

Winning an audience with words

French 4 (high school) · Lesson

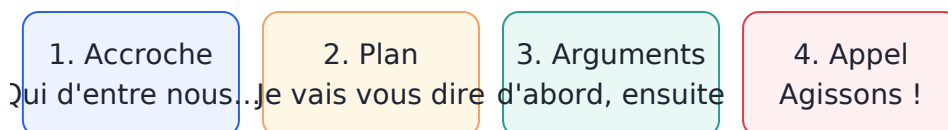
Quick answer: A persuasive French presentation opens with a hook, often a rhetorical question, announces its plan, develops arguments with d'abord, ensuite, enfin, and ends with a call to action. Emphasis structures such as c'est... qui, c'est... que and ce qui... c'est put the key idea in the spotlight and make the speaker sound confident.

Level: French 4 (high school, ACTFL Intermediate Mid) · **Standards:** ACTFL Intermediate Mid, WL 1.2 Interpretive, WL 1.3 Presentational, WL 4.1 Language Comparisons

How is a persuasive presentation built?

A strong speech follows a clear path, and the audience always knows where it is. Announce the plan early, then use signposts to move from one argument to the next.

Le fil du discours



Four steps of a speech.

Moment	Useful phrase
Greeting	Bonjour à tous, chers camarades.
Plan	Je vais vous parler de trois raisons.
Sequence	d'abord, ensuite, enfin
Conclusion	Pour conclure, passons à l'action.
Thanks	Merci de votre attention.

Speak slowly, look at the audience and pause after each signpost. Short sentences carry more force than long ones, and one strong example is worth more than three vague claims.

How do you use rhetorical questions?

A rhetorical question asks for no answer. It makes the audience agree silently. Use it in the hook or just before the conclusion: Qui veut d'un lycée sans jardin ? — Who wants a school without a garden? Pourquoi attendre encore ? — Why wait any longer?

How does c'est... qui / c'est... que emphasize an idea?

Mise en relief

Put the idea between c'est and qui if it is the subject. Put it between c'est and que if it is an object, a place or a time. Use ce sont before a plural noun. With ce qui or ce que at the start, finish with c'est.

Examples

C'est Noura **qui** a lancé le projet. — It was Noura who started the project.

C'est ce jardin **que** nous défendons. — It is this garden that we are defending.

C'est à Dakar **que** l'idée est née. — It is in Dakar that the idea was born.

Ce qui compte, c'est l'avenir. — What matters is the future.

Sujet

C'est

Noura

qui

a lancé le projet.

Objet

C'est le projet que Noura a lancé.

Qui for the subject, que for the rest.

Common mistake

English speakers copy the English structure and forget that the verb follows the emphasized person: C'est moi qui ai raison, not *c'est moi qui a raison*. Also remember that que becomes qu' before a vowel: C'est ici qu'elle parle.

Rhetoric in French schools

Oral presentations, called exposés, are common in French and Québec schools. Students learn to announce a plan and to defend a thesis with structured arguments, a tradition that goes back to classical rhetoric.

Zoé's tip

Finish your hook with a question and your speech with an action verb in the imperative: Rejoignons-nous ! The audience remembers the ends.

Key points to remember

- A speech has four parts: accroche, annonce du plan, développement, conclusion.
- C'est... qui replaces a subject; c'est... que replaces an object or a place or time.
- After c'est moi qui, the verb agrees with moi: c'est moi qui ai raison.
- Ce qui and ce que + c'est highlight an idea: ce que je veux, c'est un lycée sans plastique.
- A rhetorical question expects no answer; it makes the audience think.

Winning an Audience with Words: frequently asked questions

What is the difference between c'est... qui and c'est... que?

C'est... qui highlights the subject: c'est Léo qui chante. C'est... que highlights an object, place or time: c'est ici que je chante.

Does the verb agree after c'est moi qui?

Yes. The verb agrees with the person: c'est moi qui ai, c'est nous qui avons.

What is a rhetorical question?

It is a question asked for effect, not to get an answer, such as Qui peut ignorer ce problème ? Speakers use it to engage the audience.

How do you announce the plan of a presentation?

Say Je vais vous parler de trois points, then list them with d'abord, ensuite and enfin.

How do you end a persuasive speech?

Summarize in one sentence, then use a call to action: Pour conclure, agissons ensemble ! End with Merci de votre attention.