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A CULTURAL APPROACH TO ESL COMPOSITION:
USING POPULAR CULTURE TO TEACH RHETORICAL CONVENTIONS

by

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In the Graduate College

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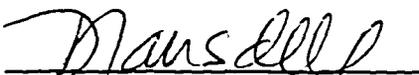
A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mansell P.", is written over a horizontal line.

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ABSTRACT

For English as a Second Language students, learning to write academically effective essays is an immense challenge because the students must obey linguistic conventions, write for an unfamiliar audience, and employ rhetorical strategies that the audience expects. In composition programs the special challenges that ESL students face are sometimes overlooked. In this dissertation I provide a rationale for developing ESL composition programs and concrete strategies for doing so.

To account for, understand, and accommodate rhetorical expectations for American academic audiences, ESL students need information that acts as an interface between conventions in their countries and the conventions American academic readers expect. The study of popular culture allows ESL students to develop such information by helping them decipher aspects of the culture they are living in. Popular culture texts reflect everyday uses of language and commonly held views because they are produced for general American audiences. They reflect widely accepted rhetorical strategies because audiences demand that texts be written according to their expectations. The process of studying popular culture is liberating for ESL students because it integrates learning about academic essay writing with

broader cultural concerns.

I concentrate on three genres of popular culture texts: ads, because their use of rhetorical appeals is so clear and because their content suggests American values; formula fictions, because they portray popular role models and follow readers' expectations; and news articles, which show examples of discursive domains and structural conventions. I also make suggestions for using contrastive analyses to help students perceive differences and similarities in cultural expectations, and I demonstrate partial results through research and samples from student writing.

By incorporating popular culture texts into the ESL composition curriculum, we help students learn to communicate their ideas in practical, accessible ways. It is by actively targeting American culture as a focus of study and helping students develop tools to analyze popular culture materials on their own that we can make effective changes in composition programs for ESL students.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SPECIAL CHALLENGE FOR ESL COMPOSITION:
DEVELOPING CULTURAL SCHEMATA TO BUILD RHETORICAL AWARENESS

The immediate purpose of college composition instruction is to help students write essays that fulfill the expectations of American academic audiences by following expected patterns, adhering to the conventions of Standard English, and addressing the audience of a specific rhetorical context. The secondary purpose is to help students develop strategies for writing effective texts outside the academic sphere. One area of instruction is composition for ESL (English as a Second Language) students, students whose native language is not English. ESL composition is a hybrid in which teachers are expected to teach standard grammar as well as conventions for essay writing. This double challenge is compounded by the fact that most courses are modeled too closely on language courses that depend on grammar exercises or on composition courses that unknowingly assume students are familiar with aspects of American culture, including a sense of Western preferences for essay writing. Neither extreme teaches enough to make students effective writers.

A more appropriate approach is to guide students

through the conscious study of culturally governed conventions for texts and the consequent decisions writers make. A culturally governed expectation for an essay written for an American academic audience is a clear statement of purpose; a culturally governed expectation for a Chinese audience in any setting is that the thesis emerge gradually. To account for, understand, and accommodate rhetorical expectations for American academic audiences, ESL students need information that acts as an interface between conventions in their countries and the conventions of American academic readers by accounting for differences in their expectations. Students need the ability to borrow a new way of thinking so they can consider their writing situations in the context of the target culture and make decisions accordingly.

Since neither composition nor language courses provide adequate models for ESL composition, I direct this dissertation to instructors who find it necessary to make a combination of the two. The purpose of this investigation is to provide a rationale for designing a curriculum for ESL composition students. I suggest that popular culture materials, because of the popular conventions they encode, are appropriate texts to employ for this purpose. I also make suggestions for using contrastive analyses to help students perceive differences and similarities in cultural

expectations, and I demonstrate partial results through research and samples from student writing.

The complexity of this project dictates the use of a variety of sources to examine it. I draw on theories from composition and second-language acquisition, sociolinguistics, cultural studies, popular culture, and anthropology. I refer to articles on teaching practices, my own teaching experiences and those of my colleagues, essays from students, and student surveys. I draw on my own language experiences and quote other language learners and instructors. The result is that my project is unwieldy and eclectic, but there is no other way to begin. The idea of creating a composition curriculum through the deliberate study of the way cultural conventions affect an audience's expectations for texts and consequent rhetorical strategies used by authors is new--and as such I've had to make use of research that applies indirectly and forge new understandings.

Two preliminary explanations are in order. Finding appropriate strategies for teaching ESL students is increasingly important as the ESL enrollment in American institutions continues to rise. ESL researcher Ilona Leki reports that international student enrollment in American universities for the 1990-1991 school year was 407,500, an all-time high (Understanding ix). Like their native

counterparts, ESL students have to fulfill university requirements, which often means completing one or two semesters of English composition. A few months of study is a short period of time for ESL students to hone complex language skills and strategies for written communication, so composition teachers must make their courses as practical as possible to prepare students for the rhetorical situations they will encounter in college and beyond.

The term "ESL student" is problematic because the ESL student body is an unpredictable mix of cultures and language levels. Some students have a native-like understanding of standard English and conventions for writing it; others have a minimal understanding of either oral or written English. Some have lived in the US for a number of years or in border areas where they have had contact with the US; others have had no direct contact with the US or any other foreign culture until the moment of their arrival.¹ The prototype of the most challenging ESL student instructors must be prepared to teach comes from a non-Western country and speaks a non-Western language, has studied English from textbooks, travels to the US specifically to obtain a university degree, has had limited exposure to Americans and American culture prior to arrival, and enjoys little contact with Americans outside of class

hours.

At the University of Arizona in the spring of 1994, sixty percent of the forty-six ESL students enrolled in the mandatory second-semester composition course fit the above description. These students were from Japan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, China, Rumania, Turkey, Singapore, Kenya, and the Ukraine. Students from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, four percent of the total, fit most of this description, but they did spend some time with Americans outside of class. The four percent from Vietnam fit most of this description, but they had been living in the US before they started college. The rest of the students were from Western countries: Mexico, Sweden, Bolivian, Norway, Cypress, Spain, and Canada. ESL instructor D. Horowitz reports that ESL students are likely to study business, agriculture, scientific or engineering technologies (107). Indeed, six percent of these students were studying business, and four percent were studying engineering, but the rest were studying a variety of subjects that ranged from psychology to English literature. There is no easy way to categorize the interests or goals of these students.

Shifts in the nationalities of ESL students occur from year to year due to politics and the relative price of the dollar. In 1992, fifty percent of the second-semester ESL composition students were Malays. In 1994, Malays accounted

for four percent. It is impossible to tailor ESL classes to specific groups because enrollments are unpredictable. Any ESL composition class will contain a wide range of competencies.

In this chapter I review current teaching practices before examining ways in which language use and cultural behaviors intersect. I argue that ESL students should concentrate on three sets of culturally governed areas of expectations for written texts: how discursive domains use linguistic conventions, how such conventions are shaped by audiences and purposes, and how to use such conventions strategically to accomplish a particular purpose with particular audiences. To learn about these expectations, ESL should study popular culture materials--texts consumed by large numbers of a culture's members because they encode widely held beliefs or accepted values. I argue that the most efficient way for students to develop cultural information that will inform their rhetorical awareness is through reading, studying, discussing, and writing about these texts.

In Chapter Two I explain the advantages of a comparative approach, reasons to incorporate popular culture into an ESL composition classroom, and which kinds of popular culture materials to choose. In Chapter Three I discuss how the study of ads helps students understand the

calculated effort that goes into each step of rhetorical design. In Chapter Four I concentrate on the way formula fictions display commonly held values while their protagonists portray cultural heroes. In Chapter Five I explore boundaries of discursive domains, aims of discourse, and structural conventions. In Chapter Six I consider practical aspects of ESL composition, both in first-year composition and beyond.

Traditional Approaches to ESL Composition Instruction and Why They Don't Work

In many ESL composition classes, less attention is paid to the writing process than to grammar, and many other ESL courses are basically simplified versions of courses designed for native speakers, with or without a concentration on grammar. Neither method makes optimal use of the instructors' expertise or the students' experiences because the limitations of a narrow linguistic approach overlook the broader problems that students have adapting to the conventions of American academic discourse.

Composition for ESL students is often taught as a grammar course for advanced language students who know the basics of the grammar structure and have a command of common vocabulary words but still make multiple errors in written and oral work. This method is modeled on the older grammar-

translation method in which students learn grammar rules and perform translations, but perform little real communication. As language acquisition specialist Earl Stevick explains, the grammar-translation method emphasizes "the ability of the human mind to reason and to decipher," thus making language study a form of "mental discipline" and grammar translation an adequate way to teach Latin and Ancient Greek, since they are text-based (125). In the US, the grammar-translation method has been largely phased out, due to declining enrollments in Latin and Ancient Greek and new models of language acquisition such as communicative competence, but the grammar-translation method is still popular in countries where education is conducted in a traditional lecture format. As ESL composition instructor Amy Tucker notes, British-influenced ESL training in Hong Kong typically includes "a preoccupation with the careful, often painstaking examination of grammatical structure and a corresponding lack of attention to more communicative skills" (183). Fellow ESL instructors and students have informed me that this style of teaching is also popular--and nearly ubiquitous--in Japan, Vietnam, Korea, Sri Lanka, China, and Taiwan (Shuck; Quang; Lee; Fernando; Cai; Hao).

Even though grammar translation as a sole method of instruction has fallen into disuse in this country, aspects of the method are still visible. At Pima College Community

College in Tucson, Arizona, the first-semester ESL writing course teaches students to compose sentences based on cues from the composition book (Navarro). At Western Carolina University, where native and non-native speakers attend the same composition classes, each week's lessons are dedicated to the review of a different grammar point (Fernando). Most ESL "composition" texts define "writing" as the act of transforming active sentences into passive ones and performing other grammatical exercises, which is the strategy behind the popular Basic Composition for ESL. Other texts, such as the bestselling The Random House Writing Course for ESL Students define "writing" as the act of completing paragraphs laid out by the editors. The Random House text is typical. The first unit discusses language but does not ask students to produce any (Tucker and Costello 49). The second, "Process Analyzing," "teaches" students to write paragraphs and to use the present perfect tense (98). "Narration" gives information about topic sentences, and then asks students to provide topic sentences for passages created by the authors. "Argumentation" discusses persuasive elements by presenting examples of logical and emotional fallacies, but does not offer advice on creating essays (377). This text does not help students write their own essays, yet it masquerades as a writing manual for college-level ESL writing.

There is debate as to whether grammar exercises help students internalize correct structures or not. Despite the fact that ESL students have obvious grammatical problems in language use, some instructors believe grammar instruction to be so useless that they employ a "non-error" approach. They assume that errors will disappear in due time as students continue to practice the language (Leki Understanding 105). Others instructors argue that it is more reasonable to limit ourselves to addressing errors that affect comprehension (Davies 65). Others argue that grammar instruction does not aid students' academic needs because their learning process should be modeled more closely on their concrete needs (Saville-Troike 216). On the other end of the spectrum, some instructors maintain that grammar instruction yields positive results (Cohen and Cavalcanti 120; Fathman and Whalley 243).

In practice students are usually taught language through a grammar pedagogy that concentrates on form over meaning and fails to serve the students' purpose. As I found when teaching in Greece, ESL instruction in the whole country is text-based because for the most part teachers are given materials and ordered to cover them. The texts are based for the most part on discrete grammar exercises and readings chosen by a handful of British editors who are far removed from the Greek language-learning scene. Students

from around Greece are classified by the books they have worked with, so instructors are expected to follow the texts page by page and follow through on all the exercises. The school I worked at in Rhodes was typical. The owner proudly boasted that his school taught to the Cambridge First Certificate Exam. Passing the exam meant that students had proven a certain degree of proficiency and that they could be admitted to an English university. I was told in strict terms that my students should spend class time working through tedious practice test booklets in preparation for the exam. The students were so accustomed to the system that they did not complain, even though most were studying English for the practical goal of working in the tourist trade in their parents' shops and hotels rather than settings sights on university work abroad. Instead of practicing communicative skills, the students learned to take multiple-choice vocabulary and language usage tests. They would have learned more and better through a more broad-minded approach that allowed a variety of teaching methods and embraced a variety of goals.

There is even more question as to whether grammar instruction is useful at the composition level where students ostensibly write entire essays rather than isolated sentences. In terms of native-speaking students, a standard article on the topic is Patrick Hartwell's "Grammar,

Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammars." Hartwell states that instructors often elect to teach discrete grammar points out of a genuine conviction that they are helping their students, but that Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer's 1963 findings still hold true (Hartwell 105). The trio wrote that "the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in composition, even a harmful effect on improvement in writing" (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Shoer 37-38). A recent article that builds on Hartwell's work is "Mirroring Ourselves? The Pedagogy of Early Grammar Texts," in which composition instructor Gregory R. Glau concludes that while many composition instructors continue to teach grammar despite studies that question such a practice, their students continue to profit little (431). The most telling summary comes from a confession recorded by Basic Writing instructor Mina Shaughnessy. She quotes a CUNY student as saying the following about his English composition course: "We done all the conjugations of the verbs for a semester, but I haven't did any writing yet" (105). Overt instruction did nothing to help this student translate speech onto the page. Shaughnessy makes the logical assumption that the student did not learn how to monitor his own writing process either. Instead of spending time performing more writing, the

student completed exercises that were too decontextualized to be useful.

While a program of pure grammar instruction is ineffective, grammar concerns cannot be ignored because ESL students sometimes make so many mistakes in written texts that readers do not have enough energy to follow the writers' lines of thought. The following samples were written in the spring of 1994 by students in their final semester of required composition at the University of Arizona:

- 1) Knowing the American culture will make writing much more easier Learning academicaly [sic] do little good.²
- 2) What makes it hard is that correcting mechanics.
- 3) Lack of vocabulary and English expressions makes me feel hard to write in English.

In the first sample, a student writer from Hong Kong uses both possible comparative forms instead of choosing the preferred one; then he fails to use the correct present tense ending for the third person singular. The second sentence, written by a Japanese student, can be corrected simply by removing "that," but the student's error is indicative of deep-structure problems. She does not understand how a verb form requiring a subject can be

transformed into a gerund and become the complement of the copula. In the third sentence, a Chinese student tries to use "hard" to describe the act of writing, but fails to use herself in the expected indirect object slot. Again, her mistakes are indicative of structural problems that are as difficult for students to correct as they are for instructors to explain. Prior to enrollment in their English composition class, the above students had all completed at least ten years of classroom English language study in which grammar was the focus, yet the range of errors in these samples is typical. Some students need help on specific forms, while others need so much help that instructors hardly know where to start. These students need help with grammar, but it must come in the form of the analysis of individual instances in which they are communicating ideas that are important to them, not discrete point exercises.

My own contention is that overt instruction in concrete forms such as the principle parts of irregular verbs is useful, whereas drills for finer points can best be picked up in context.³ Like most language learners, when I use a foreign language, I draw on a combination of methods to produce grammatically correct sentences. I fall back on memorized patterns to choose the right verb forms, running

through conjugations until I have the right person and number, but most of the time I rely on set phrases that provide examples in context because I can access the examples more quickly than I can rules and their exceptions. By the time students reach composition courses, the only effective way to deal with their grammar errors is on a one to one basis. Their problems differ, and, much like native speakers, they need to see mistakes in the context of their own writing for the experience to be meaningful enough to have a lasting effect.

Offshoots of the grammar approach are specialized programs for English language studies such as ESP (English for Special Purposes) and EAP (English for Academic Purposes). These programs attempt to simplify the process of learning English by teaching students the bare minimum needed to complete their studies, such as the vocabulary needed to understand an engineering text book. At times such programs are useful. The original ESP course was the traveller's guide that provided phrases for basic situations travellers were sure to encounter. Another example of narrowly targeted language learning concerns warfare. During World War II, Royal Air Force personnel managed to learn enough Japanese to listen to Japanese fighter aircraft in the Burmese jungle and know how to advise RAF interceptor fighters (Strevens 191). Because of the limited nature of

the communication, it was possible for the British officers to become familiar with the discursive possibilities in a short period of time.

As far as teaching students to communicate within the target culture is concerned, however, ESP programs are impractical because no professional field operates entirely from within its own framework. An engineering professor might use any number of technical words that apply to the field of engineering, but the words will be surrounded by more general ones. When ESL researcher Ruth Spack studied complaints in student journals, she found that her students did not struggle with scientific words pertaining to their course material such as "repression" or "schizophrenia"; presumably those words were discussed and defined in the texts in class lectures. Instead, students struggled with "descriptive and elaborating terms" such as "to coax" and "gnawing discomfort" (42). These words would be familiar and unremarkable to the native speakers, but distract students who are simultaneously struggling with the language of a discourse community. It would be convenient to learn just enough of a language to produce the needed results, but linguistic expertise requires vast reserves of information. Learners might be able to learn enough language for a professional field of study to be able to read texts with a degree of proficiency, but their limited knowledge would not

inform them of social conventions or provide them with the linguistic sophistication needed for effective writing.

When composition for second language students is not taught as a grammar course for advanced English students, it is usually taught as an abridged version of an institution's required writing course for native speakers. When first thrown into the situation of teaching ESL students without any specific instruction for doing so, my colleagues and I at the University of Arizona did what we thought was logical and natural. We adapted our courses for native speakers to the ESL curriculum by making shorter reading assignments, requiring shorter essays, and allowing more time for revision. Instead of changing course content in a significant way or building an entire curriculum for a small number of students, we subtracted from the curriculum that had already been established.

After several semesters of teaching ESL students, my colleagues and I changed our teaching methods to more fruitful practices. I learned to teach students to write essays as long and as conceptually challenging as the essays of their native-speaking counterparts, which taught them about the expectations of academic writing. Carol Ekstrom learned to teach the literature-based composition course through texts such as Gish Jen's Typical American, which concentrates on the experience of a foreigner in the US and

consequent problems. Since the students could relate to the contents of the novel, they wrote their essays from a position of authority. Gail Shuck explored ways of combining international and national students in ways that would increase the cultural understanding of all the participants. The experiments of my colleagues and myself were useful because they were beneficial to the students we had during the last semesters of teaching, but after two semesters of classes we were barred from the ESL composition courses to make room for new graduate teaching assistants, instructors who are currently repeating many of the mistakes we made ourselves (Shuck 1997).

As evidenced from explanations of colleagues at other schools, the initial decisions of my colleagues and myself to make our courses for native speakers fit the needs of non-native speakers were not uncommon. At Arizona State University, composition instructors use the same tactic. In a presentation on Arizona State University's "stretch program," a composition program to help students who need extra help with writing, instructor Viktorija Todorovska explained that the basic writer's model applied to native speakers is used in sections for non-native speakers, even though assignments for the foreign students are less stringent ("Bringing"). After teaching composition for several semesters, Todorovska and her colleagues realized

that the only way to address ESL composition effectively was to create their own pedagogical materials (1997). They have begun compiling an anthology, but will graduate before they will be able to use it in their classrooms.

Watered-down courses are not adequate because ESL students are often expected to produce writing that is as complex and as error-free as that of their native-speaking counterparts. From conversations with former ESL students, I have discovered that some professors are lenient towards ESL writing, but others grade harshly without taking a first language into consideration. University of Arizona student Norazizah Shafee reported that psychology professors were strict in grammar and that she had to be careful not to make editing mistakes (1994). Azarul Amir reported that once he fulfilled university requirements for writing instruction, he did not need to worry about his expertise in English, because his engineering professors did not comment on his use of language or assign him lower marks because of language errors (1994). As ESL composition instructors, we must prepare our students to write as effectively as possible.

Instructors sometimes fall into the trap of teaching non-native speakers as they do native speakers because there are so many similarities in the process of writing between the two groups that the instructors fail to view the

differences critically. Several ESL researchers have reported that the writing processes of ESL students mirror those of native speakers. Ilona Leki notes that while the prevailing understanding of the 1980s allowed that foreign students needed to have proficiency in English before they would be ready to write, concentrated research has found that there are more similarities between proficient native and non-native writers than there are between writers who are proficient and those who are writing at less advanced levels (Understanding 76). More specifically, Vivian Zamel, who applies composition theory for native speakers to ESL writers, reports that "proficient ESL writers, like their native language counterparts, experience writing as a process of creating meaning" (168). She finds that ESL writers who have a lot of practice writing texts in English are able to postpone language concerns until they have done the important preliminary work of outlining main ideas (165), whereas students on lower levels had trouble producing a draft of any kind because they continually paused to consider whether their individual word choice was correct (174).

ESL students at the University of Arizona confirm the researchers' findings of similarities between writing processes. In 1994, I asked two sections of ESL students to respond to a questionnaire about writing anxiety (see

Appendix B). I assumed their levels of expertise with English would cause apprehension. I hoped to outline reasons for that apprehension and perhaps make suggestions to lessen it, but I was surprised--and pleased--to note that the ESL students did not seem particularly worried about writing in English as opposed to writing in general. Two-thirds (33 out of 45) of the students reported similar feelings toward writing in English than they did toward writing in their own languages. As part of the survey, students were asked to explain what made writing in English easy and what made it hard. Several commented that there was no difference between writing in English and writing in their own languages. A Malaysian student wrote that "Writing in English is not easy nor hard. It's not so bad as I speak in both Malay and English. I guess my proficiency for writing both are the same." More often, writers claimed that writing was difficult, as this Canadian student reported: "I don't think writing is easy at all. No matter what language it is in." Her Mexican classmate agreed: "I don't think anything makes writing in English easy. I personally don't think that writing in any language is easy." A Finnish student pointed to a part of the process: "What is hard to write in English applies also to what's hard when I write in my mother tongue and that is: how to get started." These comments support the work of

Zamel and Leki. After years of teaching ESL myself, I have no reason to question their basic assumptions.

While a native-speaker model of composition instruction does address important aspects of the ESL writing situation, it overlooks an important but messy fact; writing is not a finite skill such as learning to apply calculus equations. Each choice in writing, from word choice to structure to arguments, is determined by the particular context for which a piece is written. For writers to produce effective writing, they have to consider all aspects of their writing situation.

Cultural Schemata and Why ESL Students Need Them

The difficulty of bridging among the viewpoints of different cultures was made clear to me one semester by the comments of a young male Korean student. Upon turning in the final draft of an essay on Edna Chopin's The Awakening, he asked why we had spent so much time studying a "woman's novel." I was taken by surprise because I hadn't thought of the novel in such terms. Certainly we'd talked about women's issues when discussing the novel, but we hadn't delved into feminist criticism per se. Instead we looked at the novel in the context of its turn-of-the-century time period. In their essays, several students compared Edna's world to their own because the social situations, including

the socioeconomic status of women, were similar. I was disappointed with my student because our class discussions about the social implications of the novel hadn't made enough of an impression for the student to develop a broader view.

The cultural gap--the differences in viewpoints caused by our different cultural orientations--was so large that I hadn't seen it; neither had he. As an American female academic, I automatically assumed that women were a normal part of the population and took Edna's experiences to symbolize a larger context. My student assumed that a novel whose protagonist was a woman held no relevance to him. Perhaps his corner of Korea ignores women's rights due to matriarchal burdens of childbearing and rearing or perhaps his particular family views women's feelings as inconsequential. Either way, our study of The Awakening had not enabled the student to develop his understanding of American life.

Instead of being oblivious to cultural differences, effective communicators slip into the ambience of the target culture. A Mexican acquaintance once asked sarcastically if I were disappointed that my boyfriend was leaving after only a three-day visit. Paco expected me to cling to my boyfriend's ankles and plead with him to stay. "*Un pájaro vuela,*" I replied, "a bird flies." Mexicans often make

references to wildlife to make illusions to the human condition in a more subtle manner. Without thinking about it, I had constructed a reply that was consistent with Mexican expectations. . . I was able to do so because I had unconsciously internalized strategies for using animal references. The listener took my point and backed down. By fighting Paco on his own linguistic ground, I accomplished cultural sleight of hand and reduced him to silence. I met the challenge of slipping effectively into another mind set and responding accordingly.

How was I able to move into that alternate mode within a split second? My fortuitous reply emerged from an unconscious, Spanish language self that I have developed over the last twenty years by majoring in Spanish, living in Mexico, and working and socializing with Mexicans in Tucson. When called to respond spontaneously to a Mexican interlocutor, my second-language self took over.

Because most ESL students don't have the luxury of living in a country and holding a job that allows them to analyze the surroundings and develop language skills at leisure, they face a difficult challenge. They need to adhere to the expectations of American academic communities but don't have time to acquire the necessary knowledge in a slow and natural manner. The question becomes: how can students learn about the expectations of a target culture in

a brief amount of time?

One conceptual aid is "schema theory," as laid out by Roger C. Schrank and Robert P. Abelson (421). Schema theory says that we accumulate information by slowly gathering "schemata," pieces of information, for a concept or behavior. We then use these pieces to build mental models that help us order the world. To some extent, we learn schemata unconsciously by living in a given culture and interacting with its members. As an instructor at a college campus, over years of reading student essays about fraternities and sororities, I have learned the rituals and conventions that these organizations use to make students feel like members of a community. Even though I never consciously tried to learn that information, I acquired it over a period of time. It's also possible to learn schemata consciously by reading or attending classes or making other deliberate attempts to learn new information.

As we gain information about a concept, consciously or unconsciously, we add to our schemata until we have a stable definition. Comprehension is an interaction between past knowledge already coded into schemata and new information being acquired. We develop facts about a particular subject, then refer to the stored information when faced with new situations. The schemata become a kind of mental shorthand to help us process our experiences. Our schemata

for "birds" might originally include "have wings" and "fly." Once we realize that a penguin is also a bird even though it doesn't fly, we alter our concept of "bird" to include such variations.

Second language students need to develop "cultural schemata," pieces of information that are determined not by the physical make-up of an object, but how a particular culture views it. For the purposes of this study I'll define culture quite simply as the characteristics, traits, and actions of people from a particular country, since country divisions so often parallel differences in language and because people from the same country share a certain amount of basic ideals and values. Most objects can be defined through general schemata; Mexicans' schemata for "birds" would mirror Americans'. The schemata begin to diverge at the point that a concept becomes laden with cultural significance from mythology, folklore, or history. In Mexico eagles are a sign of divine intervention, since an eagle led the people of Teotihuacán to their promised land. This piece of information can be termed a cultural schema, since the belief is not shared universally.

In Sociolinguistics linguist Peter Trudgill shows the strength of cultural schemata as a way members of a culture communicate with one another. Trudgill uses the example of language patterns among strangers on the British railway

system. Interlocutors start discussing the weather to smooth over the embarrassment of being thrown together, but the tactic also enables them to secure information about one another's occupations and social status since, regardless of what is said about the weather, the manner of response reflects geographical and social origins (13). A traveler decides whether to get better acquainted with a person of a similar background or avoid an extended conversation with a social opposite (14). Even if the speakers are from different areas of the country, different classes, and practice different occupations, their shared schemata for social behavior allow them to understand one another's reactions and expectations because the same schemata are transmitted and handed down by one generation or one member of a culture to another.

Developing cultural schemata is vital to second language students because inappropriate schemata cause distortion and misunderstanding. Sir Frederic Bartlett demonstrated cultural distortion through an experiment he performed with a group of Englishmen and later outlined in Remembering. He read aloud the North American Indian folktale "The War of the Ghosts" and later asked the subjects to recall the story. In their retellings, the Englishmen made changes consistent with their own cultural background. Since they did not have the schemata for the

appropriate Native American concepts, they molded the story to fit their own expectations. By processing the information on their own terms, they misinterpreted aspects of the story even though they assumed that they had understood it correctly. Bartlett's experiment demonstrated the extent to which we rely on our own cultural background to understand new situations and how the schemata we've developed in the past may mislead us if we force them into new situations without making allowances.

A similar distortion occurs when readers apply inappropriate schemata to the texts they read. To trace the effects of this kind of distortion, Margaret S. Steffensen, Chitra Joag-Dev, and Richard C. Anderson performed an experiment similar to Bartlett's in a controlled university environment (10-29). To reduce the number of variables, they chose subjects that were in the same age group (between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five) and for whom English was the dominant language. The group of American students read a text describing a wedding ceremony in India; the students from India read a text describing a wedding ceremony in the US. Afterwards the subjects were asked to record the details they could remember.

The students repeated the actions of Bartlett's Englishmen. Since they didn't have the appropriate cultural schemata, they analyzed the situation through their own,

causing them to misunderstand aspects of the texts. The Indian wedding ceremony places a high value on gifts. A majority of the Indian readers recalled that the US ceremony involved two rings and that one of the rings had a diamond. One Indian student thought she recalled that "the bridegroom's side was very happy because [the bride] was wearing [a] diamond of 2 carots" (23). The American text did not attribute the happiness to the bride's jewelry, but the Indian student created details that were consistent with her cultural expectations, which included the concept that marriage is an opportunity for economic prosperity.

American students also stretched their schemata by substituting familiar cultural knowledge where they did not possess appropriate knowledge of Indian customs, thus distorting their assumptions (24). In some cases, however, students lacking the appropriate schemata were able to create them. Although the Indian students were unfamiliar with the concept of a honeymoon, many of the students were able to collect enough information about the concept during their readings to develop a workable definition for it.

In a related study, ESL researcher Patricia Carrell looked for a difference between cultural knowledge and organization by asking Muslim and Catholic students to read biographies about one another's spiritual leaders (461). Half the students read biographies that were organized

chronologically and hence in a familiar form; the other half read biographies whose sequence was jumbled. To Carrell's surprise, the rhetorical ordering did not have a significant effect on elaborations and distortions students made when reading the texts. The cultural content was the only significant factor (472). Her finding suggests the importance of underlying schemata on successful readings and understandings.

To avoid distortion, language students must accumulate enough cultural schemata to understand a concept or behavior in full. In some cases this process takes a long period of time as learners gradually learn how to recognize the differences between their experiences and the conventions of the other culture. In my own case, I found it difficult to accumulate cultural schemata for the Mexican concept of "ahorita," or "right now." After several months of living and working in Durango, I had come to believe that the term meant "in an hour or so." My colleagues at school and friends from the community all used the word in this loose sense. One day at lunch time, my Mexican landlady said she was preparing to travel to San Luís Potosí "ahorita." At ten that night, I was surprised to find her preparing dinner in the family kitchen. When I inquired as to her health, she was puzzled. Her trip had not been postponed; she'd planned to leave on the midnight bus all along. My new

definition of "ahorita" became "sometime today, maybe." At last I'd found a definition with enough explanatory power to handle all the different possibilities I encountered, but the process had been confusing and time-consuming.

I had trouble developing cultural schemata for "ahorita" because the US and Mexico have quite different understandings of time. Western countries such as the US, England, and Germany operate under what anthropologist Edward T. Hall labels "monochronic time," meaning that events happen one after another according to a schedule set by the clock (17). In a culture that runs on "polychronic time," several things might be happening simultaneously because the culture places emphasis on people rather than on preset arrangements. Personal relationships interrupt the work schedule because unscheduled visits are more important than preset schedules. The differences between the systems are so extreme that language learners commonly have trouble switching from one to the other (22). I had difficulties with "ahorita" because my American concept of clock-time was so ingrained that I had to learn to conceive of a more flexible system.

ESL students often have the same problem I did: certain aspects of their culture are so different from corresponding aspects of American culture that they must work diligently to acquire the appropriate schemata. Worse still, sometimes

students arrive in the US with inaccurate or misleading impressions which have to be reevaluated and reformulated. ESL students who travel far from home to complete university degrees typically develop schemata for American life from popular American TV shows and movies prior to their arrival in the US. Since the shows depict select, fictional segments of society, students develop fallacious images. When they arrive in the US, they are confused and disoriented.

My former student Timothy Koushou outlined such difficulties in a final exam essay. Timothy had developed schemata for American life from Miami Vice, Falcon Crest, and Dallas, shows that could be viewed nightly on the English channels in Taiwan. Timothy developed schemata for American life from these shows, but when he arrived in Tucson to do undergraduate work, he realized that many of his concepts were false:

Last summer when I stepped out of the airplane, my illusions and dreams disappeared. Instead of those modern tower buildings in "Dallas" and those fancy cars in "Miami Vice," I only saw normal houses scattering around a great and hot desert. I was shock and terrifying. I couldn't accept this quiet and peaceful scene was the exciting American.

In his analysis, Timothy concluded that the TV shows he had watched were unreal and that he had been misled by their images. For Timothy and some of his fellow Taiwanese, the shows had built up "a false stereotype of American in our unconscious mind." Timothy's first challenge as an ESL student at the University of Arizona was to revise his understanding of an American setting around the desert landscape of a laid-back, southwestern city. Thanks to keen powers of observation and an unusually mature outlook, he was able to quickly revise his schemata and devise more accurate ones, but some of his classmates had to work much harder to do so.

ESL students who come to the US with as many misconceptions as Timothy have usually been ill-prepared by their language classes. Despite the arguments of language acquisition researchers Charles Fries, Howard Nostrand, and Robert Lado, the subject of culture is often avoided in second language instruction. This omission can be attributed in great part to instructors who feel uncomfortable reaching outside textbook material, feel insufficiently prepared to discuss the target culture, or feel obligated to prepare students for discrete-item language exams. Another factor is that students who study English abroad are often trained by instructors from Britain in order to go to Britain. Even if students do acquire

cultural information, it may not apply to the US. Another problem is the difficulty of teaching about culture out of context. As English instructor Luke Prodromou notes, textbook information about culture often seems distorted or trivial (40). A French book might extol the habit of purchasing freshly baked bread each morning from the corner store, but that does not help students understand ideological standpoints. Cultural information comes from values and habits that have long histories, so it can't be learned in a simplistic manner.

Once students do have cultural schemata for multiple aspects of life in a target culture, they can better learn to adapt to the new culture's way of thinking. Fan Shen, a Chinese doctoral student at an American university, learned to do this by putting aside his "logical [Chinese] identity" and developing an "ideological [Western] identity" (459). It was only from the perspective of this new identity that he could adopt Western rhetorical strategies and write essays that were acceptable to his American professors. Achieving this identity was a complicated process because first he had to recall his previous experiences of writing, uncover the "self" he used when writing, and come to an understanding of it. This earlier self was subordinated to his country's political party and national identity rather than to Shen's personal convictions.

When Shen's professors read his early essays, they criticized him for using generalities and advised him to explore his opinions rather than conceal them, a process that was contrary to the "rules" he had been taught and had internalized (460). Shen had to make so many changes in his writing style that he had to take on a new self that thought in a different way: "To be that English self, I had to understand and accept idealism the way a Westerner does. That is to say, I had to accept the way a Westerner sees himself in relation to the universe and society" (461). Before his professors would value his writing, he had to learn to work from within their system and their expectations. At times Shen found this process painful, since he felt he had to give up part of his own identity to put on a "Western mask," but the result was that he learned to produce acceptable academic writing (459). ESL undergraduate students may not need to develop a second cultural identity to the extent Shen did, but they do need to operate from within this alternate cultural setting.

To develop schemata for all aspects of American life, ESL students would need to adopt the tactics of anthropologists who move into foreign communities and spend the next several years studying them. Then they would need to spend a lifetime in the US and interact with Americans constantly, since cultures are always in flux. Few students

have enough time or motivation for a high level of assimilation. For the purposes of composition instruction, the foci should be on areas that contribute to student writers' awareness of rhetorical expectations: a study of linguistic conventions, since students need an understanding of terms they read and control over ones they use; how conventions are shaped by audiences and their purposes; and how such conventions can be strategically designed once the purpose and context for a text have been determined. The areas are still unmanageably broad, and they often overlap, but in the remainder of this chapter I outline aspects of each that we can reasonably hope to target in the ESL classroom.

Developing Schemata for Rhetorical Expectations

In this dissertation, I have identified three different areas of study we should target in order for students to understand and address rhetorical expectations: linguistic conventions, the audience expectations that underlie conventions, and the rhetorical strategies authors use to satisfy conventions. In this section I will explain in detail the aspects of those three areas we can address within the first-year composition classroom.

To speak a foreign language, it is not enough to learn vocabulary words and grammar rules because language is also

governed by larger factors of national culture, social situation, and purpose of discourse. Two linguists who problematized the connection between culture and language were Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, who argued that Native American languages led their speakers to view the world differently from European counterparts. Since the Hopi had no term for "time," they did not conceive of it the way other cultures did nor could the term be accurately translated (Sampson 86). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has come to be shorthand for the realization that language can not be analyzed effectively without a parallel study of the world of its creators. Their observations have generally been accepted as pointing out a basic but undeniable connection between culture and language use (Sampson 102). Taking this connection as a given, ESL students need to perform similar analyses to develop schemata for specific linguistic conventions.

Students need schemata for contemporary language and accepted forms of language that reflect a regional focus, new trends and new technologies, the students' peers, and the academic setting. They need to learn the language used in conversations and the media, language that stems from oral sources and is too fleeting to be found in dictionaries or reference books. They need to understand why a grammatically incorrect sentence such as "Will everyone

grammatically incorrect sentence such as "Will everyone please take their book?" is sometimes used in practice over a grammatically correct one. By studying contemporary language, students increase the range of words that they use effectively in written communication, and they learn grammar and lexical structures that are used by native speakers. As students master language that makes their writing sound more familiar to the audience, they become more persuasive.

Students need an understanding of the way words function within a particular context because they carry a variety of possible meanings. Since words have different ranges of meanings in different languages, there are multiple possibilities when speakers translate from one language to another. As Lado points out, "the words tree and árbol are similar in only four out of their twenty or more meanings and uses" (84-85). For students to use definitions that carry the meanings they want, they have to know how words work in a range of contexts.

Students also need an understanding of slang and current jargon. Imagine my surprise upon moving to Mexico. When I moved into my landlady's house, the first words her daughter said to me were "¿Qué ondas?". Literally, she had asked "What waves?" I recognized her words as a greeting and was able to reply in an intelligible manner, but I was taken off guard by Celina's use of a current phrase.

Although I knew Spanish words for the equivalent of "How are you?", my outdated forms were culturally inappropriate. It took me months to update my school Spanish to forms that were compatible with life in an actual Mexican city.

Words don't work in isolation but in complicated networks, such that the use of one word automatically calls up a range of related ones. These networks are built through shared cultural associations and become so familiar that we recall them automatically. Roland Barthes treated this phenomenon in a series of essays written for Les Lettres Nouvelles and later collected under the title of Mythologies. He explained how a single term such as "wrestling" calls up a series of interrelated images, down to the wrestling hall complete with "the drenching and vertical quality of the flood of light" (15). When people use the word "wrestling," these images are in their minds even though they do not speak or even think about them consciously. The images are part of a shared cultural script that is so vivid it is unavoidable. Students need an understanding of how scripts work so they can use schemata to their advantage.

Besides increasing their knowledge of linguistic conventions, students must also develop an understanding of how the audience's purposes dictate those conventions. For many students, considering an American academic audience is

a new challenge. I once had a Palestinian student who was convinced that it was proper for him to write his essay in the style of the Koran because, since the Koran is considered an unparalleled authority in his country, any text that resembles the Koran should be highly regarded. He also wanted to cite the Koran as the only source to prove his points. He could not accept the fact that an American academic audience would not regard the Koran the same way he did. Because he insisted on relying from religious quotes in his essays, he couldn't accommodate his audience. Rather than accept the actual rhetorical context that included my grading his essay, he insisted on choosing his own context, with low grades as the consequence.

My Palestinian student had gotten trapped in what Chaim Perelman, building on the distinctions laid out by Aristotle in the Organon, speaks of as the contrast between analytical reasoning and justifiable opinion (3). The former is built from self-evident or scientifically proven truths while the latter depends on the value systems of the audience (26). My student assumed he was speaking from self-evident truths when he quoted the Koran whereas I took the religious source as opinion. This example underscores the fact that for students to write persuasively, they must have schemata for their audience's values because the writers have to appeal to those values to convince audiences to appreciate their

views. After students gather information about values American audiences commonly hold, they can index those audiences. Useful ways for ESL students to develop schemata for American audiences is to examine consumer goals and expectations, heroes and role models, and expectations for the kinds of expository texts they most often read. Such schemata help students understand how Americans read their world and interpret daily events, identify moral actions, and model actions in accordance with beliefs.

Just as culture affects linguistic conventions and audiences' expectations, it affects how authors use conventions strategically to appeal to audiences. As Australian composition instructors Brigid Ballard and John Clanchy write, there is a discernible style of "Western writing" that students are expected to follow (23). The expectations for this "Western writing" include an emphasis on analysis and reasoned opinions, familiar organizational styles, and attention to audience. This is in sharp contrast to many of the writing strategies that ESL students are familiar with.

For Western writers, introductions are important because they provide a place to lay down a blueprint of the text, including a clear statement of its main idea. This expectation of an initial contract stretches back to Ancient Greece and is evident in academic and non-academic texts

today. Aristotle summed up conventions of his time by urging rhetors to first state their cases and then to prove them (Rhetoric 1414a). Today Western audiences expect writers to announce their purpose near the beginning. As sociolinguist William Labov explains, the writer uses the introduction to "orientate" the readers (219). Although a text may allow for different readings, the writer governs the choice by providing a clear path.

Members of other cultures begin their texts differently. Takao Suzuki of Keio University explains how Japanese authors "dislike clarification and full explanation of their views; instead, they like giving dark hints and attempt to drop nuances" (qtd. in R. Miller 121). Writers from India disdain stating a purpose forthright because the purpose should emerge as the reader moves further into the text (Kachru 112). These extreme differences hint at the difficulties of adapting to a new rhetorical system.

Structure is another writing strategy that has marked forms in different cultures. While Western expectations call for middle paragraphs of texts to have obvious links to the introduction, writers from other cultures do not have the same expectations. I have often mistakenly criticized my Asian students for writing essays with no purpose only to find, usually through lengthy conferences, that their purposes lay deep within the essays. They had incorporated

their purposes into their work in a manner that was consistent with their own rhetorical systems rather than Western ones. The result of culturally determined organization is that Western readers cannot "see" the writers' points and dismiss the writers' texts.' It may take years for writers to adapt to the new system. ESL instructor Robin Scarcella found that it was only after having lived in the US for eight years that second language students automatically orientated their readers in the same style that native speakers did (686).

ESL students also need to learn to express their personal opinions rather than offering "correct" answers based on nationally or religiously endorsed positions. Students need to make arguments based on evidence that they choose and explain. For Japanese and Chinese students, offering their own analysis is difficult because they have been taught that memorization is synonymous with education and that regurgitating known views is the proper method of distributing knowledge (Ballard and Clanchy 23). Often they have been taught that critical questioning of either the teacher or the text is undesirable. When American instructors ask them to perform such an action, they don't always know how to react (Nakamura 206). I once had a Vietnamese student who couldn't write a passing paper on Charlotte Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" because she did

not want to announce her thesis or give evidence for her argument; instead she wanted to offer clues and hint at her position. It took two conferences and three drafts for me to convince her to be more forthright, but instead of trusting my criticisms of her writing style, she assumed I disliked her.

To write essays that are effective in the American academic context, ESL students need to develop schemata that help them understand and address American academic audiences. An effective way to target this learning within a composition course is to apply a comparative, rhetorical approach, employ texts that lend themselves to such study, and approach the texts with the goal of developing appropriate schemata. In the following chapter I investigate these matters in detail.

CHAPTER TWO

STUDYING POPULAR CULTURE TO DEVELOP A COMPARATIVE
UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURAL CONVENTIONS AND THE
RHETORICAL EXPECTATIONS THAT ARISE FROM THEM

As I discussed in Chapter One, we develop schemata to comprehend the complex elements of our surroundings. These schemata give us a way of processing the bombardment of experiences that affect us. ESL students need to develop new schemata because the background information from their cultures does not transfer precisely to the context of the target culture. To bridge between cultures, students need schemata that allow them to view rhetorical expectations through a cultural lens. A rhetorical approach to composition allows them to actively create such schemata because it helps them recognize different elements of composition and the relationships among them.

To understand the rhetorical situation, students must first be able to place texts within larger realms of writing and interpretation. Since the cultural backgrounds of ESL students have dictated different rhetorical expectations from those of native speakers, ESL students must become aware of "the historicity and situatedness of their knowledges" (Zavarzadeh and Morton 72). In other words, the

students have been acquiring cultural knowledge and expectations since birth, but the cultural elements they have learned stretch back to the history of their cultures and to the influences that allowed those cultures to come into existence. Specific factors of students' backgrounds such as status, education, geography, and religion are a few factors that help determine the way expectations are gathered and internalized.

To achieve the rhetorical understanding necessary to comply with academic expectations for writing, ESL students must develop a comparative approach that allows them to appreciate and build upon the relativity of their positions. By placing themselves within a specific discursive situation, students imagine other positions and develop a conceptual view that brings them to wider ranges of understanding as they become aware of the "cultural biases that inscribe [their] roles" (Robison 237; see also Carino 290). By adopting a comparative approach to rhetoric, students prepare to address the complexities of their rhetorical situations and learn strategies for responding effectively to those situations through their writing.

Developing comparative understandings is not a straightforward process because cultural factors are hard to identify and define. General observations made by the outsider can degenerate into stereotypical generalizations

that reflect minute portions of a population or exaggerated features that lead to caricatures rather than to genuine understandings. Students need materials and methods for analysis that bring them within grasp of a wide range of cultural practices and that are broad enough to accommodate conflicting views of the target culture. They need to slowly develop their own conceptions based on texts, research, discussion, and first and second-hand experiences. Popular culture texts are appropriate materials because they are heavily grounded in shared experiences of Americans. The texts serve as a base for developing conceptual analyses that teach students to look for social trends and value structures and to problematize observations rather than to make one-dimensional assumptions. They provide students with material for textual analyses that cover a variety of features of text. They show students how authors comply with expectations of their audiences and develop strategies to accommodate them.

In this chapter I retrace the steps of the sophists--rhetors who worked to develop their own comparative understandings--and jump to examples of modern-day instructors who build on similar strategies of comparison to help their students reach new understandings. I then outline reasons why popular culture texts are well suited to this comparative, rhetorical purpose.

**Comparative Approaches to Discourse: What They Teach
Students about Texts**

In Ancient Greece, the sophists made contributions to the study of rhetoric that included a rhetorical model of language rooted in the contingencies of a given situation (Consigny 12). As outsiders who travelled among city-states, they noticed differences among regions and were able to examine belief systems from the benefit of a more objective position. The sophists concluded that rhetorical conventions were the products of cultural experiences rather than natural phenomena. Instead of reaching for Truth in the Platonic sense, the sophists thought it was necessary for rhetors to view "facts" within their contexts to come to usable understandings of them. Conversely, it was impossible to understand the nature of an object until the circumstances surrounding it and the forces that created it had been accounted for (Enos 79). This awareness of cultural differences led the sophists to a rhetorical sensitivity to audience, author, and text and the ways those elements interrelated.

The concept of relativity helps ESL students bridge between their native cultures and the target culture and between the rhetorical expectations of their cultures and those of the American academic community. The students are in the same position as the sophists in that they need to

develop a critical awareness that enables them to speak effectively to differing cultural conventions. Like the sophists, they are travelling between cultures. They have to hold onto their values while developing an understanding of ones held by the general American community. As they recognize how differing cultural conventions affect audiences' expectations, they can begin to develop a strategic awareness of how to adapt to cultural differences. They learn to avoid disappointing audiences' expectations when they write while also coming to understand that respecting other assumptions does not necessarily mean embracing other values.

Just as cultural differences lead to different views of appropriate roles for authors, so do they influence how authors relate to their audiences. Because the sophists believed in the importance of relativity, they allowed for "the contingencies of interpretation and human nature that are inherent in any social circumstances, which inherently lack 'ideal' or universally affirmed premises" (Enos 83). Since Truth is unattainable, learners must adopt a comparative model by viewing the circumstances of a specific situation. Since their cultural backgrounds may not allow them to accept principles held by the target culture, ESL students need to decipher American values and use them as guidelines for making appropriate decisions about texts

instead of fighting American views in a misguided attempt to retain their own.

Using a comparative model also helps students manage the problems of coping with differences between language systems. The sophistic view suggests that since language is ambiguous, and since we use language to communicate, our understandings are never complete (Hassett 378). As Kenneth Burke reminds us, any terminology that we choose is still only a "selection" of reality instead of a definitive one because alternative understandings are always possible (45). When two or more languages are involved, such as is the case for second-language students, understandings are even more complicated, since even the most careful translations between languages leave ideas dangling between definitions. By accepting a model that defines language as a fluid system, students are no longer bound to word-for-word translations of key terms, but work to develop broad understandings through an accumulation of research and experiences.

Comparative analyses can be used to comprehend discrete portions of text. By analyzing rhetorical strategies one at a time, students notice differences between preferences of different cultures. They develop strategies for compensating for these differences and accommodating their new audiences. Robert Kaplan argued for the validity of a

comparative approach through his studies in "contrastive rhetoric" ("Cultural" 1). He based his initial observations on paragraphs written by second-language students and published his findings in the 1966 landmark study "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education." Kaplan and his colleagues had noticed that they could determine their students' ethnicity by looking at written papers because students from the same cultural backgrounds used similar patterns and made the same kinds of mistakes ("Contrastive" 277). Kaplan reasoned that by analyzing cultural patterns of writing, he and his colleagues could help students eliminate their problems systematically. By learning to see mistakes as parts of patterns rather than as isolated incidents, students could make great strides towards improving their writing with a minimum amount of work.

When Kaplan analyzed contrasts in the organizational strategies of paragraphs of English prose written by non-native speakers, he concluded that Chinese rhetoric flowed in circles because writers hinted at their points rather than stating them; the rhetorical patterns of Romance languages zigzagged because tangents were allowed; Arabic was a series of parallel constructions because writers balanced the first part of their sentences with the second; and English followed a straight line because the writers

simply started out at the beginning and took the most direct path to the end ("Cultural" 16-18). Kaplan has been criticized, deservedly, for making grand generalizations from small units of discourse, but his analyses do reflect common tendencies. He has shown convincingly that writers are influenced by their cultural backgrounds and that comparisons of writing samples help reveal those influences. Once students become aware of differences and are sensitized to their importance, they can address the resulting conditions. Eventually they learn to create patterns appropriate to their new situations.

Recently several composition instructors have reported success with using the comparative approach to detect and analyze cultural differences. Instructor Lori Robison describes a course for native speakers in which she encouraged her students to locate themselves in their own culture by comparing themselves to students of the 1960s and imagining what their lives would be like in that world (233). Once the students had an understanding of the distinguishing features of their own time period, they could understand the relativity of their positions and the fluid nature of value systems (231, 237). The students developed a new way of looking at their own society, came to realizations about values they unconsciously held, and learned to contrast them with other views. One student

analyzed Easy Rider to find that while he admired the idea of "just dropping everything and hitting the road on a pair of motorcycles," he could not imagine performing the same action himself (238). He was able to understand the motivations of the main character because he understood the social and cultural expectations of the time period, not because he shared similar values. ESL students need to go through a similar mental process by examining social aspects of American life in the 1990s.

This crucial step of analyzing cultural differences and developing comparative understandings has often been omitted from composition study. Cultural differences are submerged because American academic instruction foregrounds such awareness only in terms of US residents. It might recognize cultural differences of Hispanics, since so much of the US population is Spanish-speaking, but not of smaller cultural groups. does not typically foreground such awareness. Students need to recognize the influence of their cultural backgrounds and accompanying value systems and use this recognition as a basis for understanding and appreciating the cultural system that governs American academia.

Adopting a comparative rhetorical approach allows students to place themselves in another culture, think through its rhetorical situation as it applies to the texts they read and create, and develop a pragmatic, relativistic

view. Otherwise their writing will be ineffective or have unexpected and often unwanted results. Students learn to appreciate the importance of relativity and learn to compensate for it by building on references, considering values portrayed in texts, and comparing texts to the lifestyles they reflect. They learn to work with the complexity of cultural expectations for texts rather than becoming frustrated when their writing is not well received by their chosen audience.

Popular Culture: Why It Works for ESL Composition

"Popular culture" carries different meanings depending on definitions of "popular" and "culture" (see Williams, Keynotes 198), but for the purposes of this study, I will draw on the pedagogical work of Tony Bennett, an instructor at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Study at Birmingham. Following the work of Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, and Raymond Williams (see especially Culture and Society), Bennett draws upon popular culture to help ESL students analyze salient influences on their lives. He defines popular culture as cultural forms that are well liked by many people, forms that are not "high" culture, forms produced for the consumption of the masses, and cultural practices rooted in the "creative impulses" of the people (20-22). Popular culture materials include magazines,

newspapers, pop music, radio programs, TV shows, movies, ads, and formula fictions. If the materials are well liked, they reflect values that people emulate, sympathize with, or admire. Marketers produce materials with the public's preferences in mind. Since popular culture materials are not "high" culture, they are available for immediate consumption; people do not need training in journalism to read the front page of the newspaper. The materials are rooted in "creative impulses" because they are motivated by aesthetic as well as practical purposes; an amusing ad goes beyond its basic purpose to the point of entertainment.

Cultural analysts such as Ray B. Browne, editor of The American Journal of Popular Culture, and Russel B. Nye laud the study of popular culture as an unparalleled source of understanding the character of a social group. Browne promotes popular culture as self-evaluation:

If people's popular culture consists of all the aspects that make up a way of life, it would seem obvious that it is necessary that we understand this culture if we are to understand the nation, its way of life, if we are to understand ourselves, if, in other words, we are to be 'educated' in the full sense of the word. (15)

Browne correctly maintains that we cannot understand ourselves until we examine pervasive cultural influences.

Whether we buy into popular culture events--Dallas, the Superbowl, The Grand Opry, The National Tractor Pulling Championships--or not, we still have to take them into account when trying to piece together the culture as a whole.

In a historical sense, Nye notes that popular culture has been a strong influence since the eighteenth century, when urbanization of Europe and the Americas led to a unification of social and cultural characteristics and the rise of a large middle class (19). The influence may be exaggerated in the US, where, according to Browne, "the democratic way of life demands respect for and understanding of a people's popular culture" (15). An early American goal was to avoid the snobbery of the English class system; embracing popular culture was one means to this end. At the same time, popular culture has always provided a valuable index of lifestyles, leading Thomas Jefferson to champion the importance of preserving cultural artifacts as documents of social history (Browne 16). Popular culture shows life how it is lived. As a consequence, it is Monticello that reveals the essence of Jefferson's time period, not his writing or his political decisions.

Finally, the mechanisms of popular culture make it an important source of study. As popular culture analysts Jack Nachbar, Deborah Weister, and John L. Wright note, examples

of popular culture gain acceptance because they strike a chord, but our reaction to them in turn affects their make-up: "popular culture has this two-way relationship with our lives--both affecting the values we construct for ourselves and reflecting values we have already constructed" (4).

Whether we study popular culture as artifact and look for elements that make texts popular or seek to understand goals and values that have dictated the construction of the artifacts, popular culture teaches us about society as a whole. For foreigners who are outside the main current of society, the process of studying popular culture is all the more important. Because foreigners lack practical information about common cultural practices of Americans, they benefit from a conscious approach to the study of popular culture.

In terms of formal education, popular culture has become a frequent component of composition programs for native speakers within the last decade (Harris and Rosen 62; Witkin 30). There are several rationales for drawing on popular culture for the study of composition, the most convincing of which is that popular culture is relevant to students because it touches on their immediate world by helping them interpret influences on their daily lives. As my Taiwanese student Ying-Lung Li noted on a final exam for his ESL composition course, the articles we'd read about

television were more relevant than all the others because "watching television is actually part of many people's lives."

One of the first instructors to celebrate the relevance of popular culture to students' experiences was Richard Hoggart. Hoggart noticed that the literature he taught in his English classes represented the experiences of a narrow social group--the British upper class. The experiences were presented to students as representations of correct social behavior, but his working-class students didn't relate to such idealized concepts. In class the students discussed examples of classical literature, but "they lived in the world of newspapers and magazines and radio (not television at the time) and pop song" (qtd. in Corner 139). Hoggart found that when he asked students to analyze the construction and consumption of texts from their own world, they learned information that was useful to them on an immediate basis. Students paid more attention to their course work because it had practical applications.

Composition instructors have found that their native-speaking students write well about popular culture texts because the students are familiar with them. When students write about popular culture, they concentrate on the process of writing rather than developing the background knowledge needed to understand texts that are divorced from their

experience (Winfield and Barner-Felfelli 376; see also Kafka 187). Students learn more because they are not overloaded with information. Instead of having to create schemata for the subject matter, they build on schemata they have already developed. They can use prior experiences to help them relate to the texts. Writing about popular culture presents a challenge by asking students to perform detailed analyses, but because the analytical skills are transferable, learning to appreciate and write about popular culture texts serves as a bridge to interpreting and writing academic ones (Scribner 76). Once students unravel the mechanisms of one kind of discourse and learn to interpret its strategies, they can apply their new understandings to more traditional materials.

ESL composition students themselves sense the importance of studying popular culture as a means of introduction and context for academic discourse. As I stated in Chapter One, when I surveyed ESL students about their experiences in learning to write in English, I asked: "What makes writing in English hard or easy?" While I expected students to respond by mentioning organization or grammar rules, and some did, several commented on popular culture, thus showing the students' willingness and interest in playing on a larger conceptual field. An Egyptian student who had studied English for three years wrote that

"Watching TV and listening to American music helps me develop a new vocabulary and see how people express themselves." While the Egyptian focused on listening skills, his classmate from Saudi Arabia, who had studied English for 16 years, suggested a more integrated approach:

I think writing in English will be a lot easier if the person practices writing down everything in his daily life in English, listening to movies, songs, watching TV, reading novels and talking to Americans.

Both students suggested that improvements in English would come from contact with popular culture via the media. A student from Hong Kong made a similar statement:

If one has watch a lot of American movie and TV, read a lot of American mag. and listen a lot to American music, one can propobably write pretty well. It is because he/she has inflitrated deep into the society. He knows the American culture and he knows the way they speak and write. This will make writing much more easier. If one does not have the above experience, writing will be extremly hard. Learning academically do little good.

This student from Hong Kong is convinced that "learning academically do little good" because he senses the isolation

of his course work. His studies have placed him into a vacuum, and now he feels the need to get below the surface of grammar instruction and into the mainstream of the target society.

In ESL pedagogy, what the above students are searching for are "real" or "authentic texts," meaning texts that are consumed in the target culture by ordinary, native speakers rather than created for the contrived situation of a language classroom (Richards, Platt, and Weber 22). Popular culture texts are accessible, relevant, and openly rhetorical. They help students develop schemata for current linguistic and stylistic conventions because they display lexical choices and show how grammatical style is shaped. Because popular culture is created for the masses and consumed by them, the language used to compose them is consistent with terms and syntax the audience most readily understands. Because the texts accurately reflect the use of language in the target culture, they are an appropriate source of language learning material (Mazarakis; Korsgaard; Byram 3).

Societal trends and new products are first viewed and promoted through popular culture, thus placing the material on the cutting edge. Native speakers learn words for technological innovations not from reports in Scientific American or computers journals, but from the Maxwell and

Microsoft ads used to promote them and from news flashes in USA Today. Terms that filter into the language spread quickly from one text to another and among the population. Popular culture texts become mediators of language because of their wide consumption; a word that first appears in one newspaper is printed in another or transcends other forms of media until it becomes known among a majority of the population and eventually used by it.

Popular culture texts help students develop audience awareness because the texts reflect values that native speakers have, values that market consultants assume they have, and the interrelations of those values. The designer clothes go with the top-of-the-line computer with the new car. An understanding of values serves as background knowledge for foreigners trying to interpret the actions and desires of native counterparts. Without an understanding of basic values such as consumer goals and occupational concerns, students cannot build a coherent understanding. Popular culture texts portray American ideals and lifestyles by reflecting the way people live, depicting Americans and the environments they live in, and displaying their aspirations. The texts indicate actions and attitudes that the audience finds acceptable. Clothing models are thin because Americans think thin people are attractive. By studying the way lifestyles are reflected and promoted,

students began to analyze and comprehend the values behind them (Grossberg, "Teaching" 191; Stafford 47).

Popular culture texts help students learn schemata for writing strategies by modeling effective strategies. Because the texts are designed for high-volume consumption, they are created with characteristics of anticipated audience members in mind. For some ESL students, designing a text for a specific audience is a new concept. As ESL instructor John Hinds reminds us, Japanese students are used to writing within a homogenous culture that allows them to assume large amounts of shared information ("Reader" 141). Analyzing how publications approach the question of audience gives students a base for duplicating the process for their own writing.

For some students, the act of creating a purpose for their writing is another new strategy, since texts in their own countries are expected to follow traditional values (Jolliffe 271; Lu 441). Chinese students are unaccustomed to considering the expectations of their audience because peer pressure is so widespread that audience members are expected to share nationally accepted moral positions. In the US the audience is more varied; while a group of computer engineers might share knowledge about computer engineering, they do not necessarily share the social values that would affect engineering decisions.

Because the strategies used in popular culture texts are used blatantly, students easily isolate and analyze them. Ads fall slightly short of hitting readers over the head with their messages;" formula fictions draw clear lines between the "bad guys" and the "good guys"; news articles use snappy, clear-cut headlines. ESL students can relate to the materials because they are familiar with similar products from their countries. No matter the differences in format and style between The New York Times and The Cairo Daily News, similarities are guaranteed by the nature of the medium. This is true of advertising and formula fictions as well. No matter how diverse the audience or the writing strategies, the texts are similar in concept and serve similar purposes. Students are able to make comparisons because they already have an understanding of their country's popular cultural products. By building on their own knowledge, students can more readily and more thoroughly comprehend American cultural forms.

Composition instructors are starting to report success from the use of popular culture materials in their classrooms. Robison has her students use films, songs, and other popular forms of art to create an understanding of the 1960s and to question the "accepted definition" of the time period (231). Joel Foreman and David R. Shumway use photographs from popular magazines to help students

recognize politically incorrect ideologies, the power of visual texts, and opinions enforced by the publication (244). By considering the specific audience for which texts are produced and the categories to which they belong, students develop conceptual understandings of how texts are constructed and how they operate (Shumway and Foreman 250-51). By reading their culture critically, students produce new meanings and resist imposed ideologies. Instead of accepting texts at face value, they explore beneath their surfaces.

There are practical pedagogical reasons for focusing on popular culture texts. As I mentioned in Chapter One, there is considerable flux in the make-up of ESL composition classes, but most instructors are asked to choose a textbook months before classes meet for the first time. Popular culture texts are readily available. Because the texts are so varied, they can be chosen at the last minute, and they can be chosen according to the students' interests, and cultural and linguistic expertise. These texts also provide visual clues. Even the most poorly prepared ESL student can read the key words of an ad, consider its accompanying art work, and generate a basic understanding. In newspapers and magazines, photographs perform the same function as art work. Books are often produced as movies, so a written version may be analyzed alongside its cinematic one.

Since popular culture texts have links to other texts, an extended study of them reinforces emerging understandings. The earthquake that made the front page of the newspaper becomes a longer article in a magazine, an hour-long study on a television program, and the source of humor in comedy sketches. Since the basic facts are repeated different ways in different forms, students gather versions of the same story. They build on their original impressions until their schemata are broad enough to accommodate the information transmitted through various rhetorical forms. These schemata arm ESL students with conversational tools that help them interact with Americans, thus providing other avenues of contact for cultural understanding.

The texts I focus on for this study are ads, formula fictions, and news articles. I have grouped them in this order to systematically develop students' understanding of how cultural conventions give rise to audience expectations that authors can use strategically to accomplish their purposes. On a practical level, studying ads is a way to introduce students to native materials gradually because the texts are linguistically accessible. After an initial success with short texts, students are prepared for longer and more difficult ones. In terms of function, ads present images of American values, formula fictions offer

representations of American experiences, and news articles document American perspectives on domestic and international affairs. In terms of rhetorical strategies, ads present accessible examples of rhetorical appeals, formula fictions include common patterns of organization, and news stories exemplify the directness and clarity that are valued in American academic writing. By the time students have used ads, formula fictions, and news stories to study linguistic conventions, audience expectations, and rhetorical strategies, they have broadened their rhetorical awareness and background knowledge of the target culture. In turn they use this understanding to create their own texts.

Specific ways in which these sets of texts help ESL students develop an awareness of linguistic conventions, an awareness of audience expectations, and how authors address those expectations are discussed in Chapter Three (ads), Chapter Four (formula fictions), and Chapter Five (news articles), but an abbreviated rationale is as follows:

Through ads, students learn changing and emerging language. Many words that come to be part of common vocabulary are created for the use of ads or become popularized by them; learning these terms brings students up to speed with their classmates. Ads also help students build schemata for concepts and ideals that are important to the American public. Although ads target individual

products, associated values are often stated or implied. A Mazda or Chevrolet or Porsche is not purchased in isolation, but in terms of a whole lifestyle. Students also learn writing strategies from ads, such as the use of audience profiles to help writers make decisions about their texts. Since advertisers prepare material for narrow audiences, students can study differences between publications to develop a sense of the scope of decisions advertisers have to make. Students are also exposed to the use of logical, ethical, and pathetic appeals. Ads cater to different kinds of audiences, but because they are obvious in their practices, students are able to decipher their strategies and piece together the advertisers' intentions; the picture of a small, orphaned girl crying does not leave ESL students with any doubt about the way advertisers play off the emotions of their readers to entice them to part with their money.

Through formula fictions, students notice how terms acquire definitions that are specific to a particular discourse community. They learn about audience expectations by examining everyday cultural practices that a majority of the audience is familiar with. They also examine role models such as the American detective, the popularity of which sheds light on American ideals and practices. Formula fictions also illustrate strategies that students can

analyze and draw on for their own writing. Writers of formula fictions adhere carefully to their audience's expectations of familiar plot patterns and characters. Students must accommodate their own audiences' expectations for their writing to be effective. Through formula fictions, students see how audiences' views change over a period of time and how writers accommodate social trends that reflect values and aspirations.

Through news articles, students extend their study of current linguistic conventions. They become familiar with key terms and the conceptual forces behind them. As students use new jargon, they internalize cultural views. They learn to be sensitive to the way words are used and how they come to have a particular significance within a given context. Students learn to watch for differences between surface meanings of texts and underlying ones. Through news articles, students learn the historical, sociological forces behind national ideals. They view historical events within extended contexts, which leads them to develop broad views of the American canvas. Hand in hand with historical events is the development of a value system that reflects Americans' interpretation of them. By analyzing historical events, students notice commonly held values and the effect values have on actions and interpretations. In terms of writing strategies, news articles show students how to guide

their readers through organized, focused presentations, a strategy that is often diametrically opposed to rhetorical expectations of the students' cultures. Because news articles usually state their purposes quickly and directly, they serve as models for students who have been trained to use subtlety and indirection. Because the articles use numerous strategies, students discover a range of possibilities for addressing a situation. Finally, news articles provide students with examples of writers taking authority over their subject matter, especially after they have gathered secondary material that gives foundation to their claims. Students need to examine strategies for argumentation since their own cultures often dictate that writers muffle their voices and limit authoritative statements to traditional positions.

Schemata that students develop with the help of comparative understandings and popular culture texts help them write essays that more effectively fulfill the expectations of the American academic audience. They provide students with a basis for understanding the complex cultural situations that affect their writing. Armed with the appropriate schemata, the more students are exposed to texts and the more they write, the more completely they learn to understand the rhetorical expectations for texts and develop strategies for making their own texts effective.

CHAPTER THREE

ADVERTISING: CREATING CULTURAL SCHEMATA
FOR RHETORICAL APPEALS TO SHARED VALUES

In the US ads are a way of life. Whether we open the morning newspaper or the mailbox, we are bombarded by them. They change how we understand ourselves, construct our goals, and think about the world around us. As composition instructors Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan remind us in Popular Writing in America, images from advertising make such a strong impression that if we were suddenly placed on a secluded tropical island, we would recognize the paradise as the one continually promoted by travel agencies (2). The images are so familiar that they supplant our own imaginations or even our own experiences. Ads are ubiquitous because they are successful rhetorical texts that accomplish the goals of their creators by increasing sales or promoting awareness. They persuade audiences by reflecting values, real or imagined, and using carefully planted rhetorical appeals to *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* in language that is familiar. By using ads in the ESL composition classroom, we help students learn linguistic conventions, develop schemata for audience expectations, and analyze rhetorical strategies they can use in their own

writing. Since ads appear in publications around the world, students can compare texts of different cultures to perceive cultural differences.

Because ads have always had a big impact on American society, they provide ways of understanding it. As historian Daniel J. Boorstin points out, "Never was there a more outrageous or more unscrupulous or more ill-informed advertising campaign than that by which the promoters for the American colonies brought settlers here" (26). Ads published in England promised gold and silver, fountains of youth, and endless supplies of wild animals, thus inducing scores of disgruntled English people to undertake the journey abroad only to find they had been misled. The advertising campaign did not end once settlers reached the US. The dollar bill itself carries an advertisement on the Great Seal by declaring the US a *novus ordo seclorum*, "a new order of the centuries" (Boorstin 27), suggesting that Americans have always identified with advertising. Just as "advertising" originally meant to "take note" or "consider," ads were originally hybrid creations that spread news while selling their products. Over time their role has shifted from educating to the more commercial role of persuading (Boorstin 30). They are a noticeable aspect of popular culture and will continue to be so. They represent on one hand the image of the independent businessperson struggling

to make his or her company profitable with the help of low-budget flyers to a necessary and normal aspect of an established business. Advertising is big business because it employs thousands of people and because successful ad campaigns have the power to create a fortune, destroy a public personality, or champion a cause. Although critics such as Marshall McLuhan maintain that ads are evil because they are purposefully deceiving (204), they also serve valid purposes by informing the public of products and events. They serve the whims of a society that has money to spare and time for recreation and leisure.

Ads are such successful texts that they've been called "hidden persuaders," most noticeably by Vance Packard in a book by that name. Packard showed that ads had a strong effect on people who were exposed to them, even though the consumers didn't always realize it. In Subliminal Seduction Wilson Bryan Key went a step further to theorize that advertisers often hide messages inside the art work of their texts so that they can attack the consumers on an unconscious level. McLuhan notes that ads have such a strong impact that it seems natural to study them (204). They are such a visible and viable part of society that they should not be ignored.

Since audiences don't necessarily have intrinsic reasons for reading ads, "more thought and care go into the

composition of any prominent ad in a newspaper or magazine than go into the writing of their features and editorials" (McLuhan 203). Writers of news articles and even editorials have more leeway since the facts themselves grab the readers' attention, but advertisers have to use every available strategy to keep readers from turning the page. Their techniques are obvious, which means that even beginning students of rhetoric can perceive their strategies and learn from them.

Composition instructors of native speakers have long noticed the pedagogical possibilities of ads. Peter Carino suggests the study of ads as a way to pierce through deceptive language (284). Advertisers manipulate language and use nuances to their advantage. When students carefully examine the words of an ad, they unlock clues to the advertisers' purposes and strategies. James Berlin and his colleagues have students study ads as a method of self-examination. Their assignments ask students to apply information about cultural codes to the ways advertisers expect ads to influence their lifestyles and purchasing decisions, leading students to examine unconsciously held values and the way advertisers take advantage of them ("Composition" 51). By studying their responses, students recognize unconsciously held values and the way advertisers influence them. Frank D'Angelo uses ads to help students

recognize the extent of those influences. An intense examination of ads leads to coping strategies for everyday life, since a careful study may save students from the "onslaught of advertising" (164). Students may fail to recognize the effect texts have on them until they perform a deliberate analysis.

Studying ads is beneficial to ESL students because such analysis helps them learn linguistic conventions, perceive audience expectations, and develop rhetorical strategies that appeal to those expectations. Ads teach about linguistic conventions because they use language that is too new or colloquial to appear in textbooks. Vocabulary is a significant problem for ESL students because their communication is limited by the extent of their personal lexicon. It is almost impossible for language students to learn successfully from vocabulary lists because they need contexts to help them remember the words (Sun 1996). Ads provide words and the contexts that sustain them. They help ESL students develop cultural awareness because they index common American values. Ads display consumer goals by indicating products Americans hope to buy, occupations they aspire to, and aspects of society they would like to promote or change. By studying ads, students build schemata for typical American concerns, information which helps them direct their writing toward American audiences. Finally, as

Gibson points out, studying advertisers' rhetorical techniques teaches us much about the way appeals persuade readers (22). While students who have grown up in the US are instinctively familiar with these appeals, most ESL students find them hard to perceive and identify.

ESL students do become familiar with American advertising, even when it is not part of a school curriculum. In the spring of 1994, I asked 38 nonnative and 39 native-speaking composition students to complete a survey about popular culture (see Appendix C). The questions consisted of items about current events, television shows, history, famous entertainers, and advertising. I expected ESL students to have low scores; Indeed, their overall scores were twenty per cent lower than those of their counterparts, but on questions concerning advertising, the differences were smaller. Eighty-six percent of the ESL students chose "lawyers" as the correct occupation for Goldberg and Osborne, a local law firm featured in numerous commercials, as compared to 95 percent of the US students. In answer to the product sold by Jim Click, a local car dealer also featured in commercials, there was virtually no difference. Eight-four percent of the ESL students chose the right answer, as compared to 86 percent of the American

students. Native and nonnative students watch local TV channels and absorb the messages of accompanying commercials. Since students become familiar with advertisements on their own, they have more context for concentrated study.

Most ESL students have a context for advertising before arriving in the US because ads and commercials exist in their own cultures. They can draw on this context to make telling comparisons. The aggressiveness of American ads, for example, is quite different from the gentle ads found in Japanese texts (Watanabe). Except for differences in language and setting, the majority of Italian ads could be substituted for American ones without readers noticing the difference. Even if ESL students have trouble understanding English, they have schemata for ads and understand their messages. The rhetorical understandings they develop will steadily increase their awareness of commonly used strategies.

The study of ads offers practical benefits because, as discussed in Chapter Two, ads are "real" in the sense that they are created for and used in the target culture rather than formulated for the classroom. This real-world quality gives the texts more credibility. Students may be motivated to read the texts out of a genuine need to know about the products or services advertised. Brevity makes the texts

linguistically manageable. Even if students must look for words in their dictionaries, ask about connotative meanings, and use the accompanying visual signs as a guide, they may achieve a complete understanding of their text, which gives them an important feeling of success. Because the texts are short enough to be read quickly, instructors commonly ask students to write essays on ads of their choice rather than insisting on a common classroom text (Ekstrom 1994, Shuck 1994, Buttner, Levy). Being able to choose the topic and level of difficulty stimulates the students' interest in writing about their texts.

Verbal Action Codes for Today's World

Ads help students learn linguistic conventions by demonstrating new words and phrases, changes in meaning, and the acceptance or recognition of nontraditional grammar usages. Advertisers purposefully choose language that is familiar to a wide audience. David Ogilvy, author of the best-selling Confessions of an Advertising Man, instructs advertisers to "write your copy in the colloquial language which your customers use in everyday conversation" (in McQuade and Atman 76). This language best conveys the advertisers' message to consumers and hence is more effective. As McQuade and Atwan remind us, because using colloquial language is a constant goal of advertisers, the

texts are a reliable index of public discourse (9). Because they reflect common forms of communication, they are available to a majority of the population.

Because ads operate by means of "erasure," meaning that this season's product has to be better than last season's, ad companies continually revamp their images and the ads that project them. Simultaneously, the ads change their wording to mirror the latest trends. English language critic Richard Lederer argues that these changes are important because while students need to learn standard English, a chasm often exists "between the so-called rules of usage and the English language in action" (40). Students need to distinguish between these forms so they can communicate effectively. They also need to distinguish between rules that are still important and rules that are archaic. For example, nearly every semester I have a student who, after years of formal instruction, is confused by rules of usage and asks why people say "I will" instead of "I shall." Twenty years ago, people did favor "I shall" over "I will," but by now the latter form has taken over almost completely.

The Winston cigarette campaign of the late 1970s demonstrates how changes in grammar are reflected in ads. Winston presented an ad that claimed "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should." Standard grammar devotees

complained that "Winston tastes good as a cigarette should," but most native speakers no longer distinguish between comparative phrases that contain verbal clauses and those that do not. The departure from standard grammar did not have a negative effect on the product. The company capitalized on its "mistake" by writing a counter-slogan: "What do you want, good grammar or good taste?" in addition. The campaign was successful because many readers enjoyed the joke at the expense of what they perceived as overzealous grammarians. Smokers enjoyed the association with what they perceived to be "hip" company (Ekstrom 1995).

Winston constructed its ad from everyday language used by native speakers. Whether "like a cigarette should" is "correct" or not, the structure's acceptance by native speakers will eventually make the rule obsolete, despite stalwart grammarians who resist change (Troike). ESL students profit from acquiring these newly accepted forms because they are widely used and understood.

Ads also use phrases that shed light on new ways of thought and current trends. In the analysis of an ad for a computer company, Timothy Kousshou, one of my ESL students from Taiwan, describes a beleaguered employee who faces a pile of paperwork:

"How are you going to do it?" It is a common question when you get into the same situation as

the miserable employee. "PS/2 it!" I love this phrase. I believe these are the most successful words in this ad.

"PS/2" stands for Personal Systems Two. Timothy responds to the phrase "PS/2 it!" because he grasps the meaning behind the phrase. The use of this computer will eliminate hours of tedious paperwork. Unconsciously, Timothy responds to a valued part of the American work ethic which is to accomplish tasks in a timely fashion with the use of a tool rather than a person. The PS/2 doesn't merely represent a computer company; it represents a lifestyle. A technological product that makes life easier for the owner has enough value to warrant its own verb, hence Timothy's analysis.

"PS/2 it!" has meaning within its work-environment context, but its premises are so widely accepted that it can be generalized to other situations. Timothy writes:

Convert the product name into an action code . . .
 like Nike's "Just do it!" or Cocks' "Can't beat
 the feeling." Next time when you are at
 Computerland your subconscious will shout out
 "PS/2 it!"

To "PS/2" means more than to employ a tool. It also means to accept a plan of action that can be adapted to multiple arenas. If we understand the mechanism for one "action

code," or set of responses to address a given challenge, we understand the mechanism for others. What Nike's "Just do it!" calls on us to do is not as important as the mind set that it implies. A goal is not to be approached passively, but to be tackled head-on and then completed quickly and efficiently. "Just do it!" and "PS/2 it!" require immediate and aggressive responses. These action codes are appropriate to a technological, high-paced world, the world that governs the academic environment.

Living languages change constantly because they have to accommodate new facets of life and new ways of thought. This normal process is naturally frustrating for language students who have slaved to memorize phrases and words that are no longer in use. Upon arrival in the target culture, most learners realize that the most effective way to learn to communicate is to put the books away and search for new methods of learning. The problem is finding those new ways, since there is no precise method of learning current language as used in a country or setting and rarely any relevant documentation.

When I went to live in Mexico to improve my Spanish, I was fortunate enough to live with a patient family that took the time to make explanations and that readily invited me into their circle, but that is not the most common experience, and certainly not the experience of ESL students

at the University of Arizona, (As stated in Chapter One, 80 percent of this semester's ESL student population live with compatriots.) By studying ads, texts in which public opinion changes language use despite protests from grammarians, students become more in tune with popular terms that have become part of the everyday speech of native-language students and become more cognizant of places to look for more such terms and uses. In the absence of a steady source of linguistic help from native speakers, ads become effective tutors. The power of ads does not rest with phrases or generalizable concepts, however. As I describe below, this power extends beyond the surface to entire networks of values that can be used as frameworks for comprehending American ideals.

Profiling an Audience

Since the most effective selling strategy is to address the goals and desires of the audience, effective writers anticipate the needs of the audience by imagining its members' goals and characteristics. The process is cyclical, though, because advertising sometimes creates conditions for new goals by convincing an audience it desires a product. An example is the Uncola. People didn't realize they had such a desire to show individuality through their soft drink until Seven-Up devised its campaign

(Nachbar, Weister, and Wright 9). Uncovering the way advertisers perceive and approach audiences is the study of a complex set of factors including the educational levels, economic status, professional affiliations, and desired lifestyles. Students are often unaccustomed to taking suppositions about the audience into account when writing essays [citations would be nice,], but by studying advertisers' techniques, students look at effective models for doing so.

To analyze the audience for his computer ad, Timothy Koushou (discussed above) reviewed article titles and other ads found in his magazine. He concludes that Business Week readers

dream of getting promotions and earning higher incomes, though their incomes are already higher than the average. They are workaholics and willing to pay everything for higher-level occupations.

The readers for Business Week constitute a specific audience of Type A personalities who hold professional jobs but are always looking to climb to the next step, usually through perseverance and long hours. After considering the intended audience, Timothy concludes that the computer ad bases its selling strategy on the promise of competence. If you buy this computer, you will work more quickly and accurately,

and soon be promoted to the next step. By developing a profile for the intended audience and the advertisers' efforts to reach it, Timothy concludes that the ad is successful because the audience is convinced it needs to work more competently and is ready to test any product that promises assistance.

Dilyan Batchev, a University of Arizona composition student from Bulgaria, centers his essay on an ad for the 1994 Chevrolet Corvette. Like Timothy, he uses the context of the magazine to draw a profile for the intended audience. Since his ad comes from Fortune, he concludes that the readers are investors, "people with lots of money who at the same time like to show their social status by driving luxury limousines in their business life and fast sports cars in their private life." These are the people who can pay fifty thousand dollars for a car. They are primarily men between forty and fifty years old, "since men in this age group have had time to accumulate enough wealth for a luxury item." Not only do they have money, but they are willing to spend it. Dilyan concludes that "the authors assume that their future customers already have the money and that they look for the perfect car not the cheapest one." Dilyan has perceived the relationship between the publication, the product, and the public to write a convincing essay.

In "Dutch Boy: The Game," a model essay printed in the

14th edition of A Student's Guide to First-Year Composition, Malaysian ESL student Martinus Hanan is even more reflective of the work advertisers undertake to make their texts persuasive:

The readers of this magazine are basketball fans.
. . . It might be said that there is a problem in that there is no connection between basketball and paint. However, Dutch Boy cleverly makes the readers interested by making several connections between the two. (105).

Martinus realizes that the connection between basketball fans and a paint company is tenuous, but he also uncovers the strategy Dutch Boy uses. The company creates a board game in which paint can icons are moved around a basketball court. The "game" is in the readers' heads, but because they are interested in basketball, they are willing to accept forced links between the two. Understanding this strategy is a watershed moment for Martinus because he realizes that if a paint company can find a way to address a narrow group of sports fans with no ostensible tie to the product, he will be able to search for similarly unexpected ties to interest readers in the topic of his choice.

Ads demonstrate values by showing the importance of products in their relationships to Americans' lives. They provide a format for examining values because they draw upon

our fears and desires. As McLuhan reminds us, they are "accumulations of material about the shared experience and feelings of the entire community" (203). Because experiences are commonly shared, ads can rely on stock responses and operate from strings of association and enthymatic reasoning. Aristotle outlined the enthymeme in Rhetoric when he explained that "certain propositions being true, a further and quite distinct proposition must also be true in consequence, whether invariably or usually" (1356b). The effect of the enthymeme is that "if any of these propositions is a familiar fact, there is no need even to mention it; the hearer adds it himself" (1357a). For enthymatic reasoning, then, the audience adds the missing parts. Enthymatic reasoning is a common strategy for advertisers because it inspires agreement. As long as readers accept the propositions, some can be omitted.

Through enthymatic reasoning, ads do not market Corvettes or Mazdas as much they do the lifestyle and economic status symbolized by them. As advertising analyst Pierre Martineau explains, every advertiser's goal is to attach "psychological associations to his product by combining emotive and esthetics appeals with the sales logic" (32). Products sell because they fit into the lifestyle, real or imagined, of the consumers, not because of the purpose they serve. The result of this use of

context is that ads are illuminative educational tools. While ads do not always reflect life as people live it, they mirror values that are commonly accepted and lifestyles that people aspire to. Ads provide a context for such values because they are situated in the larger context of society. As cultural analyst Roland Marchand notes, persons and objects are depicted in relation to each other as well as to the larger social structure (165), thus helping students make connections and notice social trends.

Ads function as symbols of broad American goals, so by studying the ramifications of the importance of particular symbols, students gather information about the aspirations of the target culture. A logical starting place for an ESL class would be a study of cars, a familiar product that symbolizes Americans and their relation to the world. Because Americans started producing and buying cars, city landscaping changed. Today, it is inconvenient to live in newer cities or towns in America without owning a car, and a majority of Americans grow up thinking that owning a car is as natural as going to bed at night. As Herbert Hoover suggested in his 1924 campaign speech, the political goal of America was to reconfigure society such that there was "a chicken in every pot; two cars in every garage."

Cars do not merely identify a country; they also symbolize its residents by reflecting status, self-

confidence, machismo, buying power, and class/cultural identification" (Wernick 79). If cars were merely utilitarian, they could be generic, but Americans identify themselves through their vehicles, using them as billboards to punctuate their importance and personal success (Schuon 96-97). In contrast to a majority of products, a fascination with cars belongs neither to an age group or gender. A car is as important to the sixteen-year-old allowed to drive the family car as it is to the seventy-year-old who, in retirement, spends a sizeable sum on a top-of-the-line Lincoln Continental. Even the distinction between class is small by world standards. In America many lower income families own a car, in contrast to most of the world's countries where car ownership signifies luxury and wealth.

The availability and accessibility of cars, plus driving as an act of social identify and prowess, have countless effects on the American social scene. Movies and novels point to our love of driving. In Thelma and Louise, the car is a symbol of escape and a means of freedom, just as the motorcycle is to the composition-instructor-motorcycle enthusiast in Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. An acceptance of driving as a normal event leads people to commute to new jobs rather than move families to new cities and makes driving an hour or so to

hear a concert or see a play a common event. The American acceptance of driving as a key to American identity can even be seen in politics. Clinton's recent withdrawal of a federal speed limit endorses Americans' right to drive at the speeds they choose. The fact that Clinton's act was controversial, since many fear road fatalities will increase, merely emphasizes Americans' notion of independence. Individual states will have the right to make their own laws governing their citizens' legal use of this American symbol. By studying ads for popular products such as cars, ESL students examine concepts that are significant to the American population and study the way a particular product ties to a larger social structure.

In a 1990 ad that ran in several issues of Time magazine, Chevy pictured a nicely dressed three-year-old girl sitting in the back seat of a luxurious new car eating a hot dog. In another example of enthymatic reasoning, the caption reads: "The only thing missing is the apple pie." When I showed this ad to a group of ESL First-Year Composition students, they were baffled. Not one student guessed the expected references. They needed an American interpreter to explain that hot dogs represent baseball and that baseball, apple pie, and Chevrolets are all supposed to be quintessential cultural representatives. This kind of enthymatic reasoning serves as an example of how the

audience is expected to make connections. Americans make the connections automatically, while ESL students must learn to do so to avoid being cut off from pockets of cultural understanding.

By studying ads in a composition class where students receive input from the instructor and from classmates, ESL students have the support system they need to decipher value networks found in ads and to build on those networks. They bring tacit associations to the surface and perform conscious analyses of them. For example, in "Celebrating with Champagne," my former ESL student from Nigeria discusses an ad for Korbel champagne. Neguse Mehail finds that champagne is a cultural sign of success, but the related associations lead him to a deeper concept of the "American dream."

Neguse starts his essay by describing an ad that shows a young couple standing before an elaborate dinner table. A bottle of Korbel is in the background. The woman, dressed in a red silk dress, pulls the tie of her tuxedoed companion with one hand while clinging onto a champagne glass with the other. Neguse writes:

The elegant atmosphere has many characteristics of an important American dream: Fashionable clothes, diamonds, fancy food, rich setting. The man and woman are the perfect young, blond, successful

American couple, and their attitude is carefree and relaxed.

The images associated with champagne lead Neguse to an analysis of this dream. The couple is perfect because they wear all the right clothes and go to all the right places. What enables them to achieve perfection is the wealth that grants them success. They are carefree and relaxed because they have no worries. Due to their economic status, everything else will follow, including the champagne they use to toast their success.

Neguse has correctly identified the "American dream" as a measure of financial success and the advertisers' strategy of promoting the dream as if it were within everyone's grasp. "Part of the message is that we too can be part of this elegant setting by drinking this champagne," writes Neguse. It is not necessary to be born wealthy and successful; wealth and success can be acquired later in life, independently of race, age, or sex. According to the myth, everyone has an equal shot at a charmed life. The American dream is available to all Americans--as long as they have the money to buy it.

Neguse ends his paragraph sarcastically: "This is an exciting life, indeed." Such a well-executed life would be exciting, if real life happened that way. Neguse sees through the marketers' enthymatic reasoning and the guise of

associations, and he sees through the American dream. Few people reside permanently in the elegant world of champagne and expensive restaurants; most of us experience luxury one evening at a time. Still, the dream, and the ad, have power. They encourage people to keep the image of the elegant room before them at all times, in case they do win the lottery and things turn out better than could be hoped for.

Neguse's analysis of the Korbel ad led him to the broader cultural concept of the American dream. Perhaps Neguse had schemata for this dream before starting his essay, but through his analysis he gathered additional information. His analysis is not conclusive, but closure is not a requirement for coming to a usable understanding of a cultural concept. Here Neguse has presented groundwork that has increased his understanding. As he continues to read and write in the target culture, a more critical understanding of the American dream will be one more tool he can rely on.

The Rhetoric of Persuasion

As Boorstin indicates, Plato had misgivings about the creation of a democratic society because he was worried about "the temptation to allow the problem of persuasion to overshadow the problem of knowledge" (28). Plato was afraid

that sophistic rhetoric would sway audiences' opinions in an untruthful way and cause them to be misled by forces that were beyond their intellectual control. We might allow that Plato had a point. Sometimes persuasion does overshadow knowledge when we accept arguments not just for their facts, but for the presentation of them. Notwithstanding questions of ethics, persuasive texts are well rewarded in American society. Persuasive politicians get elected, even if they resort to mudslinging. Persuasive journalists sell their stories, even if they exaggerate events for the sake of more enticing copy. Persuasive students receive high grades on written work because they show confidence in their work. It would be most natural, then, for ESL students to begin a study of writing with the study of effective persuasive strategies.

Traditionally, writers analyze persuasion according to the appeals to *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* that Aristotle outlined in Rhetoric twenty-five hundred years ago. Aristotle's original divisions have such explanatory power that they are still used as effective models of persuasion. An appeal to *logos* gives reasons for an action by referring to indisputable facts. An appeal to *ethos* relies on the writers' ability to prove they are authorities, educated scholars, or morally superior. An appeal to *pathos* draws on readers' sympathies to make them experience a strong emotion

and hence be fired to action. A broader and more modern way to think of these appeals, in the words of English instructor Walker Gibson, would be to consider "the character of the speaker, the audience, and the argument itself" (xi). Any one of these aspects of a rhetorical situation can be targeted through an effective use of identification in which the advertiser reminds readers of shared experiences and common knowledge.

Because of the nature of advertising, which is to grab an audience's attention from amidst a plethora of ads begging them to acquire unnecessary products, the use of appeals is exaggerated. This very exaggeration is what makes ads logical sources of study for students. Many of my colleagues for First-Year Composition at the University of Arizona note that comprehending rhetorical strategies such as the use of persuasive appeals is difficult for native and nonnative speakers alike and that textbook explanations are not as effective as bringing in ads for use in class discussion (Buttner, Ekstrom 1994). Once students learn to distinguish between the kinds of appeals used in ads, they can transfer that skill to more difficult texts.

In the ad for the PS/2, Timothy Koushou found evidence of an appeal to *pathos*. Although the ad is geared toward the business world, the ad uses an appeal to *pathos* by capturing its audience through humor and then making us

empathize with the protagonist. Timothy writes:

After suffering from thousands of colorful ads that puzzle your eyes, you find a simple, refreshing and funny black and white cartoon to win you a smile. An overweight boss with Jewish glasses hanging over this Russian nose is feeding his pet, a goldfish.

The art work for the ad is humorous because it suggests the familiar, exaggerated world of cartoon figures. The scene itself is also made humorous through exaggeration. The mean boss terrorizes the inefficient employee; the employee is inefficient because his computer is so obsolete that it only serves as a plant holder. Timothy claims that we laugh because we understand the situation and the stereotypes, but then "a big phrase reminds you that you might have had this familiar situation before. Your smile starts fading away." The initial appeal to *pathos* gives way to identification through shared experiences. We, too, have suffered from a boss's unreasonable expectations. Through this process of identification, we come to exact conclusion advocated by the advertisers. To avoid being in the same shoes as the overworked employee, we must invest in the PS/2.

Timothy also describes an appeal to *logos*. The employee worries about placating his boss, but the simplest solution is also the most logical. Since the employee's

computer is inadequate for the job he is called to perform, he must upgrade his system. As Timothy writes, "Thus the employee knows how to make the peace with his boss. He has found a way out of his bad situation." Between the two persuasive appeals, the advertisers present a strong case. Timothy realizes that the strength of the ad comes from this dual strategy since the advertisers reach the audience from more than one direction.

In a wider sweep, Shermali Gunawardena, my former student from Sri Lanka, traces an ad that draws on three separate appeals. In "A Taste of Nostalgia," which appeared in the 11th edition of A Student's Guide to Freshman Composition, Shermali describes an ad for the Royal Viking Line, a cruise ship that advertises luxurious living and trips to exotic destinations. Shermali notes that the most striking appeal is to *pathos*: "First [the ad] makes one go through emotions of adventure, excitement, and mystery The ship invites us to experience adventure and suspense" (127). These are stock responses used in the lure of travel, and the readers have already trained themselves to respond accordingly by allowing themselves the mental fantasy--or paying no attention and turning the page. By drawing on the hint of mystery and excitement, the readers imagine being on board the cruise ship and en route to new experiences and are pulled into the ambience the ad wants to

create.

The Royal Viking ad uses an ethical appeal by connecting with "traditional values, which go back thousands of years to the period of the Vikings (127)." Shermali uses the name of the ship to brainstorm on the way the company uses an enthymatic leap to create an *ethos* that carries such illusionary weight that readers cannot help being "hooked". Readers want to fantasize about being explorers of an earlier world. The ad uses an appeal to *logos* as well: "The cruise is practical and economical as one can experience the old nostalgic memories of the Viking period and see 'sweeping views from Helsinki to the Great Barrier Reef' at the same time" (128). There is nothing either practical or economical about taking a cruise to trace an invisible Viking period, but by this point in the ad readers are already convinced, and Shermali has discovered the power in combining a series of appeals in the same text.

In an analysis of an ad for Maxell disks, Foo-Wah Ip, my former student from Hong Kong, studies his advertisers' use of *pathos*. Foo-Wah describes an ad in which eight robots, part of the staff of a large company, sit around a large table:

All the people who take part in the meeting are robots, not human beings. The picture which hangs on the wall is a computer, not the picture of

George Washington. Is the world totally conquered by robots at this time? The maker of this ad intended to create in us a little fear . . . that if we don't use the Maxell disk . . . we will be conquered by these dead machines.

Foo-Wah realizes that this scene is an exaggerated one, but that its use of *pathos* successfully plays upon its readers. Many people are still confused about computer products, so they can be easily swayed into believing that a certain product is necessary. Foo-Wah sees that the use of *pathos* persuades the audience to take the situation seriously enough to pay attention to the message behind the ad.

Foo-Wah takes his analysis an important step further by critiquing the way the advertisers put their appeal to work. To strengthen the point that computers have tremendous capacity and we must learn about them, Foo-Wah suggests that the robots should be more agile, the light bulb should be a laser light, and all the traditional office furniture should be replaced. The ad suggests the future, but doesn't work hard enough to help us envision it. By imagining different choices for the ad, Foo-Wah analyzes the advertisers' actions as well as the actions they did not take. He understands what the writers wanted, but he also sees ways that they could have achieved their purpose more successfully. In a classroom situation, Foo-Wah's

criticisms would be the suggestions of a peer reviewer helping a classmate write a better version of an essay. His criticisms lead to the even more important step of Foo-Wah using the critical process to evaluate and rewrite his own work.

International Values and Persuasions

As I noted earlier, ESL students do become aware of American advertising. Perhaps this stems from the fact that similar strategies are used by advertisers in their own countries. Given this familiarity, students can gain an even deeper understanding of the need to address a specific audience and use strategies persuasive to it by making cross-cultural comparisons to trace differences between American ads and ads created in their cultures. (Most students have access to ads through school libraries or private sources.) In terms of values, students note how the importance of a product such as a vehicle acts as a symbol of independence, status, and personality. In terms of strategies, they notice how appeals are played out in different environments.

In a typical edition, the 16 October 1995 issue of the weekly newsmagazine Time includes ads for the ever-present automobile, food and drink, educational tools, professional aids, economic security, health products, and everyday

living. The ads for computers and accessories address Americans as hard workers and use logical appeals to suggest that their products will make the buyers more efficient, such as the Microsoft ad promising that with the help of Microsoft Windows, "fewer things will get between you and the way you want to work" (7). The ad for Merrill Lynch appeals to Americans' sense of independence because by planning their retirement investments now, workers will not have to worry about their old age (35). The Visa Rewards ad appeals to the American ideal that wealth is available to all Americans on the basis of being self-starting enough to achieve it.

Ads found in newsmagazines in Europe, Mexico, Canada, and South America yield similar tendencies. The 29 January 1995 issue of Epsilon, a national Greek weekly magazine, contains ads for products and services such as beauty aids, kitchenware, and economic security. On the surface, the ads in the two magazines differ only in language, but upon a detailed inspection, the Greek magazine has a heavier concentration on entertainment and a more relaxed view towards cigarettes. The car is marketed as a more exaggerated symbol of extravagance, given that the national percentage of car ownership, according to Glyfada Toyota dealer Alexandros Siakotos, is only thirty percent. There are noticeable similarities between products and the values

advertisers use to market them, but differences make such study useful for students trying to come to an understanding of fine shadings between cultures.

Asian or Arabic publications reveal deeper cultural differences. Japanese ads, for example, use logical appeals to argue that products are beneficial for one's health or well being (Watanabe). Chinese ads appeal to long-range needs, such as insurance ads that urge parents to provide for their children's college studies and marriage plans (Sun 1996). The strategy is effective because families are only allowed to have one child, so parents are already prepared to make extensive personal sacrifices.

To take an example from a sample publication, Monday Morning, the weekly newsmagazine from Lebanon, specializes in topics concerning the Middle East. The 11 September 1995 issue contains articles about the Lebanese economy and interviews with Middle East figures, but also reviews international sports events and previews new movies. The magazine's ads promote Chopard watches, Chrysler, Al Fajr Insurance, and Kuwait Airways. The French-language Chopard ad, depicting a Chopard watch held over a shiny stream, offers its product for its sense of luxury rather than purpose. The Chrysler Stratus sneaks into the picture from a black background to reveal a grill, wide headlights, a sleek hood, and a commanding slanted window. Its suggestion

of power and money as associated with motor power fits right into the American scheme.

The Westernized Kuwait Airways ad, in English, depicts three dark Arabic men and two fair women in Western dress. The ad covers several bases at the same time, since the company provides "a unique combination of modern aircraft, traditional Arabian hospitality, and standards of service" (80). Even though airfare is possible to a relatively small percentage of wealthy residents of Arab countries, the ad appeals to a sense of the everyday person by promising not to "consider you a VIP, more like a special friend." The ad tries to establish a reliable *ethos* by relying on its track record: "Having successfully met the challenge of the past, we are now flying into a brighter future." Instead of picturing the women who would be part of this magazine's audience, it depicts Western women whom the audience might encounter while in flight. Since Muslim women are to be seen unveiled only by their male relatives, Kuwait Airways resorts to creating a cultural mix to achieve sexual appeal. This ad is a curious hybrid that uses the gamut of rhetorical strategies, yet has distinctly Arabic features. It would help students locate some of the intersections between their cultures and the target culture and spot moments where cultural influence cause otherwise similar texts to diverge.

Studying ads helps students understand how advertisers use an awareness of their audience's values to develop their ads and how they choose persuasive strategies accordingly. A study of cross-cultural ads also helps students develop a conceptual picture of cultural difference and raises topics for further study to be pursued as students continue to live in the US. Questions raised by Monday Morning include: Why would American cars be advertised in the Middle East? What percentage of the population can afford them? To which members of a Muslim audience would the Kuwait Airways ad be effective? Why, in an area of the world where most people operate on Edward T. Hall's "polychronic time" system (as discussed in Chapter One), would people need so many watches? Comparing ads from publications in different countries sheds light on cultural differences as seen through national values and consumer tendencies. It helps students recognize that strategies are effective in their specific contexts and that the more the writers take those contexts into account, the more effective they can be.

Conclusion

By studying ads, ESL students place themselves within American society, both linguistically and culturally. For a popular culture curriculum for ESL composition students, the study of ads provides a logical and useful starting point.

Through ads, students learn linguistic conventions that have not been presented in English-language classes but that most native speakers use. Students learn about changes that take place as common usage prevails upon grammar rules. They examine values Americans typically respond to and use those responses to build schemata for life in the US. They view instances of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* in action and discern the effects of advertisers' ploys to create a sense of shared experiences. By putting themselves at the drawing boards of the advertisers, students learn to transfer effective strategies to their own writing workshops.

But ads have limitations, too. As Carol Caldwell points out, they model values, but they sometimes operate from outdated value systems to the point that they mirror the society of twenty years ago (86). They are persuasive texts, but sometimes they go overboard and ruin their credibility. Their techniques are effective, but do not always model writing behavior that students can use in their own work. Whereas appeals to strong emotions are common in ads, they may be frowned upon in academic work.

As a next step, students need to move to longer texts that provide more extended examples of language use, a study that yields more concrete information about audiences and how authors accommodate them, and how authors use structure to guide their readers and shape their texts to the

expectations of their genres. These topics are covered in Chapter Four, in which I turn to formula fictions as another basis of study for ESL composition students.

CHAPTER FOUR

FORMULA FICTIONS: EVERYDAY PRACTICES,
MODELS, AND EXPECTATIONS

At the end of John Huston's The Maltese Falcon, Humphrey Bogart looks at the statue of a falcon wistfully and calls it "the stuff dreams are made of." The crooks have hustled and killed to get their hands on a fake stone bird, but the audience knows the crooks will be foiled because the script is prewritten. The viewers enter the world of intrigue and suspense knowing that a safe escape route awaits them after the last scene, but in the meantime the moral codes are set, everyday life practices are displayed, and characters behave according to type. This is the territory of formula fictions, stories that correspond to rigid expectations in terms of plot, subject matter, protagonists, and philosophical outlook. In the form of mysteries, Westerns, romances, science fiction stories, or legal thrillers, they transport readers and viewers to settings where the parameters have been established and characters dutifully abide by them. By taking a tour of these worlds, ESL students broaden their schemata about the target culture. I begin with a general discussion of the genre before explaining ways in which one specific form, the

hard-boiled mystery, teaches students about the use of linguistic conventions within a specific discourse community, common cultural practices and role models of audience members, and authors' strategies for complying with the audience's desires for pre-determined organization of text.

Formula fictions encode a wealth of cultural information because they depend on detailed descriptions of everyday life as a backdrop for their plots and base their moral codes on widely held beliefs. As mystery-writer and critic Ross Macdonald explains:

Popular fiction, popular art in general, is the very air a civilization breathes. . . . Popular art is the form in which a culture comes to be known by most of its members. A book which can be read by everyone, a convention which is widely used and understood in all its variations, holds a civilization together as nothing else can.

("Writer" 186)

A civilization "breathes" formula fictions because they can be found everywhere. People consume them, talk about them, and view them in alternative forms (the romance novel is duplicated in the television soap opera, the mystery in the movie-of-the-week). These fictions are part of the web of daily life because they operate in connection with a system

of expectations and cultural myths. Romance readers know that real life is not mirrored in the romance where the protagonists live happily ever after, but readers want to believe that happy endings exist. Western fans choose novels to tour a part of the country where vengeance is not only possible, but encouraged, a reassuring change from real life. By studying samples of formula fictions, students examine fantasies that are shared by large segments of the US population. An analysis of formula fictions provides an accessible and broadly applicable means of introducing foreigners to American culture.

In a pedagogical sense, formula fictions make appropriate cognitive demands by requiring student readers to stretch their abilities. Since fictional texts purposefully omit information, readers have to exercise interpretive skills to jump through textual gaps (Scholes, Textual 22). For ESL students, the process of filling in textual gaps is useful because they have a tendency to limit their reading to a word or sentence level (Lazar 205; Widdowson 165). To understand long fictional texts, students have to make conceptual jumps; if they get bogged down in minute details and fail to concentrate on the overall meaning, they forget the storyline and come to an incomplete understanding. ESL students themselves feel that the novel is an effective text for helping them develop

linguistic skills and cultural awareness (Akyel and Yalcin 175).

Of all formula fictions, mysteries are the most popular. According to Newsweek, 4.1 million paperback mysteries are purchased per week, compared to 3 million romances, 2 million science fiction novels, and half a million Westerns ("Mysterious" 70). According to mystery critic Greg Grella, this popularity has been consistent since the 1930s ("Formal" 85), when literary critic Joseph Krutch wrote that the mystery "is read either aggressively or shamefacedly by nearly everyone, and it must be, at the present moment, the most popular of all literary forms" (41). Mysteries should be used as a basis of study because they offer the widest range of cultural clues and because they appeal to many different readers.

Mysteries also form part of an extended cultural tradition with recognizable conventions. Using a chain of mysterious events is a common narrative technique. As mystery critic David Lehman points out, even Oedipus Rex has structural similarities to the standard mystery novel; Laius's death causes Oedipus to follow a trail of clues to discover what happened (28). Students do not have trouble understanding the gist of a mystery story because they know the general pattern, so they can compare American tales to stories that exist in their cultures. Through contrastive

analyses, ESL students see ways in which their traditions differ from American ones and places in which they converge, helping them delineate marked aspects of the target culture.

Mysteries are effective texts for classroom use because students are motivated to read and study them. When Professor Ellen Hart assigned novels of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Tony Hillerman, the students read the novels ahead of the class schedule because they "couldn't put them down." Since the students enjoyed reading the material, they were eager to discuss it, and their interest carried over to written work completed for the class. By the end of Hart's course, the students even reported a more positive attitude towards reading. Two composition instructors at the University of Arizona recently used The Maltese Falcon as the main text for their English 102 composition courses. The instructors reported similar outcomes. The students liked the material and responded to it with enthusiasm. In earlier semesters when the instructors had taught "classics," the response was less positive and less productive (Peterson, Scurrah).

Because mysteries represent a large range of novels, instructors can tailor reading selections to their students' abilities, interests, and geographical settings. The straightforward language of Dashiell Hammett would be appropriate for ESL students who are still struggling with

basic language problems while the elaborate prose of Raymond Chandler would be suitable for an advanced group. Students living in the Southwest might read Tony Hillerman's novels set on the Navaho reservation, while students living in the Midwest might relate to Sara Paretsky's novels set in Chicago.

The original form of the mystery is the "whodunit" in which the audience guesses at the guilty party from a fixed number of suspects. Another common form is the police procedure novel, in which readers trace an investigation by the police department. In this dissertation I concentrate on the "hard-boiled" mystery in which tough protagonists, usually detectives, stop at nothing to solve their cases, no matter the necessary personal sacrifice (thus the protagonists are "hard-boiled"). The American hard-boiled mystery is appropriate for use in the ESL composition classroom because it illustrates aspects of US life and because the form is uniquely American.

The American hard-boiled novel was created in rebellion to the neat British whodunit where all the pieces fit together. While the whodunits are contained, usually in idyllic settings such as country manors or Mediterranean cruise ships, the hard-boiled novel centers around indigenous American life and draws portraits of it by capturing a certain place and time period (Grella, "Hard-

Boiled" 103). Part of this variety of geographical settings is due to the American landscape. American cities are not contained. It is difficult to walk around the city of Los Angeles. Instead of concentrating on the upper class of the whodunit, the hard-boiled novel uses characters from different social classes as the detectives rush from their grungy offices in the city center to the luxurious houses of rich clients. This social mix is much closer to the US that ESL students experience once they arrive, so the novels help students perceive these settings.

As literary analyst John G. Cawelti points out, hard-boiled mysteries give readers a way to think about contemporary life in a critical, analytical way because they double as social commentaries (151). The novels depict corrupt policemen, inept criminal justice systems, endemic urban violence, and lawless societies. Macdonald explains that instead of merely describing modes of behavior, the novels criticize them ("Writer" 187). The result is that hard-boiled mysteries are introspective studies in which protagonists attempt to decipher their world and their roles in it. Whereas whodunits protect their characters from chaos by presenting a "knowable universe" where the answers are given at the end (Grella, "Formal" 102), hard-boiled protagonists are in conflict with an imperfect, uncontrollable world. They make moral decisions, but often

have to act in immoral or illegal ways, or even let well-intentioned criminals escape.

Because hard-boiled novels illustrate the American experience and because they are linguistically appropriate, they should be used as part of an ESL composition curriculum. The novels often correspond to forms of narration in the students' own traditions, so students have multiple methods of comparison. The novels are formulaic, so students gain insights into the common attitudes and assumptions that these fictions formalize. As they learn to read the conventions encoded in these formulas, students recognize the way texts are situated in social contexts. Furthermore, the novels represent American scenes and expectations and mimic the voices of many types of American natives, thus giving students opportunities to discuss and learn from the ambiguities and contradictions that arise when they try to interpret American expressions and experiences.

As examples of three hard-boiled novels that would be particularly useful to ESL students, here I concentrate on Dashiell Hammett's The Maltese Falcon, Ross Macdonald's The Barbarous Coast, and Lawrence Sanders' The Burglar Who Studied Spinoza. Hammett is known as the father of the hard-boiled novel because he was the first writer to legitimate the form. By having his protagonists struggle to

deal with moral implications, his novels became social critiques. The Maltese Falcon (1930) embodies most of the elements that later came to be standard features of hard-boiled novels. Students do not need background knowledge to read this novel because it is the background.

After reading The Maltese Falcon, students can apply Hammett's techniques, which are typical of the hard-boiled novel, to analyze other texts. Ross Macdonald is a renowned hard-boiled writer of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. He adds a psychological element to the hard-boiled formula by unfolding his stories around oedipal puzzles created by dysfunctional families. This twist gives students more room for developing a practical understanding of American social mores and breaks stereotypical images students often have of the happy American family. The Barbarous Coast (1956) intrigues students because it breaks apart the rosy image of a Hollywood setting. The protagonist, Lew Archer, is familiar to students because he is modeled on Sam Spade.

The modern novelist Lawrence Sanders parodies hard-boiled conventions, thus bringing them into sharper focus. The Burglar Who Studied Spinoza (1980) takes jabs at aspects of American society that ESL students are aware of: TV programming, the fitness craze, and the struggle of the small independent businessperson. Sanders' novel serves as a point of departure since students can relate to the features

of everyday life he depicts and use his novel to develop schemata for commonplace events.

The Specialized Language of Discourse Communities

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, students need to gather information about linguistic conventions that are currently used in the American setting. Popular culture materials are helpful in this sense because they are up-to-date and uninhibited by strict rules of usage. But students also profit from learning how conventions are particularized into the language of a discourse community, such as the community of scholars that share the students' field of study. Specialized language is created because a group needs words that are not found in standard vocabularies or to enable the group to create a code for members. By studying examples from formula fictions, students look for patterns in their own discourse communities and come to an understanding of that specialized language.

Stanley Fish neatly illustrates the mechanisms of discourse communities in Is There a Text in This Class?. When a student asked her professor the above question, the professor's first instinct was to interpret the question as a request for the name of the required text for the class. When the student protested that she had been misunderstood, the professor was able to access an extended meaning of

"text" by surmising that the student had taken his colleague's class and recalling Fish's use of the term. The professor had accessed a particular discourse community-- those who understood Fish's use of "text" (305).

Just as Fish's colleague had to understand "text" within Fish's context, readers of novels have to perform a similar function or risk overlooking specialized definitions of important terms. In the Maltese Falcon, a word that takes on special significance is "partner." Today we are accustomed to hearing this word as a modern version of "husband" or "wife," but in the novel, the word must be understood in its thematic role. In the first scene, a client is describing her situation to Spade in his office when another man enters the room, sees the couple, and starts to back out. "It's all right, Miles," Spade says. "Miss Wonderly, this is Mr. Archer, my partner" (6). The two men work together, but more than that, they've gone into business together. They are self-made men who represent the American ideal of independence based on self-reliance and hard work. As Wonderly continues her story, "Spade winked at his partner" (7). Wonderly is attractive enough to appeal to both men sexually, but she is also a potential source of income. There is an unwritten understanding between the men on both levels. As soon as Wonderly produces hard cash, the business deal is set. When Archer

offers to protect Wonderly himself, Spade concedes out of a professional code of courtesy.

When Archer is murdered that night while working on the case, the stakes are raised. Spade is still working for a client, but his purpose has been doubled. Not only does he have an unwritten contract with Wonderly, but he also has to uncover the truth behind his partner's demise. During the course of the novel, it becomes obvious that the woman has killed Archer herself. Even though she has granted sexual privileges to Spade, in the final scene he calls the police to come pick her up. She tries to plead that she loves him and that she must mean more to him than Archer ever did. Spade replies that "when a man's partner is killed he's supposed to do something about it. It doesn't make any difference what you thought of him" (193). In fact, Spade disliked Archer, having found out he was a "louse" right after going into business with him, but the importance of partnership rises above personal feelings. The word "partner" takes on a secondary meaning in Hammett's novel and in the hard-boiled code the protagonist sets for himself. What this example shows ESL students is the importance of considering key terms as they relate to the author's purpose and the audience's understanding of codes in a given context rather than being satisfied with general definitions.

Discourse communities adapt words for their own purposes, but when such words are unavailable, the communities create them instead. The protagonists of mystery novels use idiolects that are particular to the hard-boiled genre and the popular culture understanding of the criminal world. For example, in Macdonald's The Barbarous Coast, Archer tells the "girl on the lam" that Graff's men are using her for a "patsy" and setting her up for a "murder rap" (84-85). Hester Campbell claims that nobody has "conned" her (86), but Archer insists that instead of being "in the chips," she will be "taken for a ride" (87). Native speakers are familiar with this language, mostly from gangster films. ESL students need help interpreting it because normal resources such as dictionaries are of no use. The students need to realize that instead of relying on books, they have to call upon their classmates and colleagues and that doing so is a normal, valid procedure.

The terms constructed within a discourse community have power because they transfer to different texts and even transcend time periods as the community turns inward and relies on itself for definition and meaning. In Macdonald's novel, Archer asks his writer-friend how the "Sherlock kick" is going (Barbarous 36), while Bernie Rhodenbarr describes a monster guard dog as "the Hound of the goddamn Baskervilles"

(Block 173). Both Macdonald and Block expect their readers to understand these references to Conan Doyle's work, since Sherlock Holmes is an important figure in the discourse community of the mystery world. In a similar manner, Macdonald pays tribute to Hammett and The Maltese Falcon by naming his character after Spade's partner, Miles Archer (Lehman 141). Macdonald assumes his readers recognize Spade and the conventions set by his creator and will infer knowledge of the genre from the earlier work. These references add meaning to the novels, but since they are not contained within the text, readers must bring them in from outside.

Terms take on special meanings within their particular discourse communities, and communities create their own language as needed to communicate their ideas more effectively. By viewing this process of language use, ESL students become more aware of how conventions of language work in context and are encouraged to start concentrating more closely on the language of their own professional discourse communities. They also realize that they can use discourse communities as a tool of limitation. Even though they should optimally learn as much as English as possible in all realms, they should pay special attention to the communities that most affect their academic success and personal goals.

The Audience Embodied in the Genre: Everyday Practices and Role Models

Formula fictions teach about audience by depicting everyday aspects of life. These slices of life are incidental to the novel because they function as exposition for clues rather than as the impetus for the author's creativity, but they help outsiders by painting carefully conceived pictures. Block's The Burqlar Who Studied Spinoza illustrates aspects of 1980s American by recording the protagonist's thoughts on a series of routine events. After speaking to phone machines all afternoon, Bernie Rhodenbarr complains that "I kept calling people and people kept calling me and nobody ever got to talk with anyone else" (142). Block is poking fun at technological advances and the frustrations they cause, but he also depicts an action that is familiar to Americans but not necessarily to ESL students who have recently arrived in the US.

In another demonstration of everyday life in America, Bernie explains that he turns off his TV set after Johnny announces his guests (107). Structurally Block includes this detail to give his protagonist a temporal alibi, but ESL students extrapolate cultural meanings from it. Americans set their time tables by their TV sets rather than their body clocks or interactions with others. Later Bernie admits that "I watched John Chancellor while I ate, and I

sat through half of Family Feud before I overcame inertia sufficiently to get up and turn it off" (104). TV mediates Bernie's experience and the lives of Americans by structuring their days and defining even casual actions. Although Americans are familiar with this scenario, for many ESL students this represents an unusual and impersonal way to mark time. It also suggests that television has become a cultural influence of immense proportions. Block doesn't explain his references because he knows most of the audience will understand them.

Depictions of daily events help ESL students understand the society they are living in and provide them with means of comparison. After reading a passage such as Block's, students might reflect on how television has affected their own societies, especially since many come from countries where widespread use of the invention is relatively new. For example, since Sri Lankans did not own televisions until 1974, the influence of television has been comparatively weak. Reading about the everyday situations depicted in novels gives students a forum for noticing and discussing aspects of American life that are puzzling or even frustrating.

Aside from depicting everyday actions, formula fictions teach about audience through prototypical characters who serve as role models by embodying nationally endorsed

characteristics. In her illuminating study of a group of romance readers, Janice Radway notes that readers of genre novels do not necessarily aspire to be these characters, but they do aspire to adapt aspects of these characters' lives to their own (64). Analyzing the detective as a hero who exemplifies popular American values helps ESL students comprehend widely accepted values. In general, Americans admire people who are "tough" (in the mystery novel sense of "strong-willed") because they do not give up without achieving their goals. They admire those who are independent because they act on their own decisions. They admire those who are pragmatic because they work hard for a living and plan their lives by thinking ahead.

American detectives work by themselves, make their own rules, and abide by their own decisions. Because they are independent, they refuse to take orders, even from the police, showing how defiance of authority is a necessary means of control. Because detectives are pragmatic, they accept the world as it is, unfair and corrupt, and act accordingly. The social system is inadequate, so they give themselves the license to act as they see fit. They work hard at their jobs because they believe in the importance of their professions, despite the long hours, personal dangers, and inconsistent wages. They adhere to high moral standards as a matter of principle even when, as in The Maltese

Falcon, they have developed personal interests in their adversaries.¹

Although the above traits are valued in other cultures, the combination makes them characteristically American. For example, hard work is valued in Japan, but individualism as displayed by the hard-boiled detective is not, since it is important to be loyal to the company and respect interpersonal relationships rather than work in isolation and make decisions based on personal instincts (Hall 113). In Greece and Mexico, relentless hard work may be frowned on as a sign of immoderate ambition at the expense of friends and family.

An understanding of valued characteristics gives ESL students clues to American behavior, especially when considered on a broader scale. Because of an insistence on independence, Americans usually leave home by the time they reach their early 20s, whereas in most parts of the world with the exception of Northern Europe, children stay at home at least until they are married. One consequence of this enormous difference is that connections between parents and children and between individuals and the community are often awarded secondary importance, since many Americans are willing to leave their cities of origin in pursuit of employment. When Americans leave home, and usually before

that time, they go to work. Whereas a few Americans expect to follow in a family business, it is common for them to strike off on their own. Because work is so highly valued, it becomes the focus of people's lives. It may take priority over social life at the expense of relatives, partners, and friends.

Students need to notice these differences because they have a direct impact on their experiences in the target culture. The semester I was in charge of late registration for composition students at the University of Arizona, I met a Greek student who came up against such American priorities. According to standard procedures, the student had been dropped from his composition class after missing the first two meetings. When he appeared at my desk, he was astonished that his excuse of going to Phoenix to stay with a friend in the hospital was not honored by the Composition Department. In Greece his reason for missing class would have been met with understanding. Here it was seen as an invalid excuse. The student was surprised because it had never occurred to him that a fundamental concept such as the importance of friendship would be viewed any differently in one country than in the other.

Changes in role models help students learn about fluctuating social norms. In Hammett's 1930s world, women represented angelic, motherly images such as Spade's

secretary Effie Perine, or femme fatales who were sexually charged danger zones. In Macdonald's books of the following generation, the same two kinds of women are evident, but the black and white stereotypes have broken down. In The Barbarous Coast Hester Campbell is a femme fatale in spirit, but she is not powerful enough to charm all the men she encounters. Gabrielle Torres, a victim of "the barbarous coast," approximates the angelic prototype for a woman except that her death is payment for having had an affair with a married man.

As Macdonald himself wrote, popular fiction "reaffirms our values as they change, and dramatizes the conflicts of those values" ("Writer" 186). By Block's time, another generation later, the stereotypes had broken down so much that women often became the detectives themselves. This trend is evident today. Sara Paretsky and Sue Grafton are among the many women writers whose female versions of the original American detective are tough, independent, and pragmatic. They too operate under strict moral codes created from personal moral visions. The gender switch is important because it shows Americans' increasing acceptance of women in all professional settings, even ones that were firmly male-dominated.

For some ESL students, role changes are hard to accept. Muslim students from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia,

and Palestine are often aghast to find themselves assigned to women instructors, since women in their cultural settings do not hold positions of authority over males. One semester it took me ten weeks to convince a young Palestinian student that he would have to accept me as his instructor and follow my advice if he hoped to pass the class. The experience was a difficult and painful one for both of us. Seeing role models as they are played out in formula fictions may help students recognize that societal changes are indisputable. Instead of fighting American norms merely because they are different, ESL students need to find ways of understanding and examining them. An analysis of the role models in hard-boiled mysteries will help them do so.

Cut to Fit: Tailoring to an Audience

Formula fictions belong to large networks of rhetorical systems. Virtually all readers of hard-boiled mysteries have read other mysteries and have background knowledge of the genre. They know the conventions and are familiar with classic texts. By studying the way a single mystery fits into this larger rhetorical system, students develop a conceptual overview that helps them realize how texts operate within a larger network. The existence of this network is to the students' advantage; by working from the audience's experience of related texts, students can build

upon what the audience knows rather than starting from an empty slate, and they can avoid losing readers by burdening them with unnecessary information. By making use of schemata that govern readers' understanding of texts, students develop schemata for addressing the needs of a specific audience.

Authors must follow their readers' expectations if they want their work to be taken seriously. One expectation for formula fictions is that the novels follow patterns dictated by their genres. In hard-boiled mysteries, the standard plot is that a violent act is committed, the protagonist is called to the scene and follows trails of clues, his or her life or well-being is threatened, the threat is removed, the crime is solved, the criminals are caught, and the protagonist's world returns to normal.

Because the structure of a formulaic novel is given, readers know what to expect. They know how to interpret a sudden knock on the door or a call in the middle of the night because they have learned the rules. Characters behave in expected ways and moral codes are enforced. Because readers have schemata for hard-boiled mysteries, the pieces fall into place. This system is not accidental; audiences demand that new authors respect their expectations or risk being ignored. As Raymond Chandler lamented: "Some of us tried pretty hard to break out of the formula, but we

usually got caught and sent back" (Simple 5). Chandler wanted to develop the form he had adapted from Hammett, but his audience preferred the hard-boiled style he used in The Big Sleep and Lady in the Lake. For writers to continue to win their audience's approval and for their novels to be valued, they must bear the audience's expectations in mind.

The expectations of the audience are so strong that they overrule authors' judgements of their own creations. Once students realize this fact, the more willingly they consider choices they make as writers. Many of the ESL students I have taught demonstrated an aversion to placating audiences by using expected patterns for writing essays; often they resisted stating their thesis up front or following a discernible order in the body of their essays. Part of their aversion is due to a natural tendency to follow their own culture's rhetorical patterns, even when writing in a different language, but the result is that readers cannot or will not follow their lines of thought and the writers' messages get lost. An example of such a refusal comes from Chen Huasan, a University of Arizona student from Taiwan in his first year of composition study. In a personal experience essay describing his reaction to living in the US, Chen used the following as his topic sentences: 1) Also I know that things are so different for me. 2) Not to see is not to understand is a Chinese

proverb. 3) I also had to learn to help for myself, because my family is not for consultation. 4) Three months seem long time however is like season of year. Although the sentences could be construed as pertaining to a single topic, it is hard for readers to follow Chen's line of thought. Most readers would not be patient enough to assemble Chen's points.

I have long suspected that students also resist expected conventions, perhaps unconsciously, because they want their writing to be unique. By studying formula fictions, students realize that even though authors adhere to strict expectations, their novels turn out differently. The art of a formulaic novel comes from the authors' skill in making their work distinct, even within a pattern of expectations. Authors might distinguish themselves through setting, voice, or any number of techniques. Their personal vision will make their writing distinctive as well as successful as long as they first satisfy the demands of the audience.

Just as there are expected conventions, there are ways to counter them. In The Burglar Who Studies Spinoza, Block parodies the hard-boiled genre and acknowledges conventions by following some and twisting others. There is an initial crime, but the protagonist, who becomes involved by accident, is motivated to solve the case merely to clear his

name. By building on his readers' expectations, Block leads them in new directions. Students need to realize that the same option exists for them. Straying from conventions can be successful as long as the act is deliberate and purposeful. After considering what the conventions are, students can consciously decide whether to follow them, build from them, or purposefully invert them.

Writers need to be aware of basic patterns which are expected as well as nuances created by shifts in audience. By studying formula fictions, students notice the way authors shape their work to the demands of particular audiences even with the same genre. In the case of the above hard-boiled novels, changes in the audiences' ideological worlds can be seen through the motivations of their characters. In Hammett's 1930s world, the characters' desires are clear cut. Thugs are motivated by greed. Casper Gutman, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, Joel Cairo, and Floyd Thursby all lust after the falcon because of its monetary worth and trample over anyone who stands in their way. Since the characters have no redeeming moral features, they deserve to be foiled in the end.

Macdonald's 1950s audience is not satisfied with a simple explanation of a basic sin such as greed because life is too complicated to be defined in absolute terms. The characters in The Barbarous Coast are greedy and self-

serving, but their vices are combined with deep-rooted problems. The characters are haunted by their pasts because no matter what they do, they cannot escape their genetic make-up or the influences of their ancestors. Hester becomes a criminal because her mother has set expectations she cannot fulfill. Isobel's life spins out of control because her father forces her to marry a potential business partner instead of the man she loves. Macdonald's cast is in tune with a 1950s audience because psychology became a popular area of study during this time. Many people, including Macdonald, sought professional help to unlock their pasts. Interest in psychoanalysis represents a change in the general characteristics of the national audience, and Macdonald takes this change into account.

Block writes his novel for yet a different audience, that of the 1980s. Block's protagonist lives in a postmodern world where many aspects of life do not make sense. Whereas in The Maltese Falcon lines between black and white could eventually be drawn (Spade knew the "right" action to take by the end of the novel), and whereas they became fuzzier in The Barbarous Coast (Archer solves the mystery, but is not sure where the solution has led him), Bernie's world is harder to control. He is not a detective at all, nor does he want to be. Bernie runs a second-hand book shop and supports his business with occasional

burglaries. When a victim of a burglary is murdered, Bernie becomes the prime suspect. The only hope Bernie has to prove himself innocent is to play detective for the interim. He symbolizes the everyday person who gets caught up in a chaotic world where conventions and traditional roles have fallen apart. Modern readers relate to Bernie because they understand his predicament of living in an unknowable world.

Block has to make additional changes from the original hard-boiled formula. The tough, male macho detective no longer exists, or if he does, he is not valued in the same way. Because readers now demand more practical role models, Bernie admits that he has doubts about both mental and physical abilities. Bernie works hard because hard work is still valued, but he is open-minded enough to consider other views and human enough to defy perfection. The modern audience demands changes in other gendered roles as well. While Spade's demure secretary answers the phone in the office while her boss does the real work of chasing criminals, and Hester tags along with Archer but only speaks when offering emotional support, Bernie's assistant is a genuine friend rather than a sex object. Bernie does have a girlfriend, but instead of supporting her heroic mate, she scolds him for wasting time trying to solve a mystery.

Students need to realize that audiences expect basic patterns according to the parameters of the genre for a

given text and that even within a particular genre, there are important differences among the audiences that writers must take into account. Each time they prepare their own essays, they must keep the expectations of their specific audiences well in mind.

The Detective Set Loose in the World

In Textual Power, Robert Scholes suggests that to develop a useful conceptual picture of the cultural process of writing texts and processing them, students must study "the whole intertextual system of relations that connects one text to others" (31). Studying mysteries helps students develop this conceptual picture because there are endless ways to study the intertextualities of the texts. Mysteries can be compared to one another, to other formula fictions, and to other types of texts. By making connections among formula fictions and texts that build on similar cultural expectations, students recognize the way cultural conventions are embodied in texts and how the cultural understandings students have recently acquired can be applied to other aspects of their American academic experience.

Since mystery novels have connections to world-wide features of narration, students might compare a mystery read in class with a familiar story from their own cultural

traditions. In broad terms, they might also discuss the context of the hard-boiled mystery and imagine how it would be interpreted in their own countries. According to English textbook writer T. J. Wright, the Japanese audience appreciates the American detective Lt. Columbo because he solves cases by using his intellectual capacity rather than his physical prowess (Wright 79). Japanese readers, then, would favor the whodunit over the American hard-boiled; Japanese students might analyze these preferences to come to an understanding of the cultural differences they suggest.

Other students might compare American hard-boiled novels to versions of the detective story found in their own cultures. Many Latin American countries, for example, have their own tradition of detective fiction. Because the famous Argentine writer Jorge Luís Borges was fascinated with detective stories, he wrote many himself, legitimizing the form in the Hispanic context. Borges admired English and American detective stories and helped make many available through translation (Lehman 199). Many Spanish-speaking students of college age have already read American mysteries in translation or similar texts written by Hispanic writers, so they have schemata for the genre and its expectations.

To give an extended example of how students can compare American mysteries to their own, I turn to Mexico. As

literary critic Amelia Simpson points out, the Mexican detective story is used to explore aspects of national character and to satirize contemporary Mexican society (82). Students could make effective cultural comparisons by analyzing Mexican works in juxtaposition with the American novels read in class. In Los albañiles (The Bricklayers), Vicente Leñero illustrates the way a corrupt society affects all of its members. Leñero's depiction of a world of false values and lying opportunists echoes those made by Hammett and Macdonald, but Leñero creates a singular Mexican portrait by detailing the Mexican feeling of despair when confronted by authority (Simpson 92). Leñero's use of colloquial language sets his novels in particular economic and geographical zones much as Hammett's sets the time period and the milieu. Jorge Ibargüengoitia's Dos crímenes (Two Crimes) centers around a young Mexican revolutionary whose idealism causes him to misjudge those around him. Although Miguel can hardly believe that his future in-laws would try to kill him, he uses a pretext to switch coats with his fiancée. Her father proceeds to shoot her by mistake. This theme of family manipulation is reminiscent of Macdonald's work. Family influence has an adverse effect on each of the characters, but the ties are so strong that no one can escape.

In Piropos a medianoche (Sweet Nothings at Midnight),

Antonio Helú uses a thief who gets accidentally involved in a murder case as his detective figure, just as Block does. Máximo Roldán is not unscrupulous, however. In the midst of his robberies, he exercises a personal moral code not unlike the one used by Spade and Archer to take the law into his own hands to expedite finding the truth. Paco Ignacio Taibo II's An Easy Thing (Cosa fácil) is a parody of the hard-boiled detective novel that bears resemblance to Block's work both in outlook and tone. Taibo's point is that the American hard-boiled novel is an anomaly in a Mexican setting where corruption is so rampant that a lone detective is too powerless to make an impact, but Inspector Héctor Belascoarán Shayne has clear parallels to Spade, Archer, and even Bernie.

By performing a cross-cultural analysis of an American detective novel and a mystery novel from the students' literary traditions, students locate cultural differences and analyze them. By studying the society created by Vicente Leñero, they make comparisons to Hammett's or Macdonald's socially corrupt settings and trace techniques the authors use for presenting national rather than universal characteristics. By comparing Dos crímenes to The Barbarous Coast, students note the way authors develop similar themes of family destruction in different cultural settings. By contrasting Roldán to Spade and Archer,

students examine how moral codes are activated in different settings. By juxtaposing Shayne to the other protagonists, students investigate the detective hero as cultural role model and analyze the effectiveness of parody in criticizing social norms. All these comparisons help students see how cultural difference is played out in texts, including the texts ones are planning to write.

Mystery novels have connections to other kinds of texts, so students can make cross-textual comparisons to develop a conceptual overview of the way rhetorical considerations transfer from one text to another. Film noir has especially strong connections to mysteries because authors and scriptwriters borrow one another's materials and techniques. This style of film-making became popular in the same time period that Chandler and Hammett were penning what came to be classic hard-boiled thrillers, and their novels were often used for movie scripts. As in the hard-boiled novels, many of the films depicted the corruption of society, such as the way greed brought downfall. Others depicted human behavior through femme fatales who, like O'Shaughnessy, their novelistic and cinematic prototype, destroyed men through their treachery.

In 1941 John Huston directed the definitive film version of Hammett's novel by retaining Hammett's character developments and using his dialogue verbatim (Maxfield 254;

Schatz 123).² Just as Hammett's The Maltese Falcon has come to represent the classic hard-boiled mystery, Huston's cinematic version has come to symbolize the classic film noir. As ESL instructor Nigel J. Ross notes, an analysis of such texts allows students to make comparisons between genres, study constraints on each kind, and view cultural repercussions (154), leading them to develop a conceptual understanding of systems of texts and the rhetorical strategies used to produce them.

In the novel, Hammett sets the tone verbally. He labels the first chapter "Spade and Archer," the names of his two detectives. He describes an office that is full of heavy oak furniture, suggesting a steadfast environment, but something is amiss because "the ashes on the desk twitched and crawled in the [air] current" (4). After Spade and O'Shaughnessy start talking, "all the v's in his face grew longer" because the plot has taken on deeper implications (4). Through the use of cinematography, Huston produces a similar effect. In the opening shots of the detectives' office, long grey shadows stretch over the furniture to show that we have entered a harsh world where there are only subtle shades between black and white. The tall windows are not powerful enough to let in much light, so the office remains half-lit, symbolizing the half-truths that

constitute the idiolect of Spade's clients. A long final cut shows the words "Spade and Archer" painted over the door, foreshadowing a change in the detectives' relationship.

Cross-textual comparisons also help students understand the power of representation. The cultural sign of the tough detective, enhanced through film, has become a symbol that is well known by most Americans. Between his well-known portrayals of Sam Spade in The Maltese Falcon and Chandler's detective Philip Marlowe in movie versions of The Big Sleep and Lady in the Lake, Humphrey Bogart has become this symbol's quintessential representative. References to Bogart automatically invoke associations of a rugged, wise-cracking man who calls his own shots but who makes correct moral decisions despite personal feelings. Because the image of Bogart as detective is so well understood, it turns up in other references. In Block's novel, a suspect refuses to cooperate because "He's still bein' Humphrey Bogart" (179). Famous characters become cultural signs as well. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. recently hired "Sam Slade" to come to the rescue of "Canon Confidential" (11). Because these figures are so well known, they can be generated to other contexts and texts. By building appropriate schemata, the American detective and related associations can be used to unlock aspects of the American psyche and social condition.

Conclusion

Formula fictions should be used in the ESL composition curriculum because analyzing mysteries helps students trace linguistic conventions in particular settings, recognize how audience expectations shape texts, and see how authors create their material around those expectations. This analysis will help students understand the culture they are living in and help them produce texts that will be valued in that culture. Through the study of hard-boiled mysteries in particular, students consider images of a socially corrupt America that are unpleasant but often realistic. The images help students understand the world that surrounds them and consider their own roles within that world. Students learn about cultural representations and the power of signs to convey images and ideals to the general public. Mysteries teach cultural information about writing strategies by demonstrating how authors follow their audience's expectations for patterns and keep up with audiences by noticing social trends and responding to them. Through cross-cultural analyses, students make comparisons that help them consider specific differences between their cultures and the target culture and develop a conceptual view of the way texts are constructed and digested.

Armed with the above strategies, students are ready to consider another kind of popular culture text, news

articles. Ways in which news articles help students build on their knowledge of linguistic conventions, develop a sharper sense of audience, and add a clearly delineated purpose to a recognizable structure is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

NEWS ARTICLES: MAPPING DISCURSIVE DOMAINS
AND EXPOSITORY CONVENTIONS

In previous chapters I have shown how ads and formula fictions help ESL composition students build their understanding of how linguistic conventions operate in different discursive domains, how those conventions are shaped by audiences and their purposes, and how to use conventions strategically. As a final example of popular culture texts that help students close gaps between their cultures and the target culture, I choose news articles from newspapers or magazines. I briefly discuss ways news articles have been used in composition and language classrooms before explaining how these texts can be used for more precise rhetorical purposes. Of all the popular culture texts I have discussed, news articles are the most similar to the academic texts the students will need to produce. The articles demonstrate expressive, informative, and persuasive writing as they show Western preferences for direct introductions and persuasive stances. When students study the use of linguistic conventions, they delineate boundaries of discursive domains. When they analyze audience expectations, they recognize differences in

rhetorical aims. When they study conventions, they recognize persuasive strategies for creating texts. By applying a cross-cultural approach, students use comparisons to situate themselves within discursive contexts.

Like ads and formula fictions, news articles are part of the everyday life of most Americans because the texts are used on a regular basis for pleasure and information. Seventy-six percent of adults say they use newspapers as a source of news on a regular basis, and forty-eight percent use magazines ("USA" 1A). Both kinds of texts are a fixture in American life. Because they are flexible vehicles of information, they cover countless topics for countless audiences. Such a large body of texts allows students to see how texts fit the needs of distinctive communities and are prized by them. As Robert Scholes suggests in "A Flock of Cultures," viewing the relationship between texts and the way readers value them leads students to developing conceptual understandings, which include an understanding of the broader relationship of reader, writer, and text that they need to use as models for their own work (768).

The pedagogical benefits of using news articles have been noted by composition and ESL instructors alike. Ann Balsamo uses news reports and popular magazines to help her native speakers understand "how popular media participate in the social and narrative construction of reality" (152-53).

Her students reflect on the way texts are constructed to fulfill specific cultural roles. The students develop a conceptual understanding that allows them to put their own texts into perspective. Instead of seeing their texts as isolated examples, they recognize them as components of the entire spectrum of academic writing.

Rose Marie Kinder uses news articles to encourage students to become active participants in the classroom. In "A Piece of the Streets," she explains how the spontaneity of using an editorial from the morning's paper instead of the anthology enlivened her lackluster first-year writing class. One morning Kinder deviated from her lesson plan to read students a Mike Royko column that she particularly disagreed with. In the column, Royko faulted women for making themselves sexual targets by wearing mini-skirts. Kinder read the text to her class because she had a genuine need for feedback. The students were interested in the topic because public opinion on fashion pertained to their day-to-day world (69). Since the article was not part of prepared pedagogical material, the students were not preoccupied with expected reactions to the text and felt free to comment. Because Kinder had relinquished her position of authority by approaching the text as a fellow reader, the ensuing discussion became a free-flowing dialogue rather than a stilted attempt on her part to elicit

answers to a few pointed questions (71). The students explored their views as readers performing a role in society rather than students following instructions. Kinder's goal is to make students active participants in the classroom. ESL students need to become active participants in the classroom, too; they need to become active participants in the target culture as well.

ESL language instructors also write about the benefits of using news articles. As Charles Blatchford points out, newspapers provide students with information about their new surroundings and inspire them to ask questions about aspects of everyday life that puzzle them (130). The articles serve as leads into topics students may have been curious about but unable to articulate. Fraida Dubin uses news articles in conjunction with subject matter being covered in class. A textbook explanation of psychological coercion might be factual, but students process the material more effectively when they view it through concrete terms such as examples of criminal behavior (283). Terry L. Fredrickson and Paul F. Wedel note that ESL students are likely to keep reading newspapers after they complete their education, so initial classroom study becomes part of students' personal as well as academic growth (v).

News articles provide alternatives to well-meaning pedagogical texts that, because they fail to respond to real

instances of communication, fail to provide students with credible models. As ESL teacher David Block notes, news articles provide "realistic contexts for commonly-taught language items" because they demonstrate language use in actual rather than imagined situations (214). Instead of restating grammar rules or conventions, articles demonstrate them. Because news articles cover a spectrum of typical American experiences, they help students develop a more representative picture than the one they commonly receive through films and popular television programs. By reading news articles, ESL students have the same kinds of textual experiences that their counterparts do. These shared experiences serve as cultural bridges informing ESL students of their classmates' concerns and providing them with enough information to respond. Such interaction helps ESL students understand the social context that surrounds them and feel more at ease with American classmates.

Understanding the social context affects every aspect of ESL students' lives, from their general well-being to their academic progress. I first noticed the implications of foreign students' shared experiences while completing a Master's Degree in ESL. My fellow students included a hard-working Taiwanese couple; they constantly asked me to clarify notes from the professor's lectures so their comprehension would be as thorough as possible. One morning

the couple arrived to class worried and restless. They had been shaken by a curious incident the night before when three children dressed in funny costumes appeared at their door chanting a single phrase. The couple didn't understand what the children were saying; finally the trio started yelling and ran away. Despite the media attention to Halloween, this couple had no idea of what it was, what it meant, or how it might affect them. They were living in a cultural bubble instead of using the target culture as an active learning environment, and they continued to close their doors to American experiences for the duration of their studies. The couple was not anti-American; they merely felt that the best way to be language students was to study from their books. By the time they finished their masters' programs, they had increased their knowledge of discrete grammar rules and theoretical knowledge about second-language acquisition, but they did not return to Taiwan as more effective English teachers. Had the students been reading newspapers and magazines and discussing issues from those publications with fellow students, they would have returned to Taiwan with a more native-like proficiency of English and a more developed awareness of American culture rather than with a piece of paper.

Newspaper and magazine articles are also useful because their rhetorical forms mimic generally accepted Western

preferences, such as the expectation that the main point appears near the end of the first paragraph. The following openings are typical:

... Despite all the hoopla about sport-utility vehicles, pickup trucks, and minivans, four-door sedans still command the biggest share of the auto market. And for good reason. Sedans handle more easily and ride more gently. For most families, a sedan--especially a medium or large sedan that seats five comfortably--may still be the best choice. ("How" 52)

Bond prices are surging. The stock market is on a roll. And Wall Street is bombarded almost daily by companies selling stock for the first time. The action in these initial public offerings dwarfs anything seen in the past quarter century. (Farrell 64)

Let's talk about purposes in writing. About why, for instance, you might want to write a story for the BMW Owners News in the first place. Do you write to become famous, to recommend to others a road they should travel, a place to visit--to become a more active participant in the community of other readers and writers, to relive your adventure, or to discover the meaning of the

adventure by writing about it? I write for all these reasons. (Fulwiler 15)

These introductions represent Consumer Reports, Business Week, and BMW Owners News respectively. Even though the general audience for each magazine is different, all three writers adhere to the same technique of using the first paragraph of the article to state their topic and their slant on it. They use the paragraphs that follow to support their main assertion.

News articles offer practical advantages to ESL composition programs because the texts are easy to find, inexpensive, and contemporary. Because the linguistic difficulty varies widely between articles, instructors can choose material that best matches the abilities of their students. Since news articles are often accompanied by photos, the readers' comprehension is increased through visual aids. Articles are more challenging than ads because of their length and more challenging than formula fictions because of the variety of their writing styles, but the texts are short enough that students read them without becoming overwhelmed. Because similar texts are published in their own languages, students already have a context for understanding them. Thanks to global production, news articles have become more standardized, so ESL students often have schemata for important American topics before

they arrive in the US. When they read news articles in class, they build upon existing cultural frames.

Using Linguistic Conventions to Map Discursive Domains

A study of the linguistic conventions found in news articles helps students situate boundaries of discursive domains by helping them recognize the purposes of individual publications, the amount and kind of background knowledge that their authors assume, and the relative strength of sources. J. Milton Clark and Carol Peterson Haviland, composition instructors at San Bernardino, explain how this process of outlining discursive domains worked for their class of native and non-native speakers. Since the classroom contained native speakers of English, Chinese, French, and Spanish, Clark and Haviland distributed newspapers from each language group. By examining the texts, the students soon noticed distinctions. The upscale Le Figaro yielded information about the wealthy, but not about the general French population. The Taiwanese Observer suggested that Taiwanese politics was sober and male-oriented because the publication supported a favored government position (61). The students could see that the publications had agendas because they were written for specialized audiences and intended for specific purposes.

Rhetorical analyses of publications provide insights

into the relationship between authors and their readers by teaching students to attend to how the act of reading depends on shared information. As Robert Scholes reminds us in Textual Power, "the ideal reader shares the author's codes and is able to process the text without confusion or delay" (21). Readers can only process a text if they share some experiences with the author. To achieve a complete understanding, that level of sharing needs to be high. The more authors and readers share schemata, the better readers understand, and the more authors can take shortcuts through background material and concentrate on their main points.

Writers assume their readers draw on a pool of prior knowledge and can hence enact the required codes. Shortly after Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis' death, Hugh Sidey wrote an article for Time titled "Once, in Camelot" To Americans who were born in the early 1960s or before, the mention of Camelot stirs up memories, either of John F. Kennedy, his wife, or the spirit of the times. Camelot has a distinct connotation in terms of American history, yet dictionaries do not define it. Sidey writes: "Let the skeptics snort about Camelot, but there was something during the Kennedy years that was magic" (36). Sidey assumes his readers understand that "Camelot" means the Kennedy administration and recognize it as a time of hope and optimism, brought about in part by the charisma of John F.

Kennedy and the charm of his wife. Sidey continues: "As much as anyone in those heady days, [Jackie] grasped the epic dimensions of the adventure" (36). Sidey assumes the reader understands that the "adventure" was American life in an exciting time when the US was entering the space race, rebuilding Europe, advising the Asian world against communism, and making progress with civil rights. Because he does not have to explain his terms, he cuts right to his points. American readers who are old enough to remember the 1960s follow along with Sidey because they have schemata for his references. However, they might have trouble defining Camelot to uninitiated readers because the schemata were built over a period of time and from a variety of sources to the point that the information is embedded in an unconscious layer of thinking.

Younger audiences have to make leaps to fill in the gaps. When I ran the popular culture survey mentioned in Chapter Two, ninety-five per cent of the native speakers could identify Kennedy as a president, but their definitions included no more than "assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald," "president in the 1960s," or "a president, also a hit movie." They knew some concrete facts, but didn't demonstrate the kind of knowledge that would support Sidey's definition of "magic." Because ESL audiences have even less background, they do not share many of the writers' codes and

may struggle to understand a single sentence. If they know a general definition of a term, they may fail to recognize its connotative sense; it's one thing to realize that Watergate had to do with the burglary of the Democratic Headquarters but another to realize the impact it had on the way Americans viewed a president and an era. When I performed the same survey with my non-native speakers, thirty per cent did identify J.F.K. as a former president, but the only detail offered, by a single student, was "dead." For them to employ Sidey's codes, they would need to acquire more background information.

Throughout their lives, readers build on schemata by filling in tiny pieces of knowledge: a historical fact here, a biographical note there. With each piece of knowledge they acquire, they understand more references and come to deeper meanings of the texts they read. For ESL students to develop complete schemata for references that are commonly found in current newspapers and magazines (or college textbooks), they would need to spend several years concentrating on nothing else. Part of their challenge, then, becomes a matter of deciding which details are necessary to their understanding, and which they can sense through context enough to glide over. When reading for pleasure, they might have the luxury of gathering bits of information slowly, without the help of a concentrated

program. When their reading pertains to an upcoming research project, they must find ways of understanding nuances.

This unfamiliarity with cultural references has a direct effect on students' writing when it comes to using secondary sources. Because the students don't recognize the authority sources have within a Western context, the references they use have unexpected results. Muslim students commonly cite the Koran, and then expect that, since the Koran is revered, their essays will be persuasive, even if the citation has no direct connection to points they are arguing (Ballard and Clanchy 32; Ostler 169). Students fail to realize that many US audiences are skeptical of religious arguments and may even be offended at students' attempts to use them. A related problem is that Muslim students quote the Koran with the conviction that any text containing references to it are automatically immune from criticism. Because they have invoked the Koran, and the Koran represents "Truth," their essays exude "Truth" and must therefore receive high grades.

ESL students call upon other religious texts as well, with similarly disappointing results. When explaining a rationale for the US's use of SR-71 spy planes, Giang, an ESL student from Vietnam, throws a religious reference into the middle of his conclusion on military decisions:

Many officers feel that there are still conflicts going on in communist countries and that no one ever knows what is going to happen next. St. Luke reminds us that "If a strong man shall keep his court well-guarded, he shall live in peace." The fate of democracy is placed in the hands of the national defence system of the US, which party depends on the spying systems. Therefore, the US government should consider the issue seriously.

Giang's position in the argument is clear, but the reference to St. Luke detracts from his own explanation because it is out of context. For Giang to explain the reference in light of current military action, he would have to make a direct connection between Luke's saying and specific military maneuvers. Giang has assumed that a Biblical figure carries weight and that readers naturally attach meaning to words attributed to a saint, but he errs in assuming both the readers' knowledge and their acceptance of his maxim. In fact, Giang's classmates could not identify St. Luke, so the reference slowed readers down without making his text more convincing.

Analyzing Aims of Discourse to Uncover Audience Expectations

While the linguistic conventions of a publication demonstrate the range of experiences it chooses to tell its

stories, the expectations of the audience dictate its aims. In The Theory of Discourse James Kinneavy outlines the principle aims of discourse as being expressive, informative, and persuasive (his fourth category, imitative, does not pertain here) (60). These are useful distinctions because they can also be applied to the essays students are asked to write in university composition programs in anticipation of other kinds of academic writing tasks. At the University of Arizona, first-year composition students write personal narratives in which they explore significant events, informative essays gathering facts about situations and issues, and essays that argue specific positions. Not coincidentally, these aims are also found in publications of public interest and general knowledge. Most newspapers and magazines publish articles in which the author has leeway to state personal opinions, purport to be objective descriptions of events, and persuade readers to adopt particular positions.

ESL students need to examine examples of these kinds of texts because they often fail to recognize distinctions among them. In "Xanadu--'A Miracle of Rare Device': The Teaching of English in China," Alan Maley notes his own students' struggles in this area. His Chinese students were experts at focusing on textual detail, but struggled when asked to delineate the purpose of a text (105). Because

they couldn't tell whether texts were meant to be expressive, informative, or persuasive, they couldn't define the overall intent. They understood sentences on an individual basis without being able to string them together in meaningful ways.

This inability to distinguish among aims transfers to ESL students' writing. ESL students are hard-pressed to produce different essay types. When called upon to write personal essays in which they were expected to make connections from their experiences, my ESL students resisted analyzing their own narrative events. The majority reported on events, often in great detail, but stopped short at the point where I would expect the heart of the essay to emerge, at the point where I would expect a thorough explanation of an epiphanal moment. This difficulty was apparent in the writing of my best writers as well as among my poorest. It was not dependent on linguistic skill and experience, but stemmed from deeper cognitive orientations.

One of my most perceptive ESL writers, Timothy Koushou (mentioned in Chapters Three and Four), struggled inordinately with the personal narrative. After a coherent, detailed essay about track competition, Timothy ended his draft about learning to be a good runner as such: "There's no real genius in this world, as the textbook told me." This quote was supposed to explain Timothy's conclusions

about his failure to become a great runner, but I expected more reflection. I wanted Timothy to explain how he'd come to realize what his physical limitations told him of himself, his future, and his own character. I wrote a note on Timothy's draft to this effect. When I received the final draft, I was pleased that Timothy had worked to address all of the other comments I'd made, both on language use and content, but he had neglected to change the final words. Timothy was a sincere, hard-working student; he wasn't trying to ignore my advice or bypass it, but he didn't know how to act on it. A personal essay was a new type of writing for him. Without more study of models and practice, he couldn't match my advice to a theoretical outcome.

As language instructor B. Karlgren notes, students from China are often fond of quotations, probably because they come from a country which has an extended history of written tradition and where educational training includes a familiarity with ancient texts (84). Timothy's enthusiasm for the quotation, his own sense that it adequately explained his situation, allowed him to ignore my advice to exclude it from his text. Not only is Timothy's quotation uninteresting due to its generality, but since readers are expecting Timothy to use his own reflection as a measure of judgment, the quotation also fails to be persuasive or

illuminating. Since Timothy's purpose in using the quotation goes unexplained, the quotation strips his conclusion of power rather than adding to it. His classmates had similar problems explaining their own stories.

Informative and persuasive aims present different kinds of difficulties. Both adhere to a basic, ubiquitous Western conceit: the general Euro-American discursive style calls for authors to state a thesis and support their ideas with some kind of evidence (Young 135). Unless the essay is intended as exposition, the author takes a discernible stance. This system stems from the work of Aristotle. Building on conventions of his time, in the Rhetoric he claimed that the only two necessary parts of a speech were to state one's case and then prove it (1414a). After two thousand years and a switch from oral to written media, Aristotle's observation still does much to explain the general outline for Western texts.

Just as Western audiences prefer to know the thesis of a text in the title or introduction, professors have the same expectations for the work of their students. Brigid Ballard and John Clanchy, ESL instructors in Australia, write that "our lecturers, working within an Anglo-Saxon cultural context, expect a student's approach to an essay topic to be direct and immediate" (30), but it is more

accurate to say that the lecturers expect most material they read to have a direct approach and that student essays are no exception. Since this preference is culturally ingrained, students ignore this form at the risk of having readers disregard their texts altogether (Scarcella 671). When texts don't meet readers' expectations, they stop reading.

For some Western students, the above comes "naturally" because they unconsciously write texts that display and support theses. They have been conditioned to write in such a style by years of reading texts constructed in a similar manner. For other students, the seemingly simple necessity to state one's case can be an overwhelming stumbling block. Many ESL instructors have commented on this problem. ESL instructor Amy Tucker explains that one of her Greek students, Koula, could not, or perhaps would not, recognize the need for a clearly stated thesis, despite Tucker's repeated conferences with her (111). Other students wanted to cater their writing to American expectations, but were unable to do so. As Japanese student Tatsuya Suzuki explained:

One thing I like about Americans is that they are very straightforward and they really know how to express themselves. . . . we Japanese really do not talk straightforwardly. Maybe I talk much

more frankly than most Japanese people, because I am Americanized. However, I still refuse to come out and say how I feel. I know that all I have to do is to say "yes" or "no" and make everything clear, but sometimes it is hard for me to do it."

(Tucker 161).

Tatsuya's problems are typical. He recognizes a new rhetorical style and the benefits of using it, but he gets caught between understanding how an expected system works and being able to reproduce it. The fact that he recognizes the differences in systems is an important first step, but learning to accommodate the differences may prove to be a lengthy process.

My own ESL students have consistently resisted stating a case. In a typical example, first-year ESL composition student Terry Nguyen, from Vietnam, starts her essay about capital punishment as follows:

When children are very young, it is essential that their mothers teach them everything that is right in the society to which they are living. If their mothers do not be the influence they should be, the boys and girls do not develop morals that are good for their societies and that resulting in disaster.

Although readers might guess that Terry is leading to a

discussion about crime, most would find this introduction unnecessary and hence ineffective. During a conference, I suggested that Terry change her introduction. She was adamant about including the background information because it "showed how people become criminals" and because the students in her peer group, who were also Asian, thought the introduction was appropriate.

Terry's insistence on her own style can be attributed to rhetorical training that values suggestion and tangential information over direct statements. Many students from Asian backgrounds confirm these tendencies. As Tucker's student Mimi explains in a conversation about writing:

It's very true that Chinese prefer indirect method. When my husband and I listen to a piece of music together, he might read the Chinese lyrics to me, and he will tell me how beautiful it is because it does not say it directly. You have to feel it, you have to imagine it. It's very different from the American way, I mean, they'll just blurt it out: 'I love you,' rather than leading you to that feeling. (126)

This muted style directly opposes the Western expectation to state a position directly, which in writing translates to placing a discernible thesis near the beginning of a text. Because Mimi prefers her native style to the American one,

learning to accommodate her new readers is a difficult process.

Even if ESL students manage to state a case, they often fail to make their essays persuasive even if asked to because they become lodged in an informative mode. As Helen Fox's Singaporean student Ting put it: "I don't want to take a position" (24). Many cultures adhere to a tactic in which opinions are kept private, either because personal opinions are not valued or because the writers do not wish to display them. Leki's Asian writers trained in the Chinese tradition used language "not to discover but to uncover truth based on accepted wisdom" (Understanding 95). The writers were not expected to come to their own positions, nor were their own positions welcome. By concealing their positions, the writers were doing readers a favor by granting them the opportunity to arrive at their own conclusions (Understanding 95). Other Asian cultures privilege similar actions. In Japanese, "objectivity" is privileged by a system of writing that is reader-responsible; the reader is expected to infer what the writer suggests (Hinds, "Reader" 141). In Korean, writers erase their opinions from texts by using polite formulaic phrases such as "some claim that" and "it is also said that" (Eggington 155). Students trained in these traditions must change their outlook on the purpose of writing before they are able to set aside their training and

practice writing in a new style.

Western writers are trained to take a stance and readers are trained to look for one, so ESL students must work to appreciate a persuasive stance over the neutral one many prefer. Objectivity may be an appropriate goal, but only when goal of the text is to inform rather than persuade. In his rhetorical analysis of Alexis Touflexis' "Tracing a Killer," Foo-Wah (mentioned above) commends the author for reporting the controversy fairly: "Touflexis presents both sides of the issue without taking a position on it; you can't see her own opinion the essay, but she remains objective by including from both sides of the controversy." Foo-Wah praises the essay, but doesn't realize that Touflexis' "strategy" is actually a response to the demands of her audience to report a scientific topic in an objective a manner as possible rather than a personal sacrifice to avoid bias.

Using Readers' Expectations to Assess Conventions

The simple formula mentioned above of stating one's case and proving it usually takes a discernible form that can be seen echoed through countless examples of Western informative and persuasive writing. The main point is stated in the introduction, the lead sentences of each paragraph make points that support the thesis, and the

conclusion ties the information together. For students accustomed to reading Western texts, this formula seems second-nature. For ESL students, this is seldom the case. Because so many news articles follow the conventions, they provide ESL students with models for texts.

Newspaper headlines provide obvious examples of the Western preference to disclose the thesis as early as possible, since the purpose can usually be spotted through the title. The headlines for The Illinois State Journal-Register for December 27, 1995, read: "New Opportunity Perfect Gift for Mining Industry," "Surgeons Targets of Study," "Leaders Offer Hopes for Peace," and "Dean Martin, Star of Movies, Music, TV, Dies at 78." Readers don't even have to read the first paragraph to understand the intent of the text.

For ESL students, it is often as difficult to state a case at an appropriate place as it is to come to terms with announcing that case in the first place, such as in the following paragraph by Miguel Hernández, a former ESL composition student:

In the news there is a lot of information about the drugs that is going from Mexico to the United States. There are drugs going every day, everybody in Agua Prieta knows it because it's like a new kind of jobs. Yesterday my uncle saw

two boys with some drugs going towards the border. Maybe one is the nephew of my other cousin, but my uncle doesn't say nothing more about it.

Miguel's thesis could easily involve drug traffic, border towns, social rules, and youth, and his essay could fall under several different categories. By the end of the essay, it's clear that he is writing about unemployment in Mexico. That topic is mentioned in his introduction, but because he has buried the information early in the paragraph, his readers get lost.

Because the introduction has a crucial impact on the way readers process a text, ESL students need to make a careful study of how writers prepare readers to accept their assumptions. Composition handbooks advise students to state the purpose in the beginning (Achtert and Gibaldi 6; Buffington, Ransdell, and Ryder 46-47). Examples from "real" texts (texts designed for the general public) reinforce theoretical advice. For many ESL students, this direct approach is difficult because it contradicts their own rhetorical traditions. For example, the lead in Japanese news articles is usually buried three-fourths of the way into the text (Yutani 53), while Chinese writers consider the evidence from different angles before supplying their position (Young 135). As Robin Scarcella discovered, ESL students often start essays with long, tangential

preambles that confuse or bore native speakers by failing to take their cultural preferences into account (671). Due to differences in rhetorical backgrounds, students need to analyze common structures that are valued in American writing and learn to model these structures in their own.

After stating their main purpose in the title or introduction, most news articles follow with topic sentences that have clear ties to that stated purpose. Martha Duffy titles and subtitles her article "A Profile in Courage: The most private of public persons, Jacqueline Onassis radiated restraint and strength" (29). Readers immediately realize that Duffy's purpose is to show Jackie's strength, even if they do not recall John F. Kennedy's book of the same name. Duffy's topic sentences start as follows:

- 1) [Jackie] was at her best in the crunch.
- 2) Everyone present tried to get her away from a gory scene, but there was nothing spacy . . . about her defiant resolve.
- 3) Often described as a mannequin, remote and elegant, she seemed determined to underscore the bloody reality of death by gunshot. (29)

These topic sentences, and a majority of the ones that follow, directly support Duffy's thesis by explaining different aspects of Jackie's strong character. This typical, straightforward style provides a model students can

imitate as they take first steps towards adopting, or at least understanding, a new system.

Instead of following through in a clear manner, ESL students often have trouble keeping their essays on track. Once they get past the introduction they tend to wander off in unexpected directions. In an essay about her educational experience, Yen-Thee Tiy, one of my ESL students from Vietnam, writes that "the relationship and closeness between a teacher and the student is the most important tool in providing a better and stimulating education." Her introductory paragraph contains this thesis, so her essay initially fits an expected form. However, her topic sentences break from the pattern. The first reads "When a teacher introduces the class to the students it is the teacher's responsibility to find out which students are prepared for the class and which students are going to need further assistance." To most Western readers, this topic sentence indicates a change of subject and causes them to doubt Yen-Thee's purpose. To the writer, the strategy is clear. Yen-Thee wants to suggest that a teacher can't build a close relationship with students without first understanding their abilities, but she never directly states this or the other main points in her essay; she expects the ideas to accumulate in the readers' mind until they come to understand her position. Since Western readers don't expect

to do so much work, her essay is unsuccessful.

Such wanderings are common in the writing of ESL composition students. Perhaps the connections are clear to the writers, or perhaps the writers are so burdened by the demands of writing in a second language at all that they get lost in their struggle to understand individual words. Sometimes they may even fail to recognize the importance of an expected convention. Tucker's ESL composition students, whose language backgrounds included Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Farsi, and Arabic, all agreed that digressions were unusual in American discourse, but declared them acceptable (6). They couldn't recognize the importance of a stream-lined approach. The students' habits might also stem from the rhetorical conventions of their own cultures that interfere with American academic ones, even when the students come from other Western cultures. As Kaplan noticed in his landmark study in contrastive analysis, the discourse of romance languages had a tendency to zig-zag (16). While Kaplan's explanation is oversimplified, it does suggest that the narrow, direct approach preferred by American academics is a specialized style of discourse that ESL students are naturally unfamiliar with. My Mexican students' difficulty with creating a clear path for their information seconds Kaplan's initial notion.

Identifying Perspectives through Contrasting Articles

Magazines and newspapers provide material for cross-cultural comparisons on a number of levels. By comparing articles from different cultures, students can better understand differences in texts. When they view their own culture's essay structures or introductions next to American ones, the differences are placed in sharper focus. As described above, Clark and Haviland found that even an overview of different publications provides students with information that helps them recognize differences among cultures and become more analytical of texts that appear in their own (61).

Making comparisons also allows students to situate an article within a discursive context. For example, writers may feel more free to pass judgment on topics that stem from their cultures or that they are intimately involved with. The O.J. Simpson case provides an example. While US publications often hinted at the defendant's guilt, Greek publications, in contrast from their usual style, refrained from portraying Simpson as either guilty or innocent. "Upárxoun kai díkes pou pouláne" ("Court Cases That Sell"), from the January 29, 1995 edition of the Greek national newsweekly I Kuriatiki, discusses the use of broadcasting in connection with the trial. The writer feels free to pass judgment on the use of TVs in court trials, but does not

intimate his position towards Simpson. The writer may have decided on an opinion one way or another, but is too far removed from the context of a California courtroom to take a strong position.

Cross-cultural comparisons of publications from different countries also help students situate themselves in their new discursive settings because they start to understand how others view them. At the same time they stop to consider how they want themselves to be viewed. Last semester I asked a group of ESL language students to write a short composition about a role model. "Ah," said Lado, a student from Bosnia, "I will write about General Tito." I hedged before suggesting that a role model was usually a positive figure. I then received a diatribe about how Tito was an excellent leader who helped his country become prosperous and gain prestige. I told Lado by all means to write about Tito, but I was confused; I couldn't decide if my educated, forty-five-year-old student had been totally deceived, or if the publications from which I'd gathered a negative opinion of Tito over the years had been misleading, or if they had purposefully presented a false impression to encourage the audience to disapprove of Tito's policies. A few days later, I received Lado's composition, in which he reflected on differences in representation:

I used to live in Yugoslavia under a political

system which was anathematized in Western countries. . . . The real leader of our country was Tito. He headed our country almost forty years and the majority of people in former Yugoslavia appreciate him. When I mentioned Tito's name a few times in the USA, I had a feeling that Americans consider him as a dictator Stalin's type. It is a big delusion and mistake. He was a charismatic person like J. Nehru in India, Charles de Gaulle in France, or S. Bolivar in South America. He was very popular in our country like J. F. K. in the United States.

Lado was as surprised as I was by the difference in our opinions and what we initially supposed was one another's naivete. Lado was initially hostile, since I had belittled the man who had been the leader of his country. Because Lado respected me as a teacher, he was able to see past what he assumed was my prejudice to realize my views had been formed by US publications that had failed to provide the information that had been widely accepted by the people of former Yugoslavia.

By comparing how topics are depicted in their own country's publications versus their depiction in US sources, students learn about their audience's understanding and begin to see how political positions may govern responses.

By the same token, ESL students have often acquired views of the US that are confusing to its inhabitants. By reading US publications they become alerted to some of these strange pockets of difference in representation.

Conclusion

By providing material with which to identify discursive domains, recognize aims of discourse, notice conventions, and discover individual positions, news articles are a useful addition to the ESL composition program. They help students build schemata for cultural histories they may be unfamiliar with and provide models for strategies students need to use in their own writing.

The use of news articles extends beyond the composition classroom because, after studying samples in class, students are inspired to read similar texts on their own, thus allowing them to join the high percentage of Americans who use newspapers and magazines as sources of information on a regular basis. As students gather information about daily events and national concerns, they become more prepared for living in the target culture and speaking with its inhabitants. Many language students feel overwhelmed by the task of operating in a foreign culture and assume that materials designed for native speakers are beyond them. The irony is that through class work, students find that they

can manage real materials. By reading newspapers and magazines, they are better able to handle material for class.

In the previous three chapters I have shown various ways of using popular culture texts in the ESL composition classroom. In the following chapter, I speculate on additional uses of popular culture and project other necessary areas of study for ESL composition students.

CHAPTER SIX

OBSTACLES TO ESL STUDENTS' PROGRESS
AND ESL WRITING PAST FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

In this dissertation, I have argued for the need to teach ESL composition through popular culture materials so that ESL students learn more about linguistic cues, audience expectations, and corresponding rhetorical strategies through comparative assessments of the culture that creates and employs them. I have shown how different kinds of popular culture texts such as ads, formula fictions, and news articles serve to help students with each of the three areas.

These aspects of writing are so complex that students must increase their knowledge through gradual, consistent study. In terms of audience expectations, for example, the first step is for students to consider how authors appeal to shared expectations. With such appeals in mind, students add to the picture by considering what audiences expect in texts and how genres provide formal schemata that establish patterns of association. By building upon their original notions of audience, students internalize schemata in practical ways. When composing, they make use of internalized information, which allows them the energy to

address particular or unusual aspects of a writing and project and to compose more effective texts with more ease.

In this chapter I consider the preparation of ESL students past first-year composition. I review common methods of teaching ESL composition before considering students' progress as upper-level division students and graduates.

Current Obstacles to ESL Students' Progress

There are two major factors that stand in the way of ESL students' progress in many American college and university settings. They do not receive much specialized attention from their institutions to their linguistic and cultural needs, and since their participation in the target culture is often limited, they do not always receive extra practice using English and familiarizing themselves with cultural schemata on their own.

The only special office for international students at the University of Arizona is concerned with legal procedures and practical arrangements such as housing. The office does not take interest in programs that could be created to help the students academically, such as special course work that would address their language skills and cultural awareness (Diogenes 1996). ESL students do not generally receive specialized attention within academic departments either.

In grading sessions I have attended as an intern with the University Composition Board, professors state that they are sympathetic to their students' difficulties with writing in English, yet they fail to take any concrete actions or offer more than lip service to this problem.

ESL students do receive specialized attention within the University of Arizona English department. They take a different writing placement exam and have the option to complete sections of composition courses that are limited to other ESL students. Across the country, ESL composition receives varying degrees of attention. At community colleges in Southern California such as San Bernadino, Riverside, and Chaffey, and the College of the Desert, the student population has such a high percentage of second language learners that no attempt is made to place students into separate English classes. Instructors must accept as a given that every single composition class will involve a percentage of ESL students (Connal). At the University of North Carolina, where the ESL population is less visible, writing courses are taught as grammar courses, regardless of the students' nationalities or experience writing in English (Fernando). The same is true of the community college in Thibidoux, Louisiana (Horger).

At the University of Arizona, even though ESL students are placed into separate classes, administrators of the

composition program pay little attention to what takes place inside them. This lack of attention can be explained in practical terms. At this institution, ESL composition classes account for only one section in twenty-five, or approximately seven sections a semester. Since enrollment is limited to twenty-five students per section, the average number of ESL students in any given semester is around 175. Considering this low number, there is not currently financial support to justify hiring a full-time ESL composition instructor who might coordinate the ESL curriculum and put serious time into its creation and development. The courses are taught by graduate students who graduate and move on before they have time to make a lasting effect on the program. The ESL composition program at Arizona State University, a state school with a similar native and non-native student population, operates under similar conditions (Glau). The program offers classes for ESL composition students, but because the percentage of ESL students is low, supervision and curriculum development are limited.

University of Arizona Composition Board member Marvin Diogenes explains that at the current time there is no mechanism for giving more prominence--and thus consistency--to the ESL composition program (March 1996). The students themselves have little political power and are not prepared

to fight for it; they are too busy struggling through classes to consider how the classes might be changed. Since many are accustomed to Freire's model of the banking system of education, they would not think to make suggestions or lobby for changes. Their parents are too far away to intervene.

The honors courses at the University of Arizona serve approximately the same amount of students as the ESL courses do, but the students, and their parents, have voices loud enough for administrators to hear. The composition program hires a steady coordinator, thus providing consistency among classes and from semester to semester, leading to improvement in the curriculum and levels of instruction. Pat Baliani has now been overseeing the honors courses for five years. In addition to teaching courses himself, he supervises other teachers, reviews papers, and develops course material. Working from a large base of experiences allows him to make logical choices, anticipate possible problems, and develop the honors courses in a steady, reasoned manner. Baliani explains that the biggest advantage of working with the honors courses over a period of time is getting to know the teachers well enough to be able to strive for the best possible combination of courses and teachers. The ESL courses do not have the same kind of consistency.

Although some individual instructors at the University of Arizona and other schools have recognized the need to create courses for ESL students that emphasize an awareness of cultural differences, the courses have either been too limited or isolated to have an impact on an overall ESL curriculae. Amy Tucker and her colleagues at Syracuse created a course titled "Great Works of American Literature" to give students a cultural context that would serve as background for advanced courses in humanities (26), but it did not help the students develop insight to the everyday aspects of American life that were affecting them. Instead it was a service course for "culture" with a capital "C," the Matthew Arnold-style culture of the best that's been thought and said. This is not to downplay Tucker's efforts; she and her colleagues worked hard to help their students fill cultural gaps. Tucker's course, however, represents only a small portion of what ESL students need to learn to join the larger cultural dialogue and has few practical applications.

At the University of Arizona, it took graduate assistant teacher Carol Ekstrom three years to develop what she considers an optimum syllabus for second-semester ESL composition students ("Cultural"; "From"). During the first half of the semester, she asks them to read essays or short stories by writers from foreign countries who have come to

the US as visitors or residents. These readings serve as an introduction to the novel she uses for the last half of the course, Typical American, in which protagonist Ralph learns about the target culture through mishaps, confusing situations, and occasional successes. Ekstrom is satisfied with this text because it helps ESL students consider their own roles in American society as they ponder the strange situations they encounter themselves. By teaching this text, Ekstrom is confident that students make significant progress towards situating themselves in US society and considering their relationship with other members of the American academic community (1995).

Composition instructors Gail Shuck and Hao Sun, also at the University of Arizona, experimented with a composition course that had equal numbers of native and non-native speakers. Their theory was that such a mixture would allow students from all cultural backgrounds to share their experiences and grow from them. At the same time, the course would give non-native speakers the chance to interact with American counterparts on an extended basis.

Shuck and Sun were satisfied with their experiment on several levels. They were impressed that the non-native speakers felt confident enough to express their views and make important contributions to class discussions. Being in this course gave them a sense of being welcomed into the

academic community rather than being shuffled off to segregated classes. Many of them made friends with the American students, which led to their using more English outside of class and participating in more American activities than they might have on their own. For the American students, the course proved to be an interesting eye opener since so many of the students had never even spoken with people from other countries, let alone interacted with them on a daily basis (Shuck 1997).

Although Shuck and Sun were happy with the experiment and have managed to persuade the composition program to continue it, Shuck and Sun are no longer eligible to teach the courses; they've had to make way for other graduate students. Two sections of the split courses are being taught this semester, but only one of the instructors has been able to successfully follow Shuck and Sun's lead in creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding. Since support for the experiment by the administrators of the composition program is weak, it's likely that it will be discontinued in the future unless other ESL instructors are willing to do extra work to keep the course as it is or to make improvements on it. Had Shuck been able to keep her teaching position, she would have argued for the experiment to be extended to the first-semester course as well (Shuck 1997).

The courses described above are well intentioned efforts because they recognize ESL students' need to learn English composition through American culture, but students need to learn much more than can be handled within a single semester. After all, learning to understand another culture takes such a high level of participation that anthropologists routinely live within the societies they study to get as close to the people and their customs as possible. For second-language students to be successful in the American academic environment, they too need to become insiders by achieving proximity to the target culture. An analogy by cultural studies scholar Michel de Certeau aptly suggests the extreme challenge of doing so. In "Walking in the City," he describes the act of seeing Manhattan from the 100th floor of the World Trade Center. From that height, he looks down on the city as a voyeur, but he views the scene without comprehending it because "the ordinary practitioners of the city live down below, below the thresholds at which visibility begins" (153). To understand the city and become a "walker" of its labyrinths means relinquishing the comfortable position of observer and taking place amongst regular scenes and happenings. The story of everyday practices "begins on ground level, with footsteps," so for de Certeau to understand the city, he has to be in the midst of it (157). To physically be in the midst of it, he has to

walk down a hundred flights of stairs. One by one he has to let loose of his own perceptions as he descends floor by floor while learning to view situations from the vantage point of another culture.

Like de Certeau, ESL students must dive into their environments and dig down to reach deeper levels of understanding. But while anthropologists live in foreign cultures for months for the sole purpose of completing their studies, ESL students do not enjoy this kind of time or energy or training. Two factors make this process of becoming a participant in a culture especially difficult. Because of the time it takes to learn to understand another culture, learners must be motivated enough to make this goal a priority. Learners also have to be confident enough to take risks--linguistically, socially, and culturally.

Many ESL students avoid mingling with American students or don't take the time to do so. They live with other people from their language group and often gravitate towards the same dorm or apartment complex. One semester I had twenty students from Malaysia. All but seven lived within one block of one another. Since the students were strict Muslims, they were encouraged by their parents and sponsors to band together so that their morals would not be unduly influenced by Americans and so they would be safe from harm. The students spent time on social activities, but always

with other Malays. Because they practiced little English outside of class, their language skills became stagnant. The only chance they had to learn about Americans and their culture was through observations they made during class and inferences they could make from course material.

Some students are too shy or intimidated to operate effectively in a foreign culture. ESL consultant Helen Fox describes Sarita, one of her writing center clients from India who was having exaggerated trouble writing. Even though Sarita had been taking a course in dissertation writing, the most writing she could produce on any topic was only half a page (2). She was so intimidated that she couldn't even record words for others to read. Kamala, from Sri Lanka, had similar problems even though she was accustomed to using English orally and had done so for more than thirty years. When it came to writing words on paper for an American academic audience, she froze. She had to be coached before she could produce any academic writing at all (Fox 3-4). Her resistance came not from the English language, since she used it regularly in Sri Lanka, but from using it in the American setting.

Due to the combination of obstacles ESL students face, it's not surprising that a majority fail to learn enough about the target culture to feel a part of it. Teaching through popular culture has the possibility of increasing

student motivation by providing materials they are comfortable with and interested in. Because popular culture consists of artifacts, even shy students who avoid interaction with natives can, with some introduction from a classroom setting, learn to use popular culture materials as a non-threatening learning tool. Due to the nature of popular culture, studying its materials will help students create schemata for American practices that they witness, participate in, or learn about.

ESL Students' Writing Past First-Year Composition

To affect ESL students to a high degree, we have to help them increase their learning exponentially. Many students, however, remain on the edges of US culture throughout their college careers, so they don't learn much about the target culture nor do they practice English outside of class. By the time these students become juniors and seniors, their writing may still suffer from a lack of understanding of linguistic cues, audience expectations, and rhetorical strategies. The scores of ESL students who took the required upper-level division writing exam at the University of Arizona over the course of 1996 suggest that, according to the standards of a random group of professors from different departments across campus, many ESL students do not have the writing abilities needed to complete upper-

level division course work, even after two or three years of university study.

In the writing proficiency exam, students read an essay and write a response to one of two questions. The questions usually ask students to relate a particular theme from the essay to something familiar. For example, the December 1996 exam asked students to apply an essay on work ethics to their own work experiences. The exams are read by two faculty members and judged as unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, or excellent. A typical unsatisfactory exam is unclear, undeveloped, or riddled with errors, while the typical satisfactory exam answers the question without offering much development. If the graders disagree as to whether the exam is satisfactory or not, the exam receives a third reading. The consequences for students whose exams are judged unsatisfactory depend on the students' college within the university. Most students are required to take some kind of mini-course in which they write papers geared towards their career interests.

The overall scores for 1996 show that, while three-fourths of the native speakers passed the exam, only a fourth of the non-native speakers did (Silverstein). This suggests a troubling disparity because native and non-native speakers complete equivalent sequences of composition, yet somehow the non-native speakers don't retain, or perhaps

don't internalize, what they've been taught.

By examining the unsatisfactory ESL exams of 1996, I found three recurring patterns of problems: students had too many grammar mistakes, which suggests they need much more practice in English. Other essays lacked focus, which suggests the students misjudged the audience's needs for a discernible structure. Still others resorted to non-Western rhetorical systems, which implies they lacked the ability to consciously recognize their own rhetorical strategies.

Many of the students whose essays lacked a discernible overall structure started out in an appropriate fashion by addressing the exam question and attempting to answer it only to veer off into other directions before adequately explaining their views or reaching appropriate conclusions. "Negative Literacy" starts by discussing the benefits of literacy, but then attacks it unexpectedly in the middle of the fourth paragraph:

The books or novels called thrillers, I totally disagree with those kinds of books. Those books encourages the violence which is the country's hands has her hands full of it. Unfortunately, today's people do not care about books that would shape their personality. Instead, because of the world of materialism, they either care about some weird book or sex books.

The student concludes the essay by arguing that people should read "quality books," and the title reflects this view, but the ninety-degree turn from the original thesis caused the writer to lose credibility--and fail the exam.

At first glance it appears that this writer lost control of the material and allowed "himself" to go off on a personal tangent because the topic was important. It is also feasible that the writer allowed himself the luxury of addressing a related topic as a reflection of an allowable option for writing in his own culture. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, Amy Tucker's foreign speakers of Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Farsi, and Arabic concurred that digressions were allowable in their own rhetorical systems (6). Even though her students could identify digressions in their texts, they saw no reason to alter them.

As Tucker found, ESL students often fail to recognize writing strategies that are valued in Western academic settings. Her students, and probably the writer of "Negative Literacy," are not being belligerent or stubborn. They simply do not realize that digressions cause readers to devalue their work. They are unaware that, as composition teacher Ann Johns notes, professors value a direct organization as one of the most important elements of writing (380-81). The students fail to realize that

professors generally expect the pieces of an essay to reflect the same topic, if not the same thesis (Scarcella 685). Due to the value they place on organization and consistency, professors often see extraneous information as a mistake caused by an incautious writer rather than a chance to make a broader or richer argument.

Through extensive reading, members of a culture may learn rhetorical strategies unconsciously. Many of my fellow graduate assistant teachers and I, for example, placed out of first-year composition because we'd learned to imitate an expected pattern. ESL students rarely read enough in English to learn in the same unconscious way. Since they only occasionally read newspapers or magazines, most of their reading in English is restricted to material required for their courses (Ahmed; Fernando). "Negative Literacy" suggests that the writer hasn't developed a sense of the need to proceed directly from point to point without transgressions, nor did he learn this strategy from required composition classes.

Other proficiency exam writers were so locked into rhetorical patterns they had learned at home that they imposed these patterns on this American academic exercise, again causing readers to devalue their work. The structure of the following essay demonstrates a close reliance on a culturally governed system. Although the writer starts by

making concrete points, she switches to an analogy for a long third section of the essay, causing her essay to be devalued by other readers. The "Power of Words" reads:

In the world, people are using languages to tell their will. Languages are developing little by little. As developing languages, cultures are also developing. In this present time, language and literacy have enormous power to manipulate worlds. In most of main countries, they do have education, so many people can read, write, and speak. When people have literacy, it is very easy to put their own opinion in their writing. People can read the writing stuffs in public. People will be planted someone's opinion in their mind.

In Japan, in most of elementary school, they play national anthem in every morning. When children just listen to the music, they do not know what is the meaning in that song. Yet when they look at the words on a white sheet, they know the meaning. It is saying how great Japan is and how important our emperor is. From the short song, children will think the special emperor. Then they will have loyalty towards emperor and their country Japan. This is completely mind control. The little song control people, due to

their knowledge.

There were two men who had orange juice in each hands. One was famous and intelligent. The other one was normal person. They started to introduce their orange juice in front of people. And the end of the introducing, they drank a glass of orange juice then they said "This is the best orange juice I've ever had!" They were holding different looking package of orange juice, but inside of package was all same. In public, they tested people. The orange juice was free to drink, so people came up to the table and drank both orange juice. More than half of them said exactly same thing after they drank glasses of orange juice which was introduced by intelligent guy. They said "This is better than the other one." Actually the packages had different phrases, one had "the fresh squeezed O.J." and the other one had "we just packed this orange juice from California in the U.S." For some reason people liked second phrase better than first one, and also intelligent guy had the second one. At this time, the words which came from intelligent guy controlled public people. Because it sounded nicer than the other guy.

Literacy has so much power to manipulate people. It is possible [end of essay]

The individual sentences of this essay are intelligible even if they contain mistakes, but by failing to make connections between the exam question and the analogy explicit, the writer loses credibility. The use of the analogy seems haphazard, an act of desperation by a writer who doesn't know what else to say. Even though there is a connection to the original topic, the writer stretches the topic by suggesting the power of literacy can also become ludicrous.

The writer is using a recognizable strategy, but it is one accepted by Japanese, not American readers. As John Hinds explains, "ki-shoo-ten-ketsu" is a typical rhetorical arrangement in which the writer begins the argument in the "ki" section and develops it in "shoo." In "ten" the writer turns to a sub-theme not directly connected before using the "ketsu" to bring everything together and reach a conclusion ("Linguistics" 80). In the above essay exam, the writer states her main point in what could be the "ki" by explaining the authority literacy has. In the "ten" she develops that theme by noting that even the simple words of a song, since they are written down, learned by memory, and repeated endlessly, gather tremendous power. The orange juice analogy could represent the sub-theme of the "shoo." The beginning words of the final paragraph could be the

writer's attempt to start pulling together the different threads of literacy. The essay does have a logical structure but is inappropriate for the intended audience.

There are several possible explanations for why, at mid-career, an ESL student would fall back on a rhetorical pattern from her home culture to prepare an essay to be read and evaluated by American university professors. It is likely that this writer had no idea she was making a risky choice by using a non-Western rhetorical system. She may not have realized she was using a specific rhetorical system at all.

Even if the above writer's decision to use a Japanese rhetorical system were a conscious one, she might not have been able to predict its impact on an American academic audience. As ESL researcher Ilona Leki has discovered, students have trouble identifying essays that will be valued by their instructors, so it is hard for them to recognize appropriate strategies to use when writing their own texts. Leki asked students and instructors to rate a set of four essays. She also instructed the ESL students to indicate which essay they thought the instructors would regard the most highly. Over half of the students predicted the wrong essay (26). Even when the students were consciously trying to outguess the judgements of instructors, they were unable to do so. Instead they fell back on personal preferences

suggested by their rhetorical backgrounds (27). What Leki's study underlines is the difficulty ESL students face in effectively coping with a new rhetorical system. Many of the proficiency exam writers are probably in the same category as Leki's students. They don't have a broad enough understanding about writing in an academic setting to predict how a text will be evaluated outside the context of a particular course under the jurisdiction of a particular instructor. Their lack of understanding of their audience's reactions prevents them from making appropriate choices.

Another explanation for this Japanese student's strategy is that she hasn't had enough practice using a different rhetorical system or enough time to assimilate it to feel confident using it under the stressful conditions of a timed essay exam. As ESL researchers Melanie L. Schneider and Naomi K. Fujishima point out in their study of ESL graduate students, adequate written performance is only developed over a lengthy period of time because students have to work through different stages of comprehension (16). Eventually the students may be able to recognize strategies that are commonly used in their own rhetorical patterns and be able to contrast them to strategies that are common in the American academic setting, but in some cases, learning to identify strategies can be the hardest part about learning to write. For example, Fox describes the

experiences of one of her writing center clients from Argentina. Carlos wrote standard English with an extended vocabulary, but when Fox tried to explain that his essay was full of digressions based on his knowledge of a different rhetorical system, Carlos kept insisting "this has nothing to do with cultural differences. This is just a problem I have" (8). Carlos couldn't assimilate to a new system because he couldn't recognize he was using one in the first place; he assumed he was making mistakes rather than making strategic choices.

The writing proficiency exam at the University of Arizona is designed to flag students who need extra help, but attempts to teach ESL students appropriate writing skills at mid-career may come too late or be too cosmetic to have a significant effect. Depending on the requirements of their colleges within the university, most students who receive "unsatisfactories" on the exam are required to complete the one-hour composition course offered by the University Composition Board. The course attempts to help students hone their strategies for writing academic essays, but the length of the course suggests how much writing skill it presumes: the course is designed as a last-minute brush-up course, not as the site for beginning study of academic essay writing.

There is little chance that ESL students will pick up

writing strategies through further course work, either because the courses do not call for highly skilled writing or because professors avoid assigning work that cannot be assessed quickly. A third of the ESL students who attend American universities are natural sciences or engineering majors (Zikopoulos 10). When George Braine, Assistant English Professor at the University of Alabama, analyzed assignments that required some form of writing from upper-division courses in the natural sciences and engineering, he discovered that over a third of the assignments consisted of writing lab reports which were to be completed using a strict format. The students were not writing essays; they were merely completing reports on the physical work they had done in their labs (119). Out of eighty assignments Braine collected, only three called for extensive writing in the form of an essay.

If students haven't learned appropriate writing strategies by mid-career, they will probably graduate without the ability to communicate effectively in written English. Some administrators might argue that this is not a concern, since many ESL students return to their own countries to work anyway, but such an attitude creates an uneasy feeling among instructors. At a recent national conference, Chad Compton, from the University of Brigham Young in Laie, Hawaii, argued that we can't rightly give

degrees to people who cannot express themselves in English because a college degree from an American university presupposes that graduates will have that ability.

Compton's position is the correct one to adopt because we must prepare college graduates for any situation, not just the one that is the easiest to meet. Some ESL students presumably return home and work in situations that never require communication in English. Others may work for companies (or in situations) where English is a key factor in everyday operations or where information from English-language sources suggests new technologies. Many of my former ESL students have applied for jobs with American companies; the ability to communicate well in English was always a factor in their being hired.

Other ESL students go on to take graduate course work. Again, adequate use of English plays a key factor in being accepted into graduate school, and the kind of support an institution might be willing to offer. In his applications to various graduate programs in engineering, my former student Iftekhar, from Pakistan, had to write mini-essays explaining his interest in the particular institutions. Because he was able to write essays that adhered to American academic expectations by stating clear points, backing his points with examples, and using a logical order, he was able to show adequate preparation in English that his status as a

foreign student, (coupled with a high TOEFL score), did not work against him. Instead it showed he was a student who was willing to work hard enough to overcome language difficulties while completing course work with high grades.

Conclusion

It takes immense work for an ESL student to complete a university degree while at the same time learning to communicate in English by following most conventions of grammar and usage, addressing a specific audience in an appropriate fashion, and employing specific and appropriate strategies to address that audience. Most students will be unable to complete such work unless they start using English outside of class on a consistent, extended basis. For the majority of ESL students I have taught, this would entail making a significant change in their overall behavior so that they interact much more with Americans. Some students are able to achieve such interaction on their own, but many fail to take advantage of social situations. For these students, the most logical way to inspire them to use more English is by encouraging them to make use of popular culture materials as a part of their everyday life.

The study of popular culture helps ESL students decipher aspects of a culture they are living in. Popular culture texts reflect everyday uses of language because they

are produced for general American audiences. They reflect typical American views because they are designed to appeal to a wide audience. They reflect commonly used rhetorical strategies because audiences demand that texts be written according to their expectations. The process of studying popular culture is liberating for ESL students because it integrates learning about academic essay writing with broader cultural concerns.

Certainly there is a limit to how much we can teach our ESL students in one or two semesters, but we can help them a great deal by developing curricula that target rhetorical knowledge in a broad cultural sense. ESL students must learn how to address rhetorical expectations by using linguistic conventions that are appropriate to a given context, design texts for particular audiences, and decide on and employ corresponding rhetorical strategies. The more students understand about their readers' expectations, the more effectively they learn to communicate their ideas. By incorporating popular culture texts into the ESL composition curriculum, we create a program that helps students address these issues in practical, accessible ways. It is by actively targeting American culture as a focus of study and helping students develop tools to appreciate these materials on their own that we can make effective changes in composition programs for ESL students.

Appendix A: Notes to Chapters

Notes to Chapter One

¹ As Robin Scarcella points out in her study of ESL writers, students who have lived in the US for eight years or more frame their written work much as native speakers do (686).

² Student samples will be quoted verbatim.

³ The distinction between "acquisition" and "learning" is a central concept in second language pedagogy (see especially Krashen 73-76). (Note that the field itself is "second language acquisition.") Prior to the 1970s it was assumed that the way to become fluent in a second language was through grammar translation and similar structuralist methods (Leki, Understanding 6). Students learned rules for language and applied them to exercises. The problem was that students could not generalize this knowledge to real instances of language use; they could not supply the correct forms if engaged in conversation. In contrast, Noam Chomsky found that children pick up language in a more natural way because they are constantly exposed to language and have an innate ability to organize linguistic structures. Because the skills are picked up unconsciously, children can apply them to other situations. Thus, Chomsky argues, rightly, that the most effective second language instruction builds on this natural system (Acquisition, Aspects, Syntactic).

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ There is disagreement about Spade's motives. It is hard to tell if Spade wants to avoid "playing the sap," as he claims (Maxfield 258), whether he's holding out for more of a reward (Lehman 156), making the difficult choice between serving society and serving himself (Metress 255), or being realistic in a difficult world (Cawelti 165). Macdonald and Grella suggest that Spade's reactions stem from moral concerns of taking correct actions against the killer of one's partner, the code of the detective world, and Spade's personal code of justice ("Writer" 182; "Hard-Boiled" 108). I have chosen the literal sense of Spade's explanation by taking his words at face value, which, thematically, is a logical interpretation.

² Hammett's novel was first produced as Roy del Ruth's 1931 The Maltese Falcon, then as William Dieterle's 1936 Satan Was a Lady.

Appendix B: Writing Apprehension Survey

February 1994

The following questionnaire will be used as part of a study on composition for ESL students. Thanks for your participation.

Please answer the following:

1. How many hours a day do you use English outside of class?
2. What makes writing in English difficult?
3. What makes writing in English easy?

Your country _____

Native language(s) _____

Sex _____

Age _____

Number of years in America to date _____

Number of years you've studied English _____

Writing in Your Native Language

Directions: Below are a series of statements about writing. There are no right or wrong answers. Please indicate whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), are uncertain (U), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD).

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. I avoid writing in my own language. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 2. I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 3. Handing in a composition makes me feel good. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 4. My mind seems to go blank when I work on a composition | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 5. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 6. I like to write my ideas down. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 7. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 8. People seem to enjoy what I write. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 9. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 10. When I hand in a composition I know I'm going to do poorly. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 11. It's easy for me to write a good composition. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 12. I don't think I write as well as most other people. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 13. I'm no good at writing. | SA | A | U | D | SD |

* These questions are adapted from the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Scale (Daly 45).

Writing in English

Directions: Below are a series of statements about writing. There are no right or wrong answers. Please indicate whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), are uncertain (U), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD).

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. I avoid writing in English. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 2. I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 3. Handing in a composition makes me feel good. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 4. My mind seems to go blank when I work on a composition | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 5. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 6. I like to write my ideas down. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 7. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 8. People seem to enjoy what I write. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 9. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 10. When I hand in a composition I know I'm going to do poorly. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 11. It's easy for me to write a good composition. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 12. I don't think I write as well as most other people. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 13. I'm no good at writing. | SA | A | U | D | SD |

* These questions are adapted from the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Scale (Daly 45).

Appendix C: Popular Culture Survey

April 1994

Please fill out the following survey; it will be used as part of a dissertation on cultural studies.

Your native country _____

Age _____

Sex _____

First language _____

If your first language is not English, how many years have you spoken English? _____

How many years have you studied English? _____

What do the following refer to? Please explain, identify, or define:

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Whitewater | 7) Branford Marsallis |
| 2) Gilligan's Island | 8) substance abuse |
| 3) PMS | 9) Dr. Suess |
| 4) That sucks. | 10) dissertation |
| 5) JFK | 11) co-dependency |
| 6) Niagara Falls | 12) Harrison Ford |

- 34) Steven King writes a) editorials b) novels c) poetry.
- 35) The Dallas Cowboys are a) farmers b) football players c) country singers.
- 36) Where the Wild Things Are is a a) TV movie b) nature series c) children's book.
- 37) Tonya Harding is a a) skater b) lawyer c) police woman.
- 38) Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks" is a a) painting b) song c) crime show.
- 39) Watergate refers to a a) movie b) political scandal c) restaurant.
- 40) De Grazia is the name of a) an artist b) a tenor c) a line of clothing.
- 41) Epcot Center is a) an outdoor market b) a theme park c) a theater.
- 42) Goldberg and Osborne are a) lawyers b) doctors c) jurors.
- 43) Tom Sawyer is a a) troublemaker b) wrestler c) businessman.
- 44) Hooters is controversial because of its a) food b) prices c) staff.
- 45) NRA members are interested in a) photography b) machinery c) firearms.
- 46) The Everglades are in a) North Carolina b) New Mexico c) Florida.
- 47) Holly Hunter won an Oscar for a) The Piano b) The Firm c) The Chase.
- 48) Scarlett O'Hara's story takes place during the a) Depression b) Roaring Twenties c) Civil War.
- 49) Jim Click sells a) insurance b) cars c) washing machines.
- 50) A mariachi is a a) dessert b) music group c) dance.

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