
B	Middle class	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1	Lower middle class	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2	Skilled working class	Skilled manual workers
D	Working class	Semi and unskilled manual workers
E	those at lowest level of subsistence	Casual or lowest grade workers, pensioners and others who depend on the state for their income

There's no way up

From The Daily Telegraph, 20 May 2007

Doc 3



Social mobility has ground to a halt in modern Britain and grammar schools are part of the problem, not the solution, claims David Cameron. But what has really gone wrong, and can we fix it ?

5 *"I look down on them because I am upper class."*

"I look up to him because he is upper class but I look down on him because he is lower class. I am middle class."

"I know my place."

10 Thus were the rigid boundaries of the British class system defined in 1966, in a famous comedy sketch for The Frost Report. It spoke then to a society obsessed with the class structure, and one's place within it. And while modern Britain is different in many ways from its 1960s forebear, some things have changed more than others.

15 It has actually become harder for people from the lower end of the social and income scale to climb the ladder. The truth is that social mobility in Britain was higher in 1966 than it is in 2007.

20 This has become one of the defining issues of modern politics: how to create a society that recognises, develops and rewards talent and ability, regardless of an individual's background. This was the reason last week that David Willetts, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education, announced that the Conservatives would abandon their commitment to increasing the number of grammar schools.

25 Grammar schools have long had totemic significance for Tories. They have been identified with giving intellectually gifted children from poor families the opportunity to escape their impoverished heritage. So when Mr Willetts insisted that the Conservatives would not commit themselves to introducing more grammar schools, it was surprising to many traditional Tory voters. Why did he do it?

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The main reason he gave was that the Conservative priority is to increase social mobility. Grammar schools, Mr Willetts claimed, are not effective in achieving that goal. In fact, he said, rather than selecting children on their ability to benefit from a high level of education, the few grammar schools that still exist reinforce middle-class privilege, because the children who end up going to them are overwhelmingly from middle-class homes.

In his speech, David Willetts defined social mobility as the chances that a child born to parents in the bottom fifth of the population would move out of that group and into the top fifth. That's the understanding which is most common today. It's the notion of social mobility employed by the educational charity the Sutton Trust, which has compared the social mobility of a group of people born in 1958 with a group born in 1970. Their research found that those born into the poorest 20 per cent of families in 1970 had less chance of moving into the top 20 per cent than those born in 1958. In 1958, if you were born into the bottom group, you had a 31 per cent chance of staying there. If you were born into the same group in 1970, you had a 36 per cent chance of staying there.

Again, in 1958, if you were born into the poorest group, you had a 19 per cent chance of making it into the richest fifth of the population. But if you were born in 1970, your chances of making it to the richest fifth were down to 16 per cent.(...)

David Green, who runs the think-tank Civitas and has researched family breakdown, believes that the disintegration of the family is one of the main causes of diminishing social mobility. "Family breakdown is a major cause of poverty," he says. "In the poorest 20 per cent, you will find a very large number of single-parent families, which overwhelmingly means women with small children. Those children start off with disadvantages which it is very hard for outside agencies to remedy.

"In the late 1950s and 1960s, many fathers who were in the bottom 20 per cent were very eager that their sons should not follow their own trajectory. Divorce was still relatively rare and most children were raised in two-parent families. Bright children from poor families did not have as their male role models, as they do today, older boys who despise education, think it is cool to disrupt it, and who believe that crime and benefits are the only way to get on."

It means that today, a gap in achievement opens up very early, and it is one that becomes ever harder to close. It does not only affect boys raised in poor single-parent families. It also affects girls, and it is one of the main reasons why the enormous expansion of higher education during the last 20 years has passed the poorest 20 per cent by.

The number of women going to university tripled in the 1980s, but they almost all came from middle-class families: the proportion of women coming from the poorest fifth of the population did not change at all, staying at 6 per cent. The same pattern has been repeated since then, and it explains why the expansion of university places has seen a huge rise in the proportion of middle-class children going to university, but almost none at all in the proportion of students who come from the poorest families.

The underlying cause of the problem is a consequence of the fact that, by the time a child reaches the age of 11, schools cannot do much to correct the pattern of advantage or deprivation that has been inherited from its parents.

Mr Willetts himself referred to the research which provides evidence for that fact. More ambitious egalitarians than he conclude that achieving equality of opportunity is so important that the state ought to intervene in the raising of children to equalise children's family backgrounds. Since few people today believe that state officials should intervene in every family to ensure that all children are brought up the same way, it seems inevitable that children will inherit very significant advantages - or disadvantages - from their upbringing.

That in turn means that there is no reason to expect the education system to be able to rectify the enormous disadvantages which usually come with being born into the poorest 20 per cent of the population. The best that can be done is to provide the exceptional children from poor backgrounds with the opportunity to develop their talents - which is what grammar schools can do, not least because they remove bright children from their disruptive peers, and comprehensives usually cannot, precisely because they do not separate those who want to learn from those who do not.