The Guardian

onestopenglish

Zacharias not Zeppelin: Germany to scrap Nazi-era phonetic table

Level: Elementary – Teacher's Notes

> **Article summary:** Germany plans an overhaul of its phonetic alphabet to remove words introduced by the Nazi regime.
>
> **Time:** Approximately 90 minutes
>
> **Skills:** Reading, Speaking, Writing
>
> **Language focus:** Vocabulary
>
> **Materials needed:** One copy of the worksheet per student; NATO phonetic alphabet (available online)

1. Warmer

This task introduces the topic of making spelling things out clearer and easier by allocating words to letters. Individually, students choose four words that start with the letters a, b, c and d and write them on the lines. Then they compare their choices by reading their sentences to each other.

2. Key words

a. Students read the words in the box and match them to the definitions below. Tell them to scan the article and underline the words as they find them. This will help them check their answers as well as see how the words are used in context.

Key:
1. *scrap*
2. *spelling*
3. *particularly*
4. *equivalent*
5. *ombudsman*
6. *antisemitism*
7. *state*
8. *still*
9. *era*
10. *impact*

b. Students check they know how to pronounce the key words by matching the words to their stress patterns.

Key:

Oo	oOooo
spelling era impact	particularly
oOoo	**Ooo**
equivalent	ombudsman

c. Before reading the article carefully, students use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand them and know how they are used in other contexts.

Key:
1. *equivalent*
2. *state*
3. *impact*
4. *ombudsman*
5. *still*

3. Comprehension check

Students read the statements and decide whether they are true or false according to the article. They should correct any that are false using information from the article.

Key:
1. *False. It is going to scrap its current phonetic alphabet and go back to using the one that was in use there before 1934.*
2. *False. The Nazis changed the pre-1934 phonetic alphabet, removing all Jewish names.*
3. *True.*
4. *True.*
5. *False. Some words were changed back in the late 1940s, but the Nazi version has remained the one that most people still use.*
6. *True.*

4. Using key language

a. Students match the words to make word pairs from the article, then find them in the article. Elicit what each word pair means. Ask students to look up the meaning of any of the word pairs they are unsure about before moving on to part b. of the task.

Key:
1. *c*
2. *e*
3. *b*
4. *a*
5. *d*

b. Students use the word pairs to complete the short summary of the article.

Key:
1. *phonetic alphabet*
2. *daily life*
3. *spell out*
4. *avoid confusion*
5. *change back*

5. Discussion

Students discuss the questions, which are directly related to the topic of the article.

6. In your own words

a. First, ask the whole class to remember all the words used in the NATO phonetic alphabet.

b. Students can check their answers and fill in any missing words by searching online for the NATO chart, which provides not only the words used but additional information such as how to say the words.

c. In groups, students create a new phonetic alphabet using the names of towns, cities, lakes, rivers and places of interest in their country or area. Ask them to include pronunciation help in a similar way to the NATO chart.

Ask each group to present their new alphabet and say why they have chosen each word to represent a letter.

To round off this task, ask the class to agree which words they will use for their definitive local phonetic alphabet. To do this, they should combine the words they liked best from each group's chart.