

Performing With Confidence

Classroom at a Glance

Teacher:	Yvette Heno
Language:	French IV–V, Advanced Placement
Grades:	10–12
School:	Westside High School, Houston, Texas
Lesson Date:	April 10
Class Size:	15
Schedule:	Block schedule, 90 minutes every other day

Video Summary

In this lesson, students participate in activities that improve their oral proficiency and prepare them for the AP French Language Exam. After a series of warm-up activities, students draw on prior research to discuss the French presidential election. Then they rely on research again to perform as celebrities and journalists in a class TV talk show.

Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, Presentational
- Cultures: Practices, Products
- Connections: Acquiring Information
- Comparisons: Cultural

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- Advanced Placement (AP)
- authentic materials
- heritage speaker
- native speaker
- performance level
- proficiency level
- role-playing

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary located in the Appendix.

Class Profile

“Students have to speak French constantly to have a high degree of ability to speak the language. It has to be something that is done every time they enter the classroom.”

—Yvette Heno

School Profile

Yvette Heno teaches French II–V and Spanish II at Westside High School in Houston, Texas. A magnet school with a focus on integrated technology, Westside serves West Houston’s largely professional community. The school also attracts students from across the Houston Independent School District (HISD). Nearly two-thirds of the 2,650-member student body are minorities. Westside offers seven foreign language programs, with the greatest participation in Spanish due to the region’s large Hispanic population and its proximity to Mexico.

Lesson Design

Each year, Ms. Heno designs her curriculum based on the needs of the class. French IV–V attracts a wide range of learners, from native and heritage speakers who want to retain their language skills to students who began studying French in elementary, middle, or high school and want to continue. As she develops the curriculum for each group of students, Ms. Heno draws on the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English, and the HISD Required Objectives and Correlations for Languages Other Than English.

Although French IV and V meet together and share several activities, each course has its own curriculum. In French IV, students participate in activities and games that encourage listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They also look at art, listen to music, and begin to read literature. In French V, students study French literature in depth.

The Lesson

This lesson included two activities that were based on current events: a discussion about the 2002 French presidential election and a mock talk show featuring American celebrities (chosen and played by students) as guests. To prepare for both activities, students researched a variety of sources in French, such as newspapers, magazines, Web sites, and more, so that they could participate in an informed discussion. “The *actualités* [news] is very important,” says Ms. Heno. “How else are they going to know about the culture? They have to know what’s going on every day.” As seen in the videotaped lesson, topics in Ms. Heno’s class can range from important political events to items of student interest.

Year at a Glance

French IV

Unit 1

- Review of French history and geography up to the Middle Ages
- Music: Best of the 20th century
- French commercials and film excerpts

Unit 2

- Art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance
- Authentic medieval songs and literature, including *La farce de maître Pathelin*

Unit 3

- Art of the 17th century
- Selected literature, including *L’école des femmes*
- Talk show: Music industry
- Excerpts from the film *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*

Unit 4

- Art of the 18th century
- Selected literature, including *Candide*
- Preparation for the AP French Language Exam and French language contests
- Elections in France

Unit 5

- Talk show: School administrators
- Art and music of the 19th century
- The French Revolution
- Excerpts from films, including *Ridicule*
- Political life and elections in France
- Continued preparation for the AP Exam and contests

Unit 6

- 20th-century literature, art, and music
- **Talk show: Film awards**
- **French election debate**
- Continued preparation for the AP Exam and contests

French V

- Read texts from a survey of French literature (12th to 20th centuries)
- Read required texts for the AP French Literature Exam, although they do not take the exam
- Prepare for the AP French Language Exam

French IV and V participate in the following speaking activities during the first 30 minutes of each class: Yahoo! France *Actualité* discussions (news/current events), Brainstorm game (culture), and *Tous ego* game (conversational skills).

Class Profile, cont'd.

Key Teaching Strategies

- **Acquiring Knowledge of Current Events:** The teacher helps students research print and Web sources to gain a knowledge base for classroom discussion on recent events.
- **Expanding Oral Discourse:** The teacher designs and conducts activities that move students in advanced language courses away from single-sentence responses toward sustained discourse.
- **Recalling Vocabulary by Categories:** The teacher designs vocabulary-focused activities that enable students to connect new words to familiar ones and build associations.

Analyze the Video

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- What are some advantages of using language-based games with advanced learners?
- How can teachers transform current events into teachable moments when extensive preparation is not possible or useful?
- What kinds of guidelines might you set for student-created skits or presentations?
- How can teachers manage appropriate activities for students at different levels within the same class?

Watch the Video

As you watch “Performing With Confidence,” take notes on Ms. Heno’s instructional strategies, particularly how she has organized various activities for her AP French students. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

Reflect on the Video

Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- How do the warm-up games help students prepare for the AP Exam?
- What sources do students use to get information about the upcoming French presidential election?
- How does Ms. Heno probe for cultural comparisons between French elections and U.S. elections?
- How do students prepare for the mock celebrity talk show? What guidelines are they given?
- How does Ms. Heno make her dual-level class inclusive, not only for French IV and V students but for traditional, heritage, and native learners as well?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Look Closer

Take a second look at Ms. Heno's class to focus on specific teaching strategies. Use the video images below to locate where to begin viewing.



Video Segment: Comparing French and U.S. Governments

You'll find the first part of this segment approximately 12 minutes after the video starts. Watch for about 4 minutes. You'll find the second part of this segment approximately 17 minutes after the video starts. Watch for about 1 minute.

Ms. Heno and her students discuss the French system of government and elections, and compare them to those of the United States.

- How does Ms. Heno lead the discussion on elections from a current-events perspective? How does she respond to students' opinions?
- What prior knowledge or misunderstandings about the U.S. system do students reveal?
- What knowledge do students gain about French elections? How does Ms. Heno address any inaccuracies?
- Given that the election coverage is ongoing, how does Ms. Heno end the discussion on this particular day?



Video Segment: Researching Current Events

You'll find this segment approximately 15 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 1 minute and 30 seconds.

Students research a variety of sources to prepare for a discussion about the French presidential election.

- What kinds of sources do students use for their research? How do these sources reflect students' focus on current events? What other sources could students use?
- How do the students reading the magazine interact with each other and interpret what they are reading?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.



Video Segment: Performing in a Talk Show

You'll find this segment approximately 18 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 6 minutes.

Students take on the roles of celebrities and journalists in a mock talk show.

- Identify the different roles Ms. Heno has created so that all students are involved. What communicative tasks are assigned to each role?
- How does the student host balance her prepared remarks (presentational) with her spontaneous interaction with the celebrities and journalists (interpersonal)?
- How do the celebrities communicate with the journalists? With one another?
- How have the journalists prepared? What kind of spontaneity do they exhibit in their interactions with the celebrities?
- What is the level of student enjoyment? How does it facilitate interpersonal communication at intermediate/advanced levels of proficiency?

Connect to Your Teaching

Reflect on Your Practice

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

- What is the value of having students enter competitions such as the poetry contest that Daniel entered?
- Games are used at all levels of instruction. How would you organize them to be effective for higher-level students? What kinds of language and cultural functions should they serve?
- What opportunities do you provide for students to use language beyond the sentence level?
- How has the Internet changed the kinds of assignments you give students? What are some topics that would be difficult to teach without Internet access?
- How do you create effective guidelines for student-created, student-led presentations? How do you assess these presentations?

Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

Watch Other Videos

Watch other videos in the *Teaching Foreign Languages K–12* library for more examples of teaching methodologies like those you've just seen. Note: All videos in this series are subtitled in English.

"Politics of Art" (Spanish) illustrates cultural connections, interdisciplinary content, and formal/informal discussions with advanced students, and "Promoting Attractions of Japan" (Japanese) shows students participating in games that involve spontaneous use of the language.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- Try incorporating authentic games to build vocabulary and proficiency in advanced courses. As you travel or attend conferences, look for games that would give your students the same experience that they give native speakers. Playing authentic games on a regular basis not only is entertaining, it promotes learning and cultural understanding. During the warm-up, Ms. Heno used an authentic French game called Brainstorm, in which students cluster familiar vocabulary words by association, such as "something you can sit on." The second game, in which students described their choices for the best boss, was another authentic French activity designed to stimulate spontaneous responses on provocative topics. To make the most of these activities, train your students to give answers that go beyond just "yes" or "no."
- Explore current events in your lessons. Choose topics from the worlds of politics, science, entertainment, and more. For example, Ms. Heno used the upcoming French presidential election as the basis for a lesson on contemporary French culture. She also juxtaposed this topic, which delved into the history and politics of France, with one that related to students' interest in celebrities. The common factor was student discussion based upon prior research. To conduct this type of research, students need access to a variety of sources in the target language. If your department or library budget permits, you can subscribe to foreign language magazines or newspapers. Fortunately, all the major media also have Web sites where you can get the latest articles and broadcasts. Assign students the sites that you feel are appropriate. You can also ask anyone traveling to a country where your target language is spoken to bring you back authentic materials from that country.
- The policies and political alliances of nations change over time. When introducing political topics for discussion, it is important to give students some background information to help them understand the complexities of these topics. Although it would be impossible for students to gain a full understanding of any international issue in the course of just one or two lessons, they can begin to develop a good base of knowledge that will help them move beyond making simplistic statements during discussions.

Resources

Lesson Materials

Rubric for LOTE Tasks*

Generic rubric used by Ms. Heno for activities such as the talk show

* These lesson materials can be found in the Appendix.

Curriculum References

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter114/index.html>

Yvette Heno's Recommendations

Web Resources:

Le Monde.fr

<http://www.lemonde.fr>

Online edition of the French newspaper (available in French only); note: students used this site to research the French presidential elections

L'Express

<http://www.lexpress.ch/default.asp>

Daily newspaper from Neuchâtel, Switzerland (available in French only)

Phosphore

<http://www.phosphore.com/index.jsp>

Online edition of a French magazine for people ages 15–25, with articles on culture, news, and other current events (available in French only); note: students used this site to research the French presidential elections

TV5.org

<http://www.tv5.org>

French television station's Web site, with information on travel, culture, entertainment, and news (available in French only)

Yahoo! France

<http://www.fr.yahoo.com>

The French-language version of the popular search engine; note: students used this site to research their roles for the talk show

Standards

National Standards for Foreign Language Learning

Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century defines what students should know and be able to do in foreign language education. This lesson correlates to the following standards:

Communication: Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Interpersonal Communication

Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2: Interpretive Communication

Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3: Presentational Communication

Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Practices of Culture

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Products of Culture

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections: Connect With Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.2: Acquiring Information

Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Comparisons: Develop Insight Into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.2: Cultural Comparisons

Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.