



Elements of Rhetoric in the Language-Learning Classroom: Convince Me You are Fluent!

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Introduction

"Speak clearly, if you speak at all; carve every word before you let it fall."

-Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

"Look past your thoughts so you may drink the pure nectar of this moment."

-Rumi

Premeditation and spontaneity, mind and body, creation and inspiration. It is the meeting space between these potentially competing or conflicting concepts that interests me as a language teacher. Carving words requires that one indeed has words to carve; the wider your foundation of vocabulary, the more likely that you will be able to express yourself fully and accurately. With premeditation - in the form of preparation and repeated practice - you have an opportunity for logical, careful, indeed mindful creation to occur. You are able to determine the ways in which you prefer to carve your words, to develop a sense of style and an intimate ownership of the language you are learning, so that when the occasion calls and allows for spontaneous and inspired response, you are able to activate your prior experiences in something much like muscle memory, to act through speech with authenticity and ease.

An over-preoccupation with thinking about the right words will, however, hinder the communication process, as one stammers and stumbles through the options, unable to actually choose any of them. You must not though go fully to the other extreme, that of no planning, no thinking, just doing. Putting yourself for a moment in the shoes of your beginning language students, without yet a breadth of linguistic facility at your disposal, you would fall flat, stammering and stumbling now not from awe at the wealth of choices before you, but because there are in fact no choices at your ready. Like all others but the hummingbird to the flower of the trumpet vine, you cannot access Rumi's "nectar of this moment" without the appropriate tools and the knowledge of how to use them. This unit equips students with new tools and practices, those of the persuasive

art of rhetoric, to convince themselves as well as others of their fluency. Confident students armed with the right linguistic implements are better prepared to access those moments of pure nectar in the language classroom.

Rationale

As a French teacher, I am responsible for teaching not just the mechanics of the language, but also how to put them into action, how to speak the words and breathe life into them. Students, especially at the middle school level of instruction, often struggle with the process of speaking fluently. They want to say more than they can, hunger in fact to express themselves better, more fully, and they soon become preoccupied with the lack. This results in speech that is often stilted, labored, and choppy, incomplete yet brimming with uncertainty

In this unit, I seek to explore and indeed exploit the elements of rhetoric, those tools used in effective and persuasive speaking and writing, to open up a new pathway to fluency for our students, both in prepared and spontaneous communication. With these tools, they will not only learn to inject more style and voice into their writing and speaking, but in so doing, will in fact hasten to persuade the listener or reader of their linguistic facility. In the act of convincing others, they will without doubt start to convince themselves. And this, of course, is where the magic happens for our kids.

This unit is organized around the five rhetorical canons (Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery) and the three modes of persuasion (Pathos, Logos, and Ethos) that will help students go deeper with their writing and speaking by not just absentmindedly laying down language on a page or carelessly spitting it out into the ether, but actually looking to get (albeit on a fairly simple level) purposeful and persuasive in their language usage.

To be clear, this is not a unit on speech writing or public speaking; the persuasion done here is neither outright nor prepared. Instead, we will employ the tools one would use in such endeavors to improve the quality of our students' communication experiences. By supporting opportunities for our students to inject more emotion (Pathos), argument or reason (Logos), and character (Ethos) into their writing and speaking, and to conceive of that work around the canons of rhetoric, we will outfit them with the tools and skills necessary to persuade themselves and each other, and through that everyone else, that they can speak French comfortably, and that they are making sure progress on that often elusive path to fluency.

This will provide a framework for types of language and techniques to use for enriching writing and speaking. Instead of just saying "Add more," or "Take it further," which can be vague and confusing for students, now we can guide them based on their strengths and interests down paths of how they can, a little more specifically, "add more" or "take it further." This framework can be applied to interrelated written and oral tasks, and it will provide a pool of options for enriching spontaneous communication as well, in the form of unprepared prompted conversations and regular classroom interactions.

There will be here an interplay between the spoken and written word, as well as between the spontaneous and the prepared. Although the ultimate goal is to employ these

tools in spontaneous speech, I find that the best way to equip students with these skills is to practice them explicitly and repeatedly, and to use writing to cement them into a foundational knowledge base.

This unit is geared toward 7th and 8th grade world language classes, which in my district combine to the equivalent of the 9th grade year-long course. It is written for French in particular; however it may be easily modified across languages and grade levels.

Elements of Rhetoric for the World Language Classroom

Simply put, rhetoric is the art or study of writing or speaking effectively or persuasively. ¹ At first blush, it might seem that the application of rhetorical canons and devices would be too advanced a concept for beginning language learners. Here one might begin to imagine powerfully worded political speeches or ancient and serious philosophical debates more clearly than question-and-answer paired practice around such mundane moments as ordering food at a café or introducing family members. Yet by distilling these rhetorical elements down to their core and tweaking them to our language-learning purposes, I believe that they become powerful allies in the pursuit of smooth speech and oral confidence.



I'd like to conceptualize the way we think about the elements of persuasion and how they apply to fluency as akin to a pinwheel and how it works. ² Because it isn't really a matter of a first step followed by a second step; rather, all these elements work in tandem to create an overall effect of fluency (or not). Unlike a map of steps to take in a logical order, the path to fluency requires a blend of elements that can be combined in innumerable different ways, some of which I will explore in depth in the following sections. Elements of fluency and perceived fluency overlap and intermingle, folding over on themselves and into the next like the spokes, or vanes, of a pinwheel. Yet no matter what techniques are highlighted or what strategies are employed, it is the student who will ultimately breathe life into them with his or her own point of view and personality, as carried by the voice that issues from the mouth like the breath that blows the pinwheel, to initiate and sustain that appealing, fluid, satisfying spin of communication.

Audience: Whom Are You Trying to Convince?

In his work entitled, quite simply, *Rhetoric*, Aristotle explains that all speeches involve the making of a judgment, and he indicates the importance of the listener in determining the purpose of a speech, to win a favorable judgment on an issue in court or politics, or for the speaker to be deemed eloquent and appropriately moving during a ceremonial occasion. ³ As educators we speak of this with students as knowing your audience; just as rhetorical details and tactics vary based on the makeup of the audience, so here will we urge our students to consider the audience in pursuing their work and focus, and so will we in turn consider

those elements in determining our teaching strategies and creating our rubrics.

Every person is unique, and of course different things convince different people. So it is important to consider multiple areas and methods of persuasion to achieve the greatest, likeliest persuasive successes. Although in any group the permutations of viewpoint, background, and feelings are innumerable, in the world language classroom, a student will engage with and so need to convince the following general categories of audiences of his or her fluency: Classmates (as communicative partners), Classmates (as listeners or eavesdroppers), Teacher/s, and perhaps most importantly, Self.

Though these categories appear tidy and clear, the boundaries actually blur a bit. While yes, I do break down the elements of persuasion by target audience group, persuasive success will not be achieved through the use of any one set of elements exclusively; that being said, we will use these as solid categorical starting points from which to proceed. We will consider each audience to determine what aspects of language and communication will be most effective at convincing its members of a student's fluency. As students assemble all the most personally relevant elements into individual linguistic pinwheels, figuratively and then literally in **Activity I**, they arm themselves with a tool that only needs the breath of each voice to start spinning and shining compelling evidence of fluency.

The Five Canons of Rhetoric

The art of rhetoric is divided into the following five canons, or major categories: Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery. In his *De oratore*, Cicero explained these categories and how the speaker, or orator, must employ them:

"... He must first hit upon what to say; then manage and marshal his discoveries, not merely in orderly fashion, but with a discriminating eye for the exact weight as it were of each argument; next go on to array them in the adornments of style; after that keep them guarded in his memory; and in the end, deliver them with effect and charm." ⁴

In the following sections, I discuss each target audience and pair it with the rhetorical canon that most closely corresponds to the work that needs to be done to persuade that audience of fluency. ⁵ In this way, students will have a framework for considering which factors to emphasize or strengthen depending on the audience being addressed, or the individuals who will be "judging" their degree of fluency. This framework will also be a reference for students to consult in broadening the scope of what they are currently doing, and for teachers to consult in providing useful feedback to students. Also included are some suggested Feedback Points, in simple but effective language, which we can address with students, as well as Strategies for approaching the elements of each category in the classroom.

Invention - The Foundation

Invention is all about what you are going to say. ⁶ For us, it is the foundation of everything to come. The first step to convincing anyone of your fluency, or of your presence on a path toward fluency, is having something to say. In order to be able to do this in the language-learning classroom, you must both know and know how to use the vocabulary and structures given or discussed in class. You can build up your foundation by being

purposeful about working in core vocabulary and structures properly.

This category has two main thrusts. First: Know your vocabulary. Second: Understand it - the grammar, the rules, the finer points of what to use when. I like to think of Invention as the stem and button of the pinwheel, the necessary base onto which we fasten the other elements of rhetoric and language usage.

Feedback Points - The Foundation

The following are a couple of feedback points to guide students in this area, along with necessary student actions, written in italics, and clarifying details, indicated in parentheses. The same feedback applies to both oral and written performance.

- Build the foundation. *Review vocabulary.* (Give specific topics or guidelines.)
- French: Construire la fondation. *Revoir le vocabulaire.*
- Understand the foundation. *Review grammar.* (Give specific concepts, like adjective agreement, subject/verb agreement, gender.)
- French. Comprendre la fondation. *Revoir la grammaire.*

Strategies: Building Language

In his seminal text *De copia*, noted 15th century rhetorician Desiderius Erasmus wrote of the "commonplace book," where one could collect and store information in a way that it could be logically accessed later. ⁷ So the keeper would create headings and sub-headings for the book and fill it with interesting and informative notes, observations, and reflections. Then, when needed, that information could be pulled up readily to use in some rhetorical pursuit. Adapted to the language classroom, students can keep a language dictionary/journal of learned and researched vocabulary, helpful images, reflections, cognates, favorite words, words that sound nice, etc., and they can make headings according to theme or other areas of linguistic interest, labeling them with post-it tabs for easy reference.

Also, to build language students can make flashcards using images and color-coding for part of speech and gender (or other relevant categories.) They can use the cards to study individually or they can have someone else quiz them (putting pronunciation on the French language side will make this possible with non-French speakers.) They can use the cards in class for matching games with partners or to sort in either predetermined or open categories. Basically, the more ways you can get kids to group and list the vocabulary, the more they are practicing it and thinking about it in different combinations.

For words or concepts that are tricky because they are similar, students can make "Similar but Different" posters that compare the terms and convey in images and words the similar but different aspects of the language. I also like to use rhythm, rhyme, rap, claps and beats to help students remember strings of related vocabulary or to physically and audibly emphasize similar but different structures. I find that any time I can bring an aspect of physicality to a word, it helps students remember it. More on that in the next section!

See also: **Activity II: Copia Pinwheel.**

Arrangement - Convincing Passersby with the Appearance of Fluency

Rhetorically, arrangement refers to the way you arrange the elements of your argument, the way components of an essay are pieced together to create a whole. At base, that comes down to using structure to best prove

your point. It is about the intentional ways you arrange what you are saying or doing in order to create an effective, complete, whole argument, including how you grab the audience's attention and how you establish your credibility. Rhetorically, the emphasis is how those parts contribute to the whole; when we apply this to our classrooms, we will keep our focus on the parts, as we save consideration of how they relate to the whole for later. When we speak of arrangement within the context of this unit, we will speak of the physical, perceivable, embodied aspects or parts of communication and being that influence the overall impressions we make, and how to use them to our advantage.

For this category, we seek to convince the passersby, those eavesdropping classmates who won't actually hear the whole conversation; this audience will only see and hear isolated snippets of what is said. So the way you look and sound while you are conversing will impress them more than what you are actually saying. I am not, of course, advocating that what you say doesn't matter; as I said before, not even mastery of any one category will convince someone of your fluency. But the look and sound of your communication does play an integral role in the perception of your fluency, and that is what we address here.

I consider three areas to be key in this category: Diction, Expression, and Gesture. Diction encompasses pronunciation as well as enunciation and intonation. You want students to take care to learn and practice proper pronunciation, work at clearly articulating words, and pay attention to the musical path that fluent speakers' voices follow while speaking. Expression and Gesture are two sides of the same communicative coin; expression being how one communicates with facial features and gesture with body. For Expression, have students consider whether or not their expressions match what is being said, or whether they convey anything at all; blank faces do *not* convince anyone of fluency! Gesture can cover the ways body language works with or against the speaker, as well as actual gestures that highlight words spoken.

This is largely the domain of oral communication, but in written work, we can consider the flow of the writing and the logic of the progression of sentences. Here we will determine whether questions asked are answered, whether statements follow appropriately, and whether everything makes sense. The lack of these things leaves us with a choppy, confused piece of writing that may have strong foundational elements but is missing a clear indication of integrated comprehension.

Feedback Points

The following are relevant feedback points to guide students in this area, along with key feedback words and prompting comments, written in italics.

- Diction: *Pronunciation / Enunciation / Intonation*
- French: *Prononciation / Énonciation / Intonation*
- Expression: *Facial expression / Does your facial expression go with your words?*
- French: *Expression de visage / Ton expression de visage, va-t-elle avec tes mots?*
- Gesture: *Posture / Don't Fidget! / You missed an important gesture. / Too much gesturing*
- French: *Posture / Ne gigote pas! / Tu as manqué un geste important. / Trop de gestes*
- In Writing: *Transition words / Flow? / Is the sentence order logical?*
- French: *Mots de liaison / Fluidité? / L'ordre des phrases, est-ce qu'il est logique?*

Strategies: Embodying Language

It is commonly known in the study of second language acquisition that incorporating physical activity, rhythm, music, drama, and games into lessons can aid language acquisition; some credit this to the activation of the

right hemisphere of the brain. ⁸ It could also be that those activities serve to better engage interest and thus attention. In any event, by getting embodied, keying into the physical experience of what they are saying, students are better able to meld their muscle memory with the memory of their mind, activating the one through the other, and merging a fuller expression of language.

I really like to use over-enunciation with my students as a way of getting into our faces with the language! The stretch in the muscles of the face, the momentary detachment from the meaning of the word into pure sound and feel that leads to better appreciation of the aesthetics of the language and better recall of pronunciation, as we have practically massaged it into the muscles that sound the words! And it's fun, which surely doesn't hurt. You can also have students put their whole bodies into it; for example, when a student is practicing the French version of umm (*Euhh*), have them over-exaggerate the whole thing, adding body language, gesture, and facial expression to emphasize the casualness of the term.

A variation of the above strategy includes combining facial exaggerations with movements - jumps, stomps, claps, or gestures - that mimic the sound pattern of the word, possibly as distinct from the meaning. Perhaps the movements will match the meaning and if so that will be wonderful, but if you have a hard time doing that, there's no need to worry, as the strategy is effective even when there is no meaning involved, just pure sound of word. Another variation is to try and make the face and or body convey the meaning of a word or phrase, kind of like interpretive dance; it can also be done in still form, like a tableau instead of a moving representation.

Style - Convincing Partners with the Feel of Fluency

When we first hear the word *style*, I think many of us consider it as it relates to personal style and elements of individuality; rhetorically speaking, I would say those components fall more under the realm of "delivery." For our purposes, style pertains to individuality only inasmuch as individuality is reflected in word choice, as style for us is all about the particular language selected and used. Although there certainly are specific reasons one would employ various articulated styles of language in persuasive speech, they are largely irrelevant here. In the world language classroom, style is the domain of details, refined and pinpointed vocabulary, and expressing oneself; this is where we go beyond the foundational vocabulary to select more relevant language, where we use language devices to help us sound and feel more conversational and linguistically comfortable.

These are the qualities that will convince your partners in communication activities that you are fluent; while they will be affected by all the things the eavesdroppers will, they will be paying attention to everything you are saying, and it will take more than looks and sounds to convince them.

Whereas in fluent-language communication, hesitation can signal anticipation of a thoughtful response to come, in language-learner communication, hesitation signals that you either don't know what was said or how to answer, or both. So to better persuade partners with whom you are communicating in class, you need to either hesitate less, or else mask hesitations with filler phrases and grunts like: *Euh, Beh, Donc, Puis, and Alors*. Not only do they buy you time, but they also make you seem so on that path to fluency that you even *um* and *uh* in French!

An important aspect of the language enrichment process and discussion that will happen here relates to the topic of dictionaries and online translation sites. Sometimes students get so excited at the prospect of saying what they want to say that they run to the computer to look it up. In their quest to prove and demonstrate fluency with these new phrases, they in fact often prove the contrary by revealing isolated, plucked language poorly applied because the conceptual understanding of the utilized language has been bypassed and is

lacking. Admittedly, online translation tools have come a long way from the days of giving the student the word for a can of soup when what was sought was the word for "can" that means *to be able to*. Even so, they do not teach application of language, and can mislead and confuse students as we guide them in developing their language knowledge. So be sure to teach proper dictionary usage, and to discuss things like idiomatic expressions often, so students get used to the idea that you can't always translate word for word.

Feedback Points

The following are some feedback points to guide students in this area, along with directives and questions to prompt further pursuit, written in italics, and clarifying details, indicated in parentheses.

Details: More details French: *Plus de détails* Vocabulary: *Revisit unit vocabulary. / What vocabulary do you need? / What vocabulary did you have to look up?* French: *Réexamine le vocabulaire de l'unité. / Tu as besoin de quel vocabulaire? C'était nécessaire de chercher quel vocabulaire?* Self-expression: *Is there another way to say this? / See me regarding your word choice.* French: *Est-ce qu'il y a une autre façon d'exprimer cela? / Viens me voir au sujet de ton choix des mots.* Conversationality: *How can you make this feel more conversational? (Fillers? Idioms?)* French: *Comment est-ce que tu peux donner cela un air plus conversationnel? (Mots bouche-trous? Expressions idiomatiques?)*

Strategies: Personalizing Language

To help students start to personalize their language, you can encourage them to build their own individualized vocabulary lists. This will require a lesson on dictionary usage and guidance on choosing and identifying nouns, adjectives, and verbs, so that students don't fall into the word-by-word translation trap. They can keep their findings in a special booklet (like the commonplace book from the "Invention" section), make a poster for classroom or home reference, and teach the words to classmates.

As far as vocabulary and language you provide to everyone, it would be great to work up lists of vocabulary that correspond to student interests, like popular movies or videogames in French, for instance. Also, the more fun, conversational phrases and things that French-speaking teenagers actually say now that you provide, the more motivated students will be to personalize their language. That includes introducing idioms and other phrases that have silly or unexpected stories around them.

To build off the strategy in the previous two sections relating to rhythm and rhyme, having students create original songs or chants, using chosen vocabulary, is a great way to inspire them in this endeavor. Even just taking the opportunity as it comes to say words you like the sound of with verve and appreciation can encourage students to do the same! You can also have everyone choose their own signature word; it could be something they love the sound or meaning of, and you could encourage them to use it as much as possible. It would be fun to give the class a list of everyone's words and get them all to challenge themselves to use any of them whenever they can!

Memory - Convincing the Teacher with Practice and Application

In persuasive speechmaking, the more you remember, the more you are able to really perform and so enchant, to make your point even more compelling because it seems to live within you, burning brightly, ready to spill out at your will. And isn't that the same vibrant expression that we want for our students?

As opposed to something you have to keep looking at your notes for, memorized elements of speech seem to be the ultimate truth. Except of course when they are only partially memorized, or not really memorized with care. Then they stumble out awkwardly and stiffly and seem all the less true because rather than feeling something authentically, you are clearly reciting from memory, and you may not even be doing that very well.

The language teacher's oft-articulated antidote to this is practice. The reason we ask our students to engage with the language in so many similar but different-enough-to-not-be-boringly-redundant ways is precisely to give them ample opportunity for that necessary practice. This category is all about having done the work, having put in the study and practice time, or at least doing so now. Only with a quantity of time spent engaged at working through and with the language, speaking and writing it regularly, can students attain that quality of linguistic skill and expression that evinces fluency.

The audience here is the teacher. To convince your teacher, you've got to know your stuff, and the way you know your stuff is by practicing it. The previous three categories of persuasion really get woven together here the more you practice.

Of course, there is also the matter of actual memory; by virtue of the name of this category, one would think this its dwelling place. However, since it must be exercised in relation to the other categories, especially to the Foundation or Invention category, I would argue that memorization of language really lives more comfortably there, at the Foundation stage. That is where I would introduce any of your favorite memory tips and tools to help students learn and retain vocabulary.

The more practice in which one engages, the more he or she is able to talk around unknown vocabulary, and also the more willing to take risks. Even when those risks are unconventional, like saying what you know how to say instead of exactly what your English-speaking mind wants to say. That might seem to be the opposite of risk-taking, to stick to what you know. But it entails morphing and tweaking what you know to meet your needs instead of finding and selecting a custom-ordered response, and for beginning language learners especially, trusting themselves is the biggest leap of all, and therein the riskiest.

Feedback Points and Strategies: Practice and Automating Language

The only feedback point here is to encourage more practice in an error category, or to actually assign more practice. As far as strategies go, to support continued repetition in similar but different ways, I find the embodiment strategies listed for Arrangement to be quite helpful. Any way you can mix it up for students will be helpful in the process of developing automaticity, so that the necessary repetition doesn't become monotonous.

Delivery - Convincing Yourself with Confidence

In rhetoric, the category of Delivery is actually comprised of those elements of gesture, expression, and voice that we consider for our purposes under Arrangement. Here instead I wish to focus on the idea of confidence because, without it, even the richest learning can be left unexpressed, hidden and undiscovered. So much of language success has to do with confidence – confidence to try and risk making a mistake, confidence to understand that mistakes are part of the process, and confidence that you have indeed done your work and you *do* know what to say. It is therefore incumbent upon us to help students develop that confidence within themselves, by helping to clear the path of some common inhibitors.

The use of English in the world language classroom can be indicative of many things: A shortfall of

foundational knowledge, a desire to self-express combined with an insufficiency of applicable vocabulary, the necessity of more practice, or a dearth of self-confidence. No matter how you look at it though, using English is a clear signal of a lack of fluency as well as confidence in one's abilities to self-express; whether it is used to fill in blanks or to apologize for perceived inadequacies, it interrupts the path of fluent expression, which further diminishes confidence in that arena.

Although eye contact would seem to fit under the category of expression and the elements of facial communication, I include it here because whether for or against, it reflects a student's level of self-confidence with the language. Either the student is averting eyes when he or she is insecure, or seeking refuge in yours in instances of uncertainty.

In his exploration of what he calls the *science of acting*, Professor Joseph Roach writes the following of the beginning actor, which we can easily transfer to the beginning language student:

"As he repeats himself in rehearsals and exercises... testing the pulses of his imagination, probing his physical and mental limits, ... hesitations tend to fall away one by one; his assurance generates energy, until he seems more thoroughly alive than ever before.... The actor's spontaneous vitality seems to depend on the extent to which his actions and thoughts have been automatized, made second nature." ⁹

It is this self-generated energy, set in motion and sustained by a confidence sculpted by repetition, freedom to experiment, and targeted support, that I hope to invoke and invite to dance with our kids.

Feedback Points and Strategies: Owning Language

Here, feedback points will gently revolve around whatever shows itself as insecurity for each student. In order to bolster confidence and demystify language through play and inspiring students to own their language, you could issue a call to exaggeration, an invitation to overact conversations as if students were performing for the stage and they needed to be recognized from and registered by the farthest reaches of the audience. Over-enunciating, over-expressing, over-gesticulating, here we are playing big for the back of the room. It could be a day of silliness that would have the potential to take away the scariness of trying to be perfect, while kick-starting ownership of language by having students try it on like kids playing dress up.

The Three Modes of Persuasion in the World Language Classroom

As stated elsewhere in this unit, there are three modes of persuasion to the art of rhetoric; they represent three different ways to approach a speech or persuasive act. In the world language classroom, they will represent three different areas on which students may focus, three realms of emphasis that will be determined based either on student choice or teacher recommendation. Each mode capitalizes on a different strength of being, and here I connect each to one or two canons of rhetoric, to help students hone in on one particular quality at a time.

One of the biggest hindrances to love of language learning is fear of making mistakes, or really, fear of making SO MANY mistakes. Many language teachers, out of a well-intentioned and indeed necessary sense of responsibility to be supremely accurate and to teach true language, end up "correcting" every tiny

perceivable error all at once. And while it may make obvious sense to correct an error, it often results in students feeling like there is just too much to learn, too many red lines to surmount in order to be successful. This is the point where so many give up, or else they approach it with a heart set at half, already convinced that they are wrong and so uninspired to give it much effort.

But by choosing one mode of focus, students will primarily get feedback in that one area, which will all on its own decrease the amount of corrective feedback given to something less intimidating and more manageable. This also helps students conceptually understand the idea that everything won't be corrected at once, that when you edit or draft you look at work multiple times (much like you examine passages multiple times in the close reading technique emphasized in the Common Core.)

Logos in the World Language Classroom

Logos is the ability to use rational argument to persuade by reason. In the world language classroom, it will represent a fine attention to the details of language and grammar, and an emphasis on either *The Foundation (Invention)* or *Convincing Partners with the Feel of Fluency (Style)*, depending on student language knowledge level. This will be the most familiar of categories, but do strive to illuminate the intricacies of word choice whenever and however possible. Instead of calling it *Logos* with students, we will refer to it as a focus on *Vocabulary and Language (Vocabulaire et Langage)*.

Ethos in the World Language Classroom

Ethos is the ability to persuade by strength of character and credibility. In our classrooms, when we emphasize Ethos we will pay special attention to either or both of the following categories: *Convincing Passersby with the Appearance of Fluency (Arrangement)* and/or *Convincing the Teacher with Practice and Application (Memory)*. When considering Arrangement, focusing on our embodied communication will make us seem more natural and will open up alternate pathways to expressing our character, which will contribute to a sense of authenticity that will equate with credibility. When focusing on Memory, we will stress the importance of regular practice in lighting the way to flow and fluency. We will refer to *Ethos* with students as *Credibility (Crédibilité)* with the sub-categories of *Physical Representation* and *Memory (Répresentation Physique, Mémoire)*.

Pathos in the World Language Classroom

Pathos is the ability to persuade through emotional connections; you are trying to put your audience in the right mood to receive what you are delivering, and you do that by playing to their emotions. In our classrooms, working on Pathos will mean attention to and focus on the self – self-confidence and self-responsibility – with the understanding that a strong sense of self can inspire a strong emotional connection to others. Here we will work on all the things that are hindering a feeling of confidence in the classroom. We will refer to this category as *Confidence(Confiance)*.

Fake it 'til You Make it: Artifice versus the Artificial

In most discussions of rhetoric, at some point the concept of sincerity is brought into question. When one is being so careful in carving out words, it is difficult to feel that they spring from a place of truth; it is as if not being solely "of this moment" detracts from the truth or purity of their metaphoric nectar. There is indeed a complex interplay between authenticity, sincerity, and truth in the moment on the one hand, and manipulation, insincerity, and calculation on the other.

Does thinking through your thoughts, crafting them by employing what could be conceived of as a set of artificial tools, in fact dilute the intentions of the speaker, in that he or she would then be speaking in such a way as to elicit a particular response, feeling, or understanding, as opposed to just speaking *from the heart*, as they say. In response to this question, in our seminar Professor Joseph Roach articulated a distinction that I found both remarkable and illuminating – the distinction between artifice and the artificial. He stated that although use of these techniques is indeed artifice, it is not in fact artificial. Looking at some definitions of the two terms (courtesy of Merriam-Webster), I understand this as the idea that what is artifice, in the sense of a clever or artful skill or stratagem, is not in this case artificial, in the sense of being unnatural or insincere. Put another way, one can indeed be quite sincere while consciously employing techniques that enhance perception of self; sometimes the use of tips and tricks can help access and present the truth better than freeform expression. Consider the unplanned stuttered utterance as opposed to the well-thought out statement on a topic to help get a feel for the potential here.

This idea is meaningful to this unit, since it revolves around helping our young language learners convince or persuade listeners and readers of a fluency that they are still in fact developing; this could be considered a way of presenting a less-than-honest picture of their language development. However, by working on those elements, students are actually improving their fluency! It is less trickery and more a way to draw out of students what is already there, giving them tools to employ as they close the gaps that exist on their paths of emerging fluency.

Also of note is the potential contradiction between the spontaneous communication we are looking for our students to enjoy and the stress on practice, planning, and premeditation inherent in this approach. Of course though, we know that without a strong foundation of learning and practice, it is impossible to communicate in a new language spontaneously and meaningfully aside from simple replies and responses that will frustrate and bore our middle school grade kids.

One definition of artificial is something that is lacking in natural or spontaneous quality. It is quite enchanting to me how applying these techniques can actually become a way for speakers to get at their truth more clearly, to uncover and uncloud their thoughts in order to reveal or convey their truer self. In this way, use of this framework leads to communication that is far more natural than just letting one's thoughts roam and meander without direction, purpose, and pathway. Some of our devices are intended to convey a feeling of spontaneity; I think it can be said that for the audience, what

matters is the experience of spontaneity as they receive the message, rather than receiving an unclear and disjointed collection of thoughts that are in fact spontaneous.

The approach in this unit will support the idea of helping students present themselves either as they are or as they wish to be, and in that will serve as a vehicle for transporting them to that dream language destination

we call fluency.

Activity I: Pinwheels of Persuasion

You may use the pinwheel template located in **Appendix B: Oral Practice Pinwheel** as a graphic organizer and assessment guide at various stages of oral practice, and the template located in **Appendix C: Written Practice Pinwheel** for written work. The only difference between the two is in the space for Passersby at the top, because the categories there differ in spoken and written practice. The Oral Practice Pinwheel is a great tool to use during poetry recitation and preparation.

These pinwheels break down each of the four audiences we address in the unit as well as the foundation category, and they have space for students to personalize the work they need to do in each area. You could use it as a preparatory graphic organizer, for students to complete before they do a task, or students can use it as a reflective self-evaluation tool and complete it after they have engaged in an oral or written task; partners could complete it for each other in the same manner. Or you can use it to offer feedback to students after oral and written tasks.

In any event, whether the teacher has guided the student to a Pathos/Logos/Ethos focus or the student has done that for him- or herself, the chosen audience area should be highlighted or marked with a different color ink. There is a key at the lower left hand corner of each template. Students (or teacher) can also highlight or circle relevant headings in each quadrant and then write in particular feedback and things to study, practice, consider. Words to add or improve on for the Foundation can be written in the blank space to the left and write of the Foundation stem, perhaps letting one side of the stem be words to add and the other words to improve on.

Activity II: Copia

A strong vocabulary is an indispensable tool in persuasion. In the book bearing its name, *De copia* (in which he also wrote about the *commonplace book*), Desiderius Erasmus explained the idea of the *copia*, a tool for exploring related vocabulary in all its varied iterations to build up a *copia*, or abundance, of words and expressions.¹⁰ Educators today are well acquainted with Word Maps as a way to build up vocabulary knowledge and facility for students. Here, I offer a simple template (in the shape of our beloved pinwheel) for use with students. I haven't labeled it because I find that sometimes the labels are constrictive and I'd rather have students or teacher label them as fits. But the idea is the same, the common root or most familiar iteration can go in the center, and each vane of the pinwheel can be a different part of speech, a different type of sentence, an idiomatic expression, an image, or any combination thereof.¹¹

Students can pair up and share pinwheels, and a game can be made similar to Go Fish but using the pinwheel, so that you can see if you have the same word parts or examples as your partner or new phrases to share together.

See **Appendix D: Copia Pinwheel**.

Resources

Changing Minds. http://changingminds.org/disciplines/argument/five_canons/five_canons.htm. Concise information on the five canons of rhetoric.

Corbett, Edward P.J. and Connors, Robert J. *Classic Rhetoric for the Modern Student, fourth edition*. Oxford University Press, 1998. Very thorough though dense guide to the art of rhetoric.

Curtain, Helena and Pesola, Carol Ann Bjornstad. *Languages and Children: Making the Match (Foreign Language Instruction for an Early Start Grades K-8), second edition*. Longman, 1994. This is a fundamental resource for K-8 language teachers and one to be consulted on all ideas for exploration in the K-8 World Language classroom.

Grammar – About. <http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/copia.htm>. Background for the copia.

Lanham, Richard A. *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms, second edition*. University of California Press, 1991. A clear, simple, and thorough guide to rhetoric and rhetorical terms.

Roach, Joseph R. *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*. University of

Michigan Press, 1993. An enjoyable and insightful resource that in particular can illuminate the discussion of automaticity, spontaneity, and rehearsal as it pertains to performance.

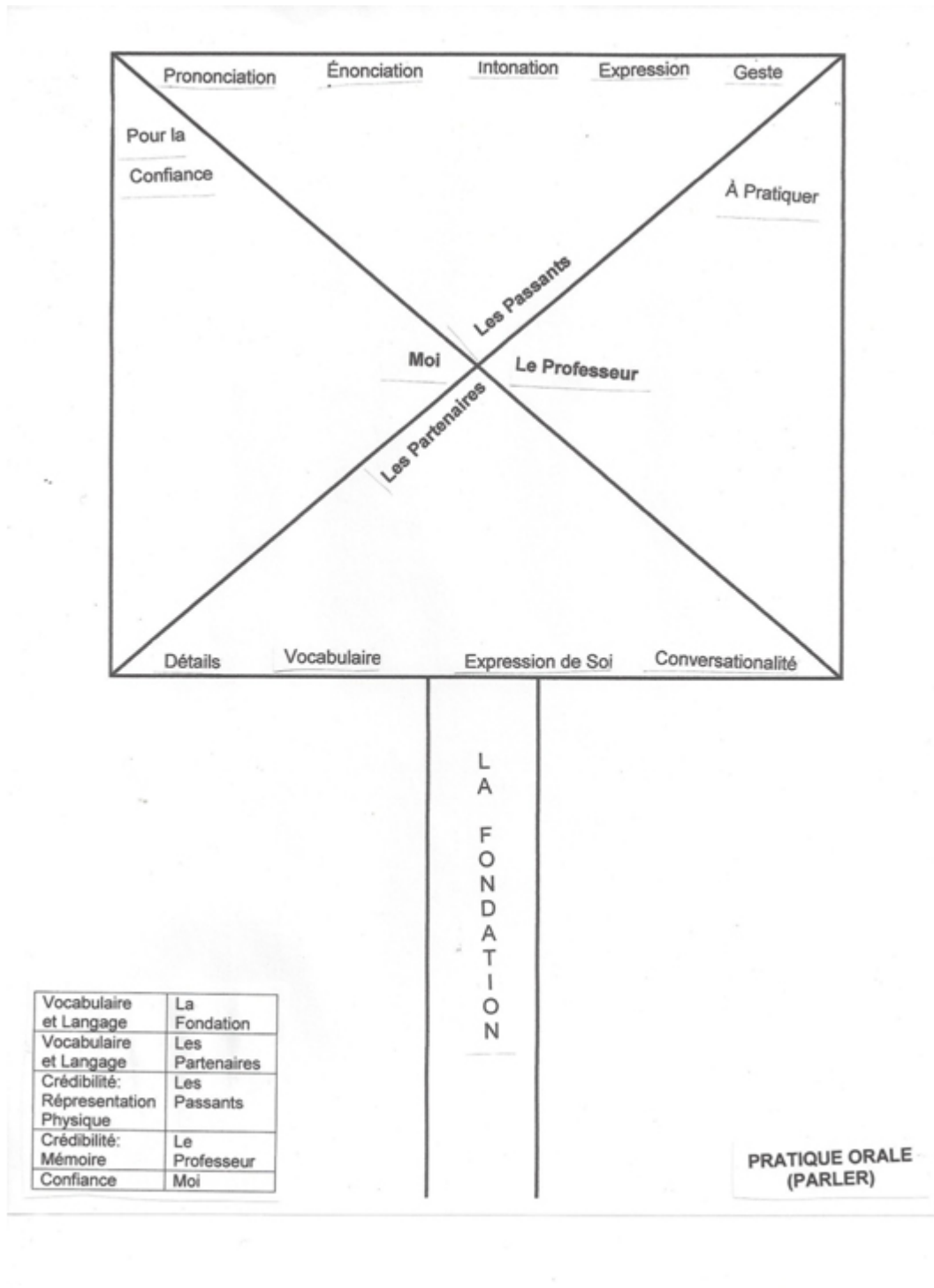
Silva Rhetoricae (The Forest of Rhetoric). <http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric>. Helpful information on rhetoric, the commonplace book, and copia.

Appendix A: Standards

As World Languages teachers seek to support Common Core State Standards, taking this

approach to writing in our language will help us go deeper with the tasks we are asking children to complete, mirroring the ELA standards for writing, speaking and listening, and language. Students will be explicitly taught about the five canons and three modes in order to get them thinking about how and why certain elements of text make something more believable or persuasive. We will address these concepts in our class in both written and oral scenarios, and as many of the Significant Tasks required for our Quarterly Exam are related to each other, students will certainly see the impact in both those areas of assessment. This unit also clearly and strongly supports the ACTFL Communication Standard for World Language Instruction.

Appendix B: Oral Practice Pinwheel



Appendix C: Written Practice Pinwheel

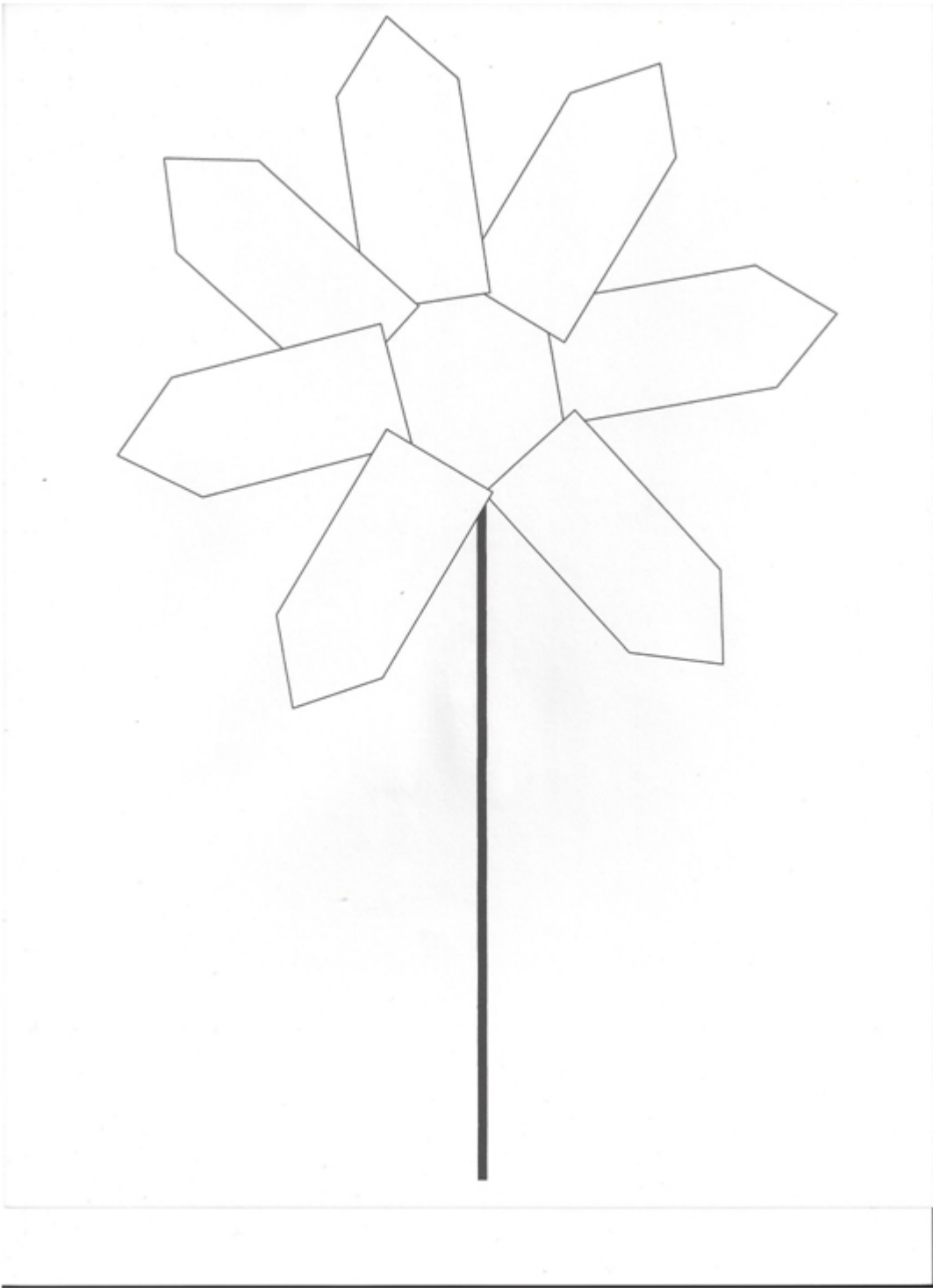


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Vocabulaire et Langage	La Fondation
Vocabulaire et Langage	Les Partenaires
Crédibilité: Réprésentation Physique	Les Passants
Crédibilité: Mémoire	Le Professeur
Confiance	Moi

PRATIQUE ÉCRITE (ÉCRIRE)

Appendix D: Copia Pinwheel



Notes

- 1) Merriam-Webster free dictionary online.
- 2) Clipart from: http://sweetclipart.com/multisite/sweetclipart/files/pinwheel_pastel.png
- 3) As shared in Lanham 164.
- 4) As shared in Lanham 165-166.
- 5) Bear in mind that as I adapt these canons to the language-learning classroom, some aspects will present themselves differently than they do in discussion of pure rhetoric.
- 6) Identifying the audience is actually a component of Invention, but I found it more constructive to address that first, and separately, as an organizing structure for our work. In the discussion of rhetorical planning, the 3 modes of persuasion are approached in the category of Invention, but I include them later in the unit, as they will be used a bit differently in our world language classroom. The topic of timing, also considered under the category of Invention, is largely irrelevant for our purposes.
- 7) <http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/commonplacebookterm>
- 8) Curtain and Pesola, 59.
- 9) Roach 16.
- 10) <http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/Pedagogy/Copia.htm>
- 11) For a detailed example that can be used as a springboard, see: <http://burton.byu.edu/Composition/CopiaGuide.pdf>

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

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