

Comparing Communities

Classroom at a Glance

Teacher:	Ghislaine Tulou
Language:	French III
Grades:	9–12
School:	McLean High School, McLean, Virginia
Lesson Date:	March 21
Class Size:	26
Schedule:	94 minutes every other day

Video Summary

In this lesson, students discuss community life at home and abroad and practice new grammatical structures. First, students share what they like about their community, then read an article about a French-speaking Canadian community and discuss what activities they would do if they visited there. Next, students learn the conditional verb forms using worksheets, and follow up with discussions about communities. Finally, Ms. Tulou introduces a children’s book that uses the conditional tense, and students practice writing sentences similar to those in the book.

Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, Presentational
- Cultures: Products, Practices
- Comparisons: Culture
- Connections: Making Connections

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- authentic materials
- heritage speaker
- negotiation of meaning
- thematic units

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

Class Context

“Language is a tool of communication. If I only ask students to do what’s on the sheet of paper, that becomes a grammar exercise. But as a human being, I’m interested in them, not the grammar point. So to show that I’m interested in them, I’m going to ask a follow-up question. That way, you recycle more vocabulary and you encourage students to talk more. This human interaction is very important.” — Ghislaine Tulou

School Profile

Ghislaine Tulou teaches French II, III, and V Advanced Placement at McLean High School in McLean, Virginia. Located four miles from Washington, D.C., the community of over 60,000 includes professionals and U.S. government employees, as well as international business professionals and government officials. The 1,500-student high school is fairly diverse; 20 percent are Asian, largely from South Korea. About 50 languages are spoken by McLean’s international student population, although most students do not need ESOL classes. The school focuses on college preparation and offers Spanish, French, German, and Latin language classes.

Lesson Design

“Before you plan the lessons, you plan the unit,” says Ms. Tulou. To plan her units, Ms. Tulou refers to the Standards, the Fairfax County Performance Assessment for Language Students program, and the class textbook (see Resources). Using a backward design planning strategy, she begins by designing each unit’s culminating written or oral performance activity that will serve as the assessment for the unit. She then organizes individual lessons by selecting the vocabulary themes and grammatical structures for each lesson, and creates opportunities for students to practice all three Communication standards. She incorporates the remaining Standards across multiple lessons within a unit.

Year at a Glance

Me and My World

- Home life and responsibilities
- School day; School community
- After-school activities

Health

- Me and my health
- How do people stay healthy?

Community

- The car and driving responsibilities
- **What makes a good community?**

Ecology

- Local ecology
- Global ecology

Class Context, cont'd.

The Lesson

In the videotaped lesson, students learned the conditional tense while discussing different communities. They began by talking about their own community, then shifted their focus to Hull, a city in Quebec, Canada. Ms. Tulou discovered the community's Web site during a lengthy online search for a Canadian community that stressed quality of life. (Note: This Web site is no longer available.) She chose to focus on Canada because her students had studied France the previous year.

After this lesson, students continued to practice the conditional tense during discussions about how they would change their community. As a culminating activity, students wrote letters to the county supervisor with their recommendations for improving the community. This activity served as the written assessment for this unit.

This class included four heritage language speakers. These students worked mostly with the traditional learners on assignments; Ms. Tulou felt they enriched the experience of the group. However, she did differentiate instruction when the regular lesson was too basic for the heritage speakers. She either asked them to elaborate more during oral or written assignments, or she gave them alternate assignments more appropriate to their advanced linguistic levels.

Key Teaching Strategies

- Contextualizing Grammar: The teacher embeds grammatical practice in meaningful content.
- Facilitating Reading Authentic Texts: The teacher helps students understand authentic texts, using prereading, skimming/scanning, and reading-for-meaning strategies.

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:

- How do you develop verbal communication skills in high school students who are in Level III or beyond?
- How do you balance teaching language structures and content in a standards-based classroom?
- When teaching content about communities, what kinds of authentic materials might you use? What final project might you design?

Watch the Video

As you watch “Comparing Communities,” take notes on Ms. Tulou’s instructional strategies, particularly how she integrates the study of grammar into readings of children’s stories and discussions about different communities. 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:

- What strategies does Ms. Tulou use to move students toward the goal of “expanding” language?
- In what ways does Ms. Tulou make the grammar topic (conditional tense) meaningful for students? How does she address different learning styles when teaching grammar?
- What observations can you make about students’ awareness of their own learning? How does Ms. Tulou’s approach to instruction contribute to this awareness?
- How has Ms. Tulou given the lesson a social studies/civics focus?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Look Closer

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



Video Segment: Acquiring Information

You'll find this segment approximately 6 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 2 minutes.

Students read an article about the community of Hull to identify activities that they would like to do if they visited there.

- What prior knowledge do students bring to the interpretive reading task? What is the prereading activity?
- What scanning task do students perform? What is its purpose?
- What reading strategies does Ms. Tulou encourage students to use?
- Analyze the student pairs' problem solving. In the first pair, how does the student help her partner understand *patinage* (skating)? What is the result? How does Ms. Tulou help another pair of students negotiate the meaning of *baignade* (bathing)?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.



Video Segment: Practicing New Grammar

You'll find this segment approximately 14 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 3 minutes.

After completing a worksheet that prompts use of the conditional tense, students use the new tense to share personal preferences with one another.

- How does the activity's design focus on the use of the conditional tense while allowing for conversation?
- Observe the student pairs and try to identify their use of the conditional tense in conversation. How prominent is the use of the new tense?
- In the second featured pair (boy in blue shirt, girl in black shirt), what elements of real conversation do you hear?
- Describe the balance between grammatical practice and interpersonal communication.

Connect to Your Teaching

Reflect on Your Practice

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

- How aware are your students of the rationale behind your instructional approach? How do you keep them informed?
- How do you determine when and how to intervene in pair and group work?
- When a grammatical form or concept is the focus of a lesson, what device (or hook) do you use to help students understand usage? How do you put the grammar practice in a context that's interesting to students?
- How do you choose children's literature that is authentic but also accessible in terms of language level and style?

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.

"Routes to Culture" (Spanish) illustrates students expanding conversation beyond sentence level, and "Chicken Pox" (French) demonstrates the reading of children's literature with kindergarten students.

Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- Incorporate authentic readings into thematic units to provide students with new information and develop their reading strategies. Ms. Tulou's students read Web articles about the community of Hull. They did not have to read and understand every word; rather, they developed their ability to scan for specific information. You can extend this activity by giving students the opportunity to work on independent readings similar to ones they do as a class. For example, following a lesson like the one above, students could select another community in a French-speaking country and look for articles describing that community. They could then go through the text and identify activities that they would like to do if they visited that community. This would allow them to test their ability to read independently while gathering new information to share with classmates.
- Look for opportunities to include authentic children's literature when studying particular grammatical structures. Stories that use repetition and a parallel structure can reinforce grammatical lessons while conveying meaning in a way that appeals to students of all ages. The book *Si j'étais un animal* (If I were an animal) repeatedly uses an if-clause construction that gave Ms. Tulou's students additional examples of the conditional form in action. Students also created their own variations of the text by writing additional sentences in the same style. The activity can be further extended by having students create new illustrated pages for the book or write their own book using the same grammatical structure. For example, continuing with the community theme, students could write books titled *If I Lived in Outer Space* or *If I Were the Mayor*.

Resources

Lesson Materials

Bojanowski, Nathalie-Anne. *Si j'étais un animal*. Les éditions du Raton Laveur. Quebec, Canada: Saint-Hubert, 1997.

Le Conditionnel—Oral Exercise*

A worksheet featuring questions that students answered to practice the conditional tense and to compare their preferences with classmates (includes English translation)

* These lesson materials can be found in the Appendix.

Curriculum References

Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) and Testing for Foreign Language
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/foreign_language/index.shtml

Fairfax County Program of Study
<https://www.fcps.edu/academics/high-school-academics-9-12/world-languages>

Ghislaine Tulou's Recommendations

Web Resources:

City of Helsinki, Finland
<http://www.hel.fi/static/mirror-v2/archive/www.hel.fi/www/helsinki/fr.html>
Discusses the quality of life and other cultural aspects of Helsinki, Finland (available in English, Finnish, French, German, Russian, and Swedish)

Lyon and Its Region
<http://www.lyon-aderly.com/defaultfr.asp>
A Chamber of Commerce site that discusses the quality of life in Lyon, France, and offers a list of organizations that will help foreigners adapt to the city and make contacts with locals (available in English, French, and Japanese)

Resources, cont'd.

University of Texas French Grammar Guide

<http://www2.lamc.utexas.edu/frgr/index.t>

Grammar lessons followed by interactive exercises (some with sound files), a French dictionary, and quick reference sheets

Standards

World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages

The *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* create a roadmap to guide learners to develop competence to communicate effectively and interact with cultural understanding. This lesson correlates to the following Standards:

Communication

Communicate effectively in more than one language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes

Standard: Interpersonal Communication

Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.

Standard: Interpretive Communication

Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.

Standard: Presentational Communication

Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.

Standards, cont'd.

Cultures

Interact with cultural competence and understanding

Standard: Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives

Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied.

Standard: Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives

Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures studied.

Connections

Connect with other disciplines and acquire information and diverse perspectives in order to use the language to function in academic and career-related situations

Standard: Making Connections

Learners build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively.

Comparisons

Interact with cultural competence and understanding

Standard: Cultural Comparisons

Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.