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Simplification and Personalization of French Grammar

Regina Dee

School for International Training

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SIMPLIFICATION AND PERSONALIZATION
OF FRENCH GRAMMAR

BY

REGINA DEE

B.A. FRENCH, MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY 1988

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS
IN TEACHING DEGREE AT THE
SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING

BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT
AUGUST 2002
This project by Regina Dee is accepted in its present form.

Date ________________________________

Project Advisor ________________________________

Project Reader ________________________________

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Independent Professional Project is dedicated to my French teachers: Messieurs Stevens, McIntyre, Gosselin, Moran, Silverman and Madame Leggett. I am also thankful to everyone who has encouraged my professional career.

Thank you for continuing to help me develop my God-given talents.
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Author’s Name    Regina Dee

Author’s Signature ________________________________
ABSTRACT

The materials included in this project have been developed as a result of my emerging understanding of French grammar since I began studying it in 1976. I began teaching a French Activities class in 1986 to eighth graders at St. Andrews and third and fourth graders at an Elementary School in Baltimore as a student at Morgan State University. While I was completing my student teaching at Baltimore City College Preparatory School, I found that my students had difficulties understanding textbook explanations. I therefore began to create my own explanations during sessions when students came for after school help. I also sketched different connections on transparencies during classes and later entered them into a computer to adjust them and make them look more professional. Since then, I have also taught French 101 and 102 at Carroll Community College in Western Maryland. I have, however, spent most of my career teaching in Maryland and Virginia high schools.

Currently, I teach at Annandale High School in Virginia, twenty minutes from Washington, D.C., where over 2,300 students represent more than sixty countries and forty languages. As a result of our proximity to Washington, D.C. most of my classes contain at least one native speaker from France, The French West Indies, Former French Indochina, Lebanon or Africa. Although these students speak French with their relatives and friends, French classes may be their first opportunity to read and write their language in the United States. During my career I have taught French I through IV, Advanced Placement French and am currently implementing the first year of International Baccalaureate French at Annandale.

In all of these situations my students say that my configurations help them to understand French grammar. Some of them have even returned to me for explanations after moving on to other teachers. They say “we know you’ll make sure we understand it.” Since these illustrations have been such an aid to my students, I am including them here along with the oral explanations I give when presenting them in class. These explanations are followed by a few classroom experiments. Inspired by my learning experiences at SIT, they are intended to create a “safe place” for using the grammatical structures explained, in spoken and written expression. I hope that these materials will help other teachers enable their students become as comfortable with French grammar as mine have.

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Tell me and I forget,  
teach me and I remember,  
involve me and I learn.

Benjamin Franklin, Ambassador  
from The American Colonies to France
INTRODUCTION

My desire to simplify French began with my first teaching experiences in Baltimore City in 1986. My university guidance counselor was the father of a hearing impaired sixth grader at Saint Matthews. He told me that his son’s school would pay me to teach French Activities to his son’s class once a week for ten weeks. Since his son had this impairment, I knew that my activities would have to involve lots of movements in order for him to understand my instruction. I, therefore, created movements to accompany French songs and used games involving physical movements to teach French. I also substituted for my French professor during this time.

During the summer of 1986 I taught Vacation Bible School in Arizona. I taught at ten churches in twelve weeks. My students’ ages ranged from two to nineteen. My partner, a female college student from Kentucky, and I were greeted by a different host family at an airport almost every Saturday night. By Sunday afternoon we were told the ages of our students and we would spend Sunday evening preparing for the week. This summer adventure caused me to become very resourceful. Many of our desert classrooms had almost no supplies. My partner and I had to be very creative with our lesson plans. I was glad that I played the piano, clarinet and had arts and crafts as a hobby.

When I returned to Morgan in September of 1986 I knew that I would be extending my educational plans to include not only French as a major and Spanish as a minor but also Secondary Education as an additional minor. By spring of 1986 I was again teaching a part-time French class to third and fourth graders at George Kelson
Elementary School in Baltimore. This enabled me to continue the practical expansion of my teaching repertoire while taking the required education classes for certification.

My advisor at Morgan was Dr. Sandye Jean McIntyre, Consul de Sénégal. As a friend of Leopold Sédar Senghor, Sénégal’s president and the first African admitted to L’Académie Française, Dr. McIntyre tolerated few grammatical errors. Since Morgan is a Historically Black American Institution we had a minority population made up of students from French West Africa and the French Antilles. These classmates and friends greatly enhanced my ability to practice French daily. Many of my Spanish classmates were also native speakers. One of my Spanish professors, Evangelia Natividad, from the Philippines, amazed me with stories of her experiences as a student in the Experiment in International Living.

By the time I graduated in 1988, Maryland State teaching certificate requirements required teachers of all subjects to take a Special Education and Secondary Reading class. In these classes, I developed the habit of providing thorough and interactive explanations for every concept I taught. These classes, my experiences with various age, ability and ethnic groups enabled me to be hired as a part-time French Teacher in Howard County, Maryland. Eventually, I taught both French and Spanish in a full-time position. During this time my classes contained many Jewish and Oriental students, a Haitian student and a legally blind student for whom I had to enlarge most copies onto 8 x14 inch paper. These two students were in my class for three years, from French II to French IV. I also had a student who was a quadriplegic in my French II class at this time. He drove his hi-backed wheelchair into my class accompanied by his nurse each day. He often turned in
assignments completed on a keyboard upon which he typed with a pencil held between his teeth.

In 1994 I left Howard County Public Schools to fulfill my curiosity about the travel industry by working at Dulles Airport as a Multilingual Customer Service Agent. By January of 1995 I found myself teaching French 101 and 102 at night. One of my community college students at this time was hearing impaired. There were sounds which she could not distinguish in English but she was able to recognize all sounds in the French language. I continued these two jobs until a televised Interactive French class replaced me in September of 1996. During that time most of the examples I used in my classes were related to my experiences with French-speaking travelers. My fellow customer service agents encouraged me to apply to The Fairfax County Public School System in January of 1997.

I substituted in almost every class imaginable until I became popular as a language sub in May of 1997. I spent the summer working for the Department of Recreation and by September I was almost exclusively a foreign language sub. My assignments became longer and longer until an administrator at Annandale High asked me to sub for a French and Spanish Teacher who went on maternity leave in late January. When she returned in early April, I was surprised with an offer to substitute for a Special Education and Reading Teacher. When I took those two classes at Morgan, I did not think of myself as unique. In Virginia, however, A Foreign Language teacher with Special Education classes on her transcript and experience teaching these students was indeed unique. As a result of these credentials, I was initially hired as a Special
Education and Spanish Team Teacher at Annandale High in September of 1998. During this time I maintained my fluency in French by attending events advertised by l’Alliance Française of Washington, D. C..

When Annandale’s only full-time French teacher retired in December of 1999, I assumed the position. After two years of teaching students who were Learning Disabled, I found myself applying principles of thorough and interactive explanations to my French classes as well. I also continued to use my experiences with native speakers, French commands, games, and music in addition to textbook materials. I gave assignments that required students to notice elements of French culture in their own environment. They included finding newspaper articles about Francophone countries and products with French names, directions or ingredients. These activities caused my administrators to comment that my work was “thorough” and that I “teach for relevance.”

In the spring of 2000 my principal invited me to join Annandale’s International Baccalaureate application committee. As a member of the IB application committee, I had the privilege of writing the French curriculum, being interviewed with my Latin and Spanish colleagues and attending a training session in California. Since a Master’s Degree was preferred but not required for this position, I thought this was a signal for me to seriously pursue a Master’s in French. My college Spanish professor, Señorita Natividad had died in autumn of 1998 and for some reason I thought of her Experiment in International Living. I found a brochure saved from the 1980’s. Of course when I called the 800 number I found that this school had a website. I breathed a sigh of relief as I saw that SIT had a summer program. I was dreading the fatigue of night classes.
My principal and colleagues wrote recommendations. I survived essays and interviews in English and French to be accepted into SIT’s summer program for a Master’s of Arts in Teaching French. By June of 2000 I was officially a SMAT 19.

At SIT my journaled reflections about my teaching practice helped me to verbalize the style I have been developing since I began teaching in 1986. They also helped me to realize that the most fulfilling aspects of my teaching career have been those times when I have made what seemed foreign to my students become familiar and what seemed difficult to them become simple. I, therefore, decided to do my independent professional project on The Simplification and Personalization of French Grammar.

Because of my experiences with Counsel-Learning, Feedback and research done in Humanistic Education, I have begun to incorporate student personal interests into grammatical exercises. The addition of personalization to my teaching repertoire may make my instruction even more relevant to student experience. In this project I will attempt to state my principles and describe my strategies for simplifying and personalizing French grammar. I will also summarize assessment goals for which these strategies prepare my students.
From Simplification to Personalization: French II

When I began student teaching in Baltimore City I found that my students automatically imitated my French commands and questions. This led me to the conclusion that classroom target language learning is closely related to the native language learning of infants. As infants imitate their caretakers and peers, students imitate their teachers and classmates. During my Interim Year Teaching Project, I noticed that my French II students often repeat commands such as “Sortez les devoirs”, “Tournez à la page sept” and questions such as “Qu’est-ce que tu fais?” This theory was further validated by research done for my SIT, Sandanona 2001 presentation entitled “Minimizing Disciplinary Problems by Maximizing Language Learner Involvement”.

A quote taken from my Four Skills binder, for this presentation, states that “If they haven’t understood the first time, they’ll still be able to do the activity by watching others. As pupils learn more and more language, you can let them take over the role of the ‘instructor’ – they are very good at it!” (Scott and Ytreberg 1990, 23). This research along with my teaching experiences have lead me to the conclusion that examples and repetition are necessary for language learning. My students do take over the role of teaching when they perform skits, cultural and grammatical presentations as well as during routine cooperative learning activities.

This is true not only in learning how to speak the target language but also in learning how to write it. As I continued my teaching career, I found that the same questions were asked each year about the grammatical concepts when they were presented. Although the students produced spoken language almost automatically, they seemed to realize that word order was different once they wrote down a sentence.
Spelling also baffled them. They would mispronounce words because they were trying to associate their spellings with the phonetics of another language. I, therefore, have been trying to address these aspects of written language learning in my instruction as well.

Having taught from a number of texts, I find that textbook explanations often give explanations and sample sentences without providing room for students to demonstrate their understanding of each individual step towards building a sentence. Most students get lost somewhere in that explanation. As I saw this began I separating the steps towards building a sentence, giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of each step in a grammatical explanation. An example of this is my explanation of the placement of object pronouns.

When I introduced the object pronoun “en” by orally modeling questions and answers that would be familiar to them, they responded easily and naturally. I then showed them how to cross out the actual quantity or phrase beginning with “de” to create a sentence in which the pronoun “en” preceded the verb. They then turned to ask their partners these questions.

Combien de frères ou de soeurs as-tu?

-Je n’en ai pas.

-J’en ai trois.

Combien de classes as-tu?

-J’en ai sept.

Combien de cahiers as-tu?

-J’en ai deux.

Combien d’exams as-tu aujourd’hui?
- J’en ai trois.

Though they answered these personalized questions automatically, orally, my students became confused when they tried to read and respond orally to the text exercises. This confusion prompted me to create a worksheet containing patterns that could be applied to the text sentences they would be required to complete for homework in order to incorporate vocabulary from this particular chapter of the text. This vocabulary is also required in the Fairfax County Program of Studies for French II, so I provided them with a set of directions that could be used with all of those sentences.

La place des pronoms d’objet

Le pronom d’objet indirect - en = “some”

Underline the phrase beginning with “de” along with the article and noun immediately following it.

Nous mangeons beaucoup d’oranges.

Eliminate “de” and the articles and/or nouns following it. These words will be replaced with “en”. Write the remaining words.

____________________________________________________________________

Write the conjugated verb.

____________________________________________________________________

Place “en” immediately before the conjugated verb and rewrite the sentence.

____________________________________________________________________

To make the sentence negative, place “n’…pas” around both “en” and the conjugated verb.

____________________________________________________________________

If there is an infinitive then “en” goes immediately before the infinitive.

Nous allons manger beaucoup d’oranges.
Homework exercises were corrected in class by having students state their written answers before I revealed them on the overhead transparency. Students who had questions asked them of the classmate who gave the answer. Once I was sure everyone understood all of the answers, I announced the journal entry topic for that class period. I informed my students that they would probably see a similar topic on the chapter test. As we progressed through the chapter, I introduced other object pronouns and vocabulary in the same manner. Students also completed textual listening activities and worksheets concerning the chapter video in order to hear this grammatical concept and vocabulary used in various ways.

The development of my interest in personalization at SIT may have come as result of Fairfax County’s use of imagined realistic situations in their spoken and written assessments. Our school system requires that 25% of the final exam for all French II students be a recorded spoken Performance Assessment for Language Students (PALS) and that 25% be a written PALS. In order to give my students practice for the spoken PALS, I modified some of the suggestions for written portions of quizzes and tests to create an oral test. Test “A” was administered to two of my classes, “B” to two others and “C” to those who had to make it up at a later date.

Allez viens! Ch. 3

A. Leave a phone message for a friend stating that you are trying to decide on a gift (en) for a mutual friend (lui). Ask for ideas and make three suggestions. You may also want to suggest where the gifts may be purchased (y).
Use the pronouns suggested in parenthesis to avoid repetition.

Speak for at least 60 seconds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Gift suggestions</th>
<th>Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B.** Leave a phone message in response to birthday gifts from a friend. Thank them for one item and politely reject the others(en). Suggest someone (lui, leur) with whom you may share a gift of great quantity.

Use the pronouns suggested in parenthesis to avoid repetition.

Speak for at least 60 seconds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Gifts</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**C.** Leave a telephone message for some friends inviting them over for a party. State what they should bring (en), where you will meet (y) and anyone else for whom they may bring something (lui or leur)

Use the pronouns suggested in parenthesis to avoid repetition.
The current French II text, *Allez,viens!*, is well suited to prepare students for PALS assessment. Each section of each chapter contains written exercises called “journal.” The testing program also contains written portions in form B of each quiz and at the end of each chapter test. This year, I have been adapting these journal entries and written portions for use as spoken and written PALS practices. Although written PALS practice tests had been given for the previous chapters, journal entries converted to spoken tasks had been given for a quiz and classroom practice in using the hand-held cassette recorders. The chapter 3 test was the first time my students were given a test grade, worth two quizzes, for an oral PALS assessment practice.

The most frequently used phrase heard on their cassette tapes was the command “Offre-lui…” this further supports my theory, supported by experience and research, that students repeat that which they have heard most often. They had to give this command many times while completing textbook exercises concerning gift-giving. An example of a response that could have been given for scenario C is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Items to bring</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Speak for at least 60 seconds.
“Samedi nous allons avoir une fête. Réunissons chez Babette. Il faut y être à huit heures. Nous aimons les desserts, apportes-en! Lundi est son anniversaire, alors apportes un cadeau pour lui offrir”.

Invitations such as these can be found in the “Troisième étape” of chapter 3 of the text. Sentences using the appropriate object pronouns were added to show students how they might add them in their recordings. This oral test was created in lieu of the usual written chapter test. The pronouns noted were required in order to assess student ability to use pronouns presented during the chapter appropriately even though they might have been omitted in natural conversation.
From Simplified Explanations to Personalized Assessment:

International Baccalaureate French, Part I

In teaching my IB, advanced fourth year French class, I use the same simplification principles that are used in my French II classes. The major difference between the classes is that all directions in the classroom and textbook are given in French. French III is a transitional level. Although Monday presentations or discussions are held, in French, as a result of weekend research on unit themes, a different set of verb tenses is taught with each unit. This provides the opportunity for students to review verb tense structures and use them appropriately in communication and assessment. In order to complete a review of all French verb tenses specified in the Programs of Study for levels one through three in time for the National French Exam in March, I have classified the tenses required by our French curriculum into three groups: simple tenses, compound tenses, and verb forms accompanied by prepositions. I include one of each of these groups in each of the first three or four units taught during the school year. For students who learned all of them in previous levels, this grouping of verbs allows for review of the structure and usage of verb forms. For students who may not have had the opportunity to learn them in levels one, two or three, this review is an introduction to forms to which they may not have been exposed. My habit of presenting supposedly previously learned materials in new ways has always relieved my anxiety about what may or may not have been taught by teachers of a previous level. For some it is review, for others it is their first exposure, but by presenting it in a different format in my class I am sure they all have at least one common experience with the information. As stated by
Lily Wong-Fillmore “Teachers seldom say anything in just one way; they say it in several different ways, giving students more than one chance to figure out what has been said” (Wong-Fillmore 1985, 40). In cooperative learning situations the students who have been exposed to the information previously can also clarify rules of structure and usage for their classmates to whom these rules may be less familiar.

When reviewing the simple tenses, for example, students were asked to write different journal entries using the present tense. Some of their themes included writing about their favorite foods or describing themselves. Asking them to share, out loud, one sentence they wrote with their classmates gave me an idea of how advanced their vocabularies were, as well as whether or not they were comfortable using the present tense of irregular verbs. Most of them used verbs from the basic three verb groups so that my teaching centered around verbs that had irregular spelling patterns in the present tense. In order to help them remember when to change the accent or double letters in the conjugations of these verbs, I created rhymes to help them remember pronunciation rules. Synonyms such as “muet” and “silent” were used in the worksheet which follows so that the lines of the rule would rhyme in French. Rhymes, like songs, serve as a mnemonic device in language learning. I often hear my students repeat rhymes or spell out acronyms, I have made up about a certain group of words, when studying during a Flex activity period or whispering them unconsciously to themselves while taking a written test, in order to activate their memories. These rhymes also help me to use a familiar structure when demonstrating the conjugation of a new verb while “teaching directly in the target language” (Wong-Fillmore, 34).

1. Les changements avant “e” muet.
a. “On double le “t”
   quand le “e” est muet”

   jeter
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>je</th>
<th>tu</th>
<th>on</th>
<th>nous</th>
<th>vous</th>
<th>elles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

   Appeler
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>je</th>
<th>tu</th>
<th>on</th>
<th>nous</th>
<th>vous</th>
<th>elles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

b. “On ajoute un accent
   Quand le “e” est silent”

   Acheter
   
<table>
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<tr>
<th>je</th>
<th>tu</th>
<th>on</th>
<th>nous</th>
<th>vous</th>
<th>elles</th>
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</thead>
</table>

c. “On change l’accent
   Quand le “e’” est silent”

   Préférer
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>je</th>
<th>tu</th>
<th>on</th>
<th>nous</th>
<th>vous</th>
<th>elles</th>
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</thead>
</table>

I conjugated these verbs along with my students in class and then gave them text exercises with which they used these patterns for homework. When conjugating or having a student conjugate these verbs on the board, I usually have the class pronounce each word as it is written. If a word is written without the accent or doubled letter I ask “Est-ce que le “e” est muet?” A student then raises a hand to say “oui” or “non” alerting the writer to make spelling changes if necessary. In a lesson such as this “The students could see what they were to do even when they were unable to understand… putting the new information in the context of work that students had already completed…made it possible for them to make use of prior knowledge and experience for making sense of new materials” (Wong-Fillmore, 38).
Since the imperative uses three forms of the present tense, I used the review of 
this verb form to review a list of verbs containing even more irregular conjugations and 
uses. This provided them with a **review and new information** in the same exercise.

L’impératif

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbe</th>
<th>Tu</th>
<th>Vous</th>
<th>Nous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. être</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. avoir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. faire</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. *aller</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. *écouter</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. choisir</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. dormir</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. attendre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. prendre</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. mettre</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. peindre</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. vaincre</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. essayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. manger</td>
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<td>15. commencer</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. ouvrir</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. lire, dire</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18. écrire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. venir</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. devoir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. connaître</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. savoir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. vouloir, pouvoir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. conduire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
*Pour les verbes qui se terminent en “er” on n’écrit pas le “s” après la forme de “tu” sauf si le verbe est suivi par une voyelle.
Exemples: Va-t’en  Vas-y  
              Parle-moi  Parles-en

Verbes irréguliers d’usage
1. intéresser – Qu’est-ce qui t’intéresse?

________________________________________________________________________

2. manquer – Qu’est-ce qui te manque?

________________________________________________________________________

3. plaire – Qu’est-ce qui te plaît?

________________________________________________________________________

Verbes impersonnels

Falloir – Il faut
Pleuvoir – Il pleut

As a review presentation before last year’s French IV and Advanced Placement combined class final exam, I also used this list to assign a verb representing a conjugation pattern to each student. Each student then presented verb, representing their verb group, to the class. They had to tell what was unique about their verb group and state the tenses in which it followed different rules from other verbs which may have had similar infinitive endings. Hearing their classmates state grammatical rules in simpler French than I or the textbook used and having the opportunity to ask them questions of a peer, clarified many aspects of verb conjugation and usage for those French IV and AP students last year.
This academic year after using this list to review command forms, I gave a spoken quiz that required students to use them and the present tense. I added situational clues that would require them to use specific and advanced vocabulary in a realistic imagined situation. A practice assessment such as this is intended to prepare them to use a variety of verb forms in the oral portion of their IB exam in the spring of 2003.

ENREGISTREMENT: PRÉPARATIONS POUR UNE FÊTE

SITUATION:
Samedi, c’est l’anniversaire d’une vieille dame qui est comme la grand-mère de tout le voisinage. La banlieue va lui donner une grande surprise-partie.

TÂCHE:
Laisser un message sur le répondeur du centre de récréation. Il faut leur dire les choses et la nourriture qu’il faut acheter ou préparer.

SUGGESTIONS:
Imaginer que la dame a des allergies ou qu’elle est diabétique. Vous pouvez aussi dire d’où vous téléphonez.

GRAMMAIRE:
Utiliser le présent et l’impératif.

Parler pour 60 secondes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACHETER</th>
<th>PRÉPARER</th>
<th>AUTRES NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

Like the French II PALS assessments, there are both oral and written components in the IB exam. At Annandale, the International Baccalaureate
exam will be given, for the first time in 2003, at the end of the fifth year of Modern Languages to students who have earned at least a B in French III. 30% of the exam requires a minimum of three spoken recordings. They may include role-plays, discussions or an exposé given by the student on a subject of personal interest, related to the target language or cultures. The IB exam also requires students to write a minimum of 250 words about a literary or philosophical topic. This section is also composed 30% of the exam.

Therefore, in order to give my students adequate written practice using appropriate simple tenses they were also given pertinent prompts, journal entries and cooperative learning activities. In order to practice using the imperfect and conditional in personalized sentences, for example, students completed sentences containing these two tenses in their personal journals. They were asked to write at least four other similar or pertinent sentences. Then each group of four students was given a dry erase board or piece of newsprint upon which each member completed a version of the sentence “Si j’avais tout le temps libre que je voulais, je ferais…” For both the journal and the cooperative writing activity, students were told that “ferais” was only a model conditional verb and that a verb appropriate to their activity could replace it in their sentence. When all groups finished their sentences they presented them to the class and were usually greeted with nods of understanding or exclamations of “J’allais écrire cela”. The personalized cooperative learning exercise gave students the opportunity to correct and learn from each other. This is usually less intimidating than being corrected by an instructor. This exercise also enabled students to “write their way
into reading”. This theory was presented by Vivian Zamel in her early July 2001 presentation to my Four Skills class at SIT. In essence, she stated that students are eager to read writing, done by their peers, that addresses common interests, opinions and activities.

Since the same root is used in the formation of both the conditional and the simple future tenses in French, I created a worksheet that illustrated the similarities and differences between these tenses while grouping the roots in terms of similar spellings. This worksheet was also used as a bridge between simple and compound tenses.

L'emploi de la racine du futur simple

le futur simple

les verbes réguliers
l'infinitif + les terminaisons du verbe "avoir" au présent
Je parlerai.

Verbes exemplaires

anglais: I will…

-er -ir -re
je_________ tu ___________ il_____________

nous________ vous ___________ elles_____________

les verbes irréguliers
la racine du futur + les terminaisons du verbe "avoir" au présent
Tu feras.

les 6 racines du futur
ceux qui se terminent avec

-verbe racine -rr- racine -dr- racine -vr- racine

_________ _________ _______ _______ _______ _______
les racines qui changent au présent (les lettres qui doublent, les changements des "e" muets à la fin)
Pensez à la forme de "je"
J’appellerai mon chat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Présent</th>
<th>futur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeler</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

les changements des "e" muets à la fin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Présent</th>
<th>futur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeter</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exceptions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Présent</th>
<th>futur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ennuyer</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

le conditionnel

les verbes réguliers
l'infinitif + les terminaisons de l'imparfait
Je mettrais mon manteau.

les verbes irréguliers
la racine du futur + les terminaisons de l'imparfait
J’irais lentement.

le conditionnel passé

les verbes réguliers
avoir ou être au conditionnel...le participe passé
J’aurais dit "oui".
Elle serait allée.
le futur antérieur
avoir ou être au futur simple...le participe passé anglais: I will have...
(by the time)

J'aurai fini quand elle arrivera.
Il aura reçu son diplôme à l’âge de dix-neuf ans.

Phrases exemplaires

This worksheet helped my students to see that there were only a limited
number of spelling patterns that could be used for large lists of verbs if they
knew how to categorize the particular verb they needed to use. They have told me
that my ability to show them that there are limits to the number of patterns in
French, reassures them that they may one day learn them all. Sometimes,
before seeing my limited number of patterns, they are overwhelmed by the
number of rules and patterns in French and are frustrated because they think they
will never end. When I present a concept, even to my French II students, I
usually tell them its limits. An example of this is when I present the tenses I will
cover in French II. They include the present, near future, past compound,
future simple, and the imperfect tenses. I tell my students that at the end of
French II they will have been exposed to all of the verb parts they will need to
produce all of the other tenses needed for speaking French. Other tenses and
moods will only be varied combinations of these parts. This encourages them to move on to French III with the confidence that they already have tools to succeed.

As a written assessment of the simple tenses, I let my IB students expand upon the journal entry prompts they were given during the unit.

6 Temps simples
Une rédaction de mes rêves

Écrire une rédaction qui commence avec les mots “Si j’avais tout l’argent et tout le temps libre que je voulais je ……”. Écrire au moins 100 mots (150-A2). Finir avec au moins une phrase du futur qui considère la réalité… “mais en réalité…” Donc utiliser l’imparfait, le conditionnel, et le futur simple.

The rubric I use to grade these written assessments is a simplified version of the three areas of competence explained in IB assessment guides for a total of thirty points on my unit test and thirty percent of the IB exam. Students are awarded one point for each aspect that is adequately displayed in their writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tâche</th>
<th>Présentation</th>
<th>Langue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Idées convaincantes</td>
<td>1. Forme</td>
<td>1. Vocabulaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ___ mots (but 250)</td>
<td>2. Éléments de Forme</td>
<td>2. Vocabulaire complexe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Sujet de plusieurs angles</td>
<td>10. Efficacité</td>
<td>10. Accents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Safety in Oral Reading**

As I stated previously, although most students **pronounce French words** in a manner that would be comprehensible to native speakers during oral imitation and oral PALS assessment, they often mispronounce words when reading because they are trying to associate their spellings with the phonetics of a language they have already learned to write. This is as true for native speakers of French, who may be studying written French for the first time in French II, as it is for speakers of English. Since English is the phonetic system they have learned to write, they often try to apply it to written French as well. Prior to my study of French Structures at SIT, my Francophone students were frustrated with my constant correction of their spelling mistakes when writing. My Anglophone students, as well, were usually timid about reading aloud because they knew I would constantly be correcting their pronunciation.

Before beginning my studies at SIT, I often wondered why students did not volunteer to read since this activity did not require them to figure out an answer. Now I am sensitive to the fact that they do have to figure out how to pronounce words and are afraid of criticism of their pronunciation.

Now, most of our Anglophone students speak Spanish to some degree before entering a French class. French spellings and grammatical structures are so similar to Spanish that, before my introduction of my French spelling chart, they really did not understand why I was correcting them as long as their pronunciations did not sound like English pronunciations. In their minds, everything that was not English must have been Spanish.

Shakti Gattengo visited my Approaches to Teaching Foreign Languages class at SIT on the evening of second Sunday in July 2000. After watching her demonstrate the
the “Silent Way” of teaching of French phonetics and studying international symbols for French sounds in my French Structures class, I decided to create a sound chart that would simplify French spelling and pronunciation for my students. It classifies similar sounds yet follows the familiar sequence of the alphabet.

The first group of sounds listed are vowel sounds. Single letters and combinations with similar sounds are listed in the same column. I then address the nasal sounds because they all contain vowels and are characteristic of the French language. After this, I have written the consonants. They too are arranged alphabetically with similar sounds in common columns. Using this spelling chart also enables my students to see that there is a sound-symbol correspondence in the usage of French accents. The final list, of French names and French - English spelling comparisons, helps them to remember that accents do not only influence the sound of a word but may also help them to remember a corresponding English word. That is the case when they see that the “s” rarely precedes a “t” in a French word, but is replaced with an accent mark. This helps them to spell and pronounce French words more accurately. These charts also serve as a point from which to begin discussions about other aspects of French pronunciation. These aspects include always emphasizing the last syllable and only pronouncing the last consonant of a word if it appears in the word “careful” with the exception of the “r”. Discussions and pertinent pronunciation exercises also explore ways in which the “r” and other consonants affect vowels and consonant blends. The infinitive ending “er” and the consonant blend “gr” are examples of letter combinations affected by the letter “r”.

25
L’orthographe française

VOYELLES

a e i o u è é ou

à eu y au ait ai
œu ille eau ais ez
ei er (egg) et

NASALES

on an in un
om am im
en em

CONSONNES

b ch d f g gn h j k
ga ge qu
go gi ca
gu co
cu

l m n p r s t v w x z
ss oi (ks) s
ce ui (gz)
ça
cô
cû

Noël Noëlle Français Anglais
fête feast
hôpital hospital
bête beast
arrêt arrest
Since I started using this chart in my classroom, my students have a familiar point of reference which protects them from my former constant criticism of their reading skills. Recently a student asked whether the French word for “all” was pronounced “tu” or “tout”. When I responded by pronouncing the word “tout”, she immediately turned to her partner and said “See, I told you it was spelled “T O U T”.

Peer teaching incidents such as these are indications that my students are understanding the concepts I am teaching them. When students feel confident enough about a concept to teach it to a classmate, I feel that I may have found a method that is successful.

I review French pronunciation with this chart in the same manner that Shakti used her Silent Way charts. During a Flex period or in class before an oral assessment or illustrated presentation I often use transparencies of these charts to review the sounds of French. As I point to each sound the students say it chorally. If some of them mispronounce a sound I point to it again. The second time I point to it, I listen for a student who may be pronouncing it correctly and ask them to pronounce for the class. Other students then repeat after this model student. I also often ask for sample words containing the sounds as I point to them. This helps them associate printed French words with these sounds when they see them written in their texts. My usage of spelling combinations used in actual written French, rather than international linguistic symbols, seems to be more practical for high school students.

Creating a Safe Environment for Personalization

Once students understand French grammar and the French sound system their next challenge is to be able to communicate their personal thoughts authentically. Students are eager to communicate about that which interests them. “They want
learning which is more personal and human” (Muskowitz 1978, 7). Most students drop out of school because they often encounter “many hours they consider a waste of time and unrelated to them” (Muskowitz, 7). Making an effort to explore topics of interest to my students keeps them attentive and eliminates many disciplinary problems. Everyone feels as though they have something to contribute to class discussions. The best way to enable them to talk about their interests is to find out what interests them. “They want learning which is more personal and human” (Muskowitz, 7).

As I have illustrated previously, I do this by letting them complete French sentences with individual responses that may be included in journal entries. Asking them impromptu questions about their past or upcoming weekend and holiday activities gives me insight to topics they may enjoy discussing. This also gives them a realistic context for a variety of verb tenses. This is especially true when they share a sequence of events, summarize a television show or movie they have seen. Personalized exercises are an opportunity for students to creatively demonstrate and rehearse their understanding of grammatical concepts.

During the summer of 2001, with the help of Patrick Moran, my culture teacher, I decided that requiring my students to keep journals might be a good way for them to practice for written PALS evaluations as well as the written portion of the IB exam. I also knew, that with at least twenty students in each of four French II classes and an IB class of fourteen, it would be unrealistic for me to promise to read and respond to each day’s entry. This method of response was described in Janet G. Finck’s thesis about dialogue journals. Instead, I decided to allow students to voluntarily read one sentence of what they write, at least once a week, to the class. French II students are required to write
at least three sentences per entry. A minimum of five sentences per entry is required from IB students. I wanted to let the students keep their journals private in order to enable them to express whatever they wanted in French without fear of correction. At the beginning of the year, students were also told never to give their journals to another classmate to read. They had the right to decide how much to share from their own writing. This right to choose what to share was a feature I liked during Ruth Spack’s mid-July 2001 presentation during my Four Skills class at SIT. During her presentation, she also asked students whether she, or another student could read aloud a passage they had written that she felt was especially good. This gave them the chance to say no instead of being embarrassed that she was doing this. She was also careful never to use student work as an example of something wrong. Instead she even compiled some insightful student statements and displayed them to the class leaving off student names. I do a variation of this by writing a note to a student on a graded assignment asking that they “Mentionner en classe…” This allows them to choose whether or not they want to draw attention to their own good work. During my usual semester notebook check, I check their entries to make sure they are of the appropriate length for their level, to see that they are in French and that the date of each entry is written in French. Since most of the topics are opened-ended “These topics, by virtue of being student-generated, make …journals a high-interest commodity in the classroom, one which students have trouble putting down” (Gross 1990, 44). I usually let them write while I circulate throughout the room checking to see if they have completed the previous night’s homework. Once I have done this, I ask “Fini?” all of them usually say “non” and ask for more time.
This process produces respect for student privacy and freedom to explore personal expression before having to speak. It has encouraged students who may not respond to the same question orally by giving them time to create a response about which they may be more confident. “…not requiring immediate responses and providing a safe distance, is an added benefit to promoting this new kind of relationship” (Gross, 44). Opportunities for this kind of experimental reflection are what made me feel comfortable expressing my own thoughts at SIT, where journaling was a homework assignment in almost every course.

Since my native language is Ebonics, prior to coming to SIT, I, along with other classmates who spoke an ethnic dialect or had a foreign accent were told to be silent most of the time in classes that were taught in English. This treatment is what sparked my interest in Foreign Language classes where I was encouraged to speak. I, therefore, took German in the third grade and decided that I would eventually become fluent in French during a trip to Canada at age 10. Because of my yellow skin, I am rejected by many Black Americans as “too light.” These reactions to my speech and skin color have caused me to feel more easily accepted by recent immigrants and Americans with international experience. Therefore, at SIT, I had the experience of feeling safe expressing myself in English for the first time. I felt very comfortable hearing so many different accents and cultural perspectives during our class discussions. This prompted me to speak English, despite my ethnic accent, and express my own multicultural perspective more as a student at SIT.

This experience led me to the conclusion that my students would also communicate, in French, if they felt safe enough to do so. I, therefore, decided to try
and recreate my SIT experience in my own classroom not only by the incorporation of journaling this year but also by altering the **structure and rules of spoken interactions**.

On the first day of classes, as usual, I began with an exercise involving individual introductions. I noticed that I was surprising my French II students with my requests for responses. Since the rules articulated and implemented at SIT had me feel almost as comfortable speaking English as I have been encouraged to become speaking French, I decided to implement them in my classroom.

In past years I said “Bonjour, je m’appelle Madame Dee. Comment t’appelles-tu?” then pointed to a student and expected a response. This year, after introducing myself to my students I asked for volunteers instead of putting a particular student on the spot. When I did this, several students raised their hands and said “Je m’appelle…” when I recognized them and said “oui”.

As Ruth Spack said during her visit “Never surprise a student” in a foreign language class: the newness of the language makes the class scary enough. After that first activity, I gave them the opportunity to ask for the names of their classmates and have their classmates respond. I circulated throughout the room, listening, while all students participated in this short conversation with a classmate simultaneously. I then asked for volunteer pairs of students to repeat their conversations for the class.

Once students had become comfortable with their classmates, I asked for volunteers to wear the names, of administrators and school employees, which I had printed on hole-punched sentence strips for them to hang around their necks. These volunteers were asked to walk down different rows of the classroom and answer classmates who asked “Comment vous appelez-vous?” with the name of an adult who
worked in the building. I also circulated, giving students the opportunity to ask me this question and to ask for help. After they finished circulating these students stood in the front of the classroom and students took turns raising their hands and asking “Comment vous appelez-vous?” After that formal activity I asked for volunteers to state the names of classmates as I pointed to them. “Comment s’appelle-t-elle?…Comment s’appelle-t-il?” The students I indicated smiled when their classmates remembered and stated their names.

The modifications I made in this activity enforced some of the rules I have learned during the past two summers. After this initial activity students understood that they would be expected to respond in French and I continued to state some of my other classroom rules. This year, along with my general demand for “politesse”, I specifically stated that there would be no toleration of teasing or insults (Muskowitz, 32). I also stopped repeating answers given by individual students so that they would listen to and respect each other’s answers.

Summary of rules implemented:

1. The choice to remain silent (Spack).
2. The opportunity to think and practice speaking before addressing the entire class (Muskowitz,32).
3. The necessity of listening respectfully to classmates (Muskowitz,32).
4. No teasing or insults (Muskowitz,32).
5. The opportunity to ask for help.

After my initial introductory lesson in French, I remind my students, in English, that what they now consider their native language was foreign to them at birth. I remind
them that they went through a process in order to learn it. I say this knowing that those who have learned other languages since their birth will be experiencing a familiar process. However, those who have been monolingual until that moment fear that they cannot remember the process and may even feel resentful over the fact that they have to again the face the communicative uncertainty they thought they left behind in early childhood. As I observed in my Swahili class at SIT and as I observe in the classes I teach each week, monolingual Anglophone students are terrified of being in an environment in which they cannot comprehend the language or culture. Multilingual students, however, who may have had to make transitions between languages and cultures, daily, for most of their lives, adjust more readily to the demands of foreign language classes. I, therefore, have to adjust my teaching style for those who are most likely to feel uncomfortable in a foreign language classroom so that everyone will feel comfortable enough to participate.

Awarding participation points for every phrase spoken in French in the classroom is a great incentive for motivating my monolingual students to use the language. Students have the opportunity to earn a maximum amount of six participation points at the rate of two points each time they volunteer. Brave students raise their hands often and usually share more than one sentence from their journal entries during this portion of the class. Keeping track of the number of points I award each student on a seating chart stops me from repeatedly choosing the same students. As I write down these points, I often give vocal validation by saying “Oui”, “C’est bien”, “Excellent” or “Exactement”. Since I only allow students to leave the room if they ask for passes in French, they even earn points and praise for asking for passes to various parts of the
building. Students who are more timid about sharing their personal thoughts wait for more structured exercises in order to earn the majority of their spoken participation points. R. Hanvey states that for the attainment of “cross-cultural awareness . . . contact alone” is insufficient “participation must be reinforced by **rewards that matter to the participant** … and must be sustained over long periods of time (Hanvey 1979, 55)”. In addition to participation points and vocal praise, I also reward my students with stickers and classroom privileges. This is especially true for times when they cannot be awarded with grades, such as during the FLEX activity period. During this period, of less than an hour, students may visit other teachers for extra help. I, therefore, do not award points that may contribute to a grade during this time. So, for FLEX, during team and individual games, I often reward students who use French with theme stickers or allow them to help me with, what I consider to be mundane classroom tasks like handing back graded papers or creating flashcards for a game. These activities, however, often help students feel as though they are making a meaningful contribution to their classroom environment. I have observed that they make alienated students feel included and important to their classmates. Since the stickers usually contain congratulatory French phrases, they reinforce vocabulary and spelling skills.

Other theme stickers evidence the fact that **I have listened when students mention their personal interests during personalized exercises**. They may display symbols of ethnic holidays, sports, or musical instruments. Students often compete to see who will collect the largest variety of stickers.

Whether my students are competing for grades, vocal praise, and theme stickers
or collaborating to complete a task that will make the classroom function more efficiently, I try to create an atmosphere where everyone feels included and encouraged to safely express themselves in French. As a result of these efforts, I received a rewarding comment concerning encouraging personalized sharing. It came during the last week of classes. When asked about the most enjoyable aspect of my class this year, a student responded that she enjoyed “talking about weekends with classmates, it made us feel like a family.” This makes me feel as though I have accomplished my goal of establishing a congenial atmosphere in my classroom this year.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


