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EXPLORING VISUAL LEARNING IN THE  
BASIC WRITING CLASSROOM

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition

---

by  
Prince Michael Ferguson  
December 2003

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BASIC WRITING CLASSROOM

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## ABSTRACT

In the early nineteen seventies, Mina Shaughnessy pointed to the problem of students arriving at community colleges and universities unprepared to engage in their academic education. Since her seminal text *Errors and Expectations* teachers have confronted student deficiencies and have had some successes, yet thirty years later when the demand for reading and writing are essential at all levels of the work force, the problem of student unpreparedness still resonates in academic discussions. Consequently, since traditional methods are not working for all students, some educators/researchers are employing alternative methods to assist these students.

For many students in basic writing classrooms the language of writing assignments, essay prompts and required reading is especially difficult. Therefore, some teachers are using approaches other than logical or linguistic methods to assist these students. This thesis details some of the methods teacher/researchers are using. Most significant is a case study that explores the use of visuals in a basic writing classroom. The results of the case study and a survey instrument suggest that there is a niche for alternative methods and the use of visuals in the basic writing classrooms.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Especially, I wish to thank and dedicate this thesis to Kellie Rayburn whose untimely death occurred shortly after the research for this thesis had been completed in her classes. Although ill at the time the research was in process, Kellie gallantly assisted her students and me. Kellie was also a member of my thesis committee. Other committee members are Dr. Carol Peterson Haviland advisor and Dr. Rong Chen reader. Without the guidance and suggestions from all committee members this thesis would not have been completed. Finally, I wish thank my mother Rosetta Ferguson for believing in me.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Writing and reading are essential for workers at all levels of the work force, according to National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). Emphasizing critical literacy particularly, the NAEP stresses the ability to question sources, to look for assumptions, to read for intention rather than just facts, and then to transform this information:

Skills in reducing data, interpreting it, packaging it effectively, documenting decisions, explaining complex matter in simple terms, and persuading are highly prized in business, education and the military and will become more so as the information explosion continues (Flower et al. 5).

Yet due to many factors, including social, political, and academic, students are arriving at universities unprepared to engage in the critical literacies required of them. The language of writing assignments, essay prompts, and other required reading is especially difficult for them, so many students need help decoding written and verbal

instructions, readings, and assignments. Two of the problems are that the language is often abstract (the terms are unfamiliar or unknown) and that familiar words are used in new semantic environments. For example, the word "reflect" commonly means to throw back heat, light, or someone's image in a mirror (Webster 563). However, the same word used in academic assignments more often means to mediate or ponder a contested issue or one's writing and then writes about it.

Educators have devised a number of approaches to help students decode and confront their assignments, but most of these approaches use linguistic and logical skills. However, alternative methods, which emphasize multiple intelligences along with the linguistic and logical, are available but less often used.

For example, Denise Stephenson reports, in her article "Constructive Toys: More than a good time," on kinesthetic, spatial, and visual intelligences. Stephenson suggests that constructive toys are a form of play that can reduce the negative feelings associated with writing projects and thus help students both understand and complete written assignments. On the importance of play,

Stephenson cites Robert Ochsner's statement from *The Physical Eloquence and Biology of Writing*:

Simply put language play makes writing an enjoyable task, and if we enjoy doing something, that satisfaction becomes its own reward.

Moreover, the quality of writing improves. Students who enjoy writing will practice often, and their work will have a meaningful objective: personal excellence. Thus play becomes its own purpose (Stephenson 7).

To assist students with writing assignments, Stephenson used color and toys like legos and had the students manipulate sets of building toys that represented their writing assignments. She states, "toys create a playful atmosphere where right and wrong disappear and abstract ideas are manifest concretely" (1). She explains how the interaction of toys, color and play work together to help students:

The most typical scenario involved a couple of group members fingering the toys as they started talking about the topic. Suddenly, one person would take charge and establish a modeling principle, such as specific colors representing

either certain points or particular structural elements for the piece. For example, anything blue in the project might refer to the ocean, or more abstractly, the blue might be agreement among characters. An example of a structural principle might be a series of yellow connectors that separate the two sides of a compare/contrast essay (2).

Stephenson asserts that when the builders explain their creation, "They may have suddenly recognized that they've built elements that express their ideas more fluently than they'd imagined (4)."

Other practitioners have suggested an array of alternative possibilities to assist students in approaching, understanding and completing assignments. Examples are *Talking Texts* by Randal Holme, which focuses on drawings, textual cardiograms, comic strips, pictures, paintings and various styles of maps. Quentin Brand states in "Art and art galleries: resources for teachers" that "responding to art calls on the imagination, which enriches and facilitates learning, and stimulates the recall of vocabulary and structure..." (34). As a method of engaging basic writing students, J. Milton Clark suggests

a non-traditional pedagogical text—Rap music. According to Clark, “rap is a place where ideas are expressed in a culture that does not want to hear our voice. The focus could be on themes like civil disobedience and censorship and comparisons to Martin Luther King and Ghandi” (Clark). In commenting on her textbook *The Medium of Wordless Picture Books: An Overview of Classroom Applications*, Trudy Wilson maintains that:

Long before our ancestors used organized language, communication was accomplished through facial expression and gesture. As verbal language developed, visual imagery also developed as a viable means of expression and record keeping. Important events were documented with painted, drawn, and carved visual symbols. Cave walls in various parts of the world hold evidence of hunting procedures and tribal rituals in the form of paintings and carvings done by Paleolithic peoples. As civilization and language developed, these became more sequentially organized, much like sentences. As communication became more important for

sociological, political, and religious reasons, simplified pictures symbols were created (5).

What is being suggested is that there are many ways that students can be helped in decoding, understanding and responding to unfamiliar reading, writing and language learning situations.

In the preface to their text, *Patterns in Popular Culture: a Sourcebook for Writers*, Harold Schechter and Jonna Semeiks employ material not ordinarily studied in composition courses: sections of comic books, chapters from popular novels (detective, horror, science fiction), Sunday newspaper comic strips, rock and country-western songs, a scene from a Marx Brothers' movie. The authors cite Northrop Fry who contends in *Anatomy of Criticism* that popular literature can be defined as "literature which affords an unobstructed view of archetypes... which give expression to human experience" (xviii). Archetypal models are universal and familiar to all at some level of consciousness. They have found:

that classroom discussions for movies, pop music, and comic books tend to be extremely animated. Generally, students are both knowledgeable and enthusiastic about this kind

of material. They are certainly not intimidated by it and have solid ideas and strong opinions about it. As a result, they are able not only talk but also to write about it with confidence, verve, and conviction (xvii).

Schechter and Smeiks state that a very fruitful approach to the popular arts is one produced by literary myth criticism. Their premise is that certain fundamental patterns or archetypes, stories, themes, situations, are repeated in myths, fairy tales, and classic literature all over the world. But these same patterns also appear in popular art: "Indeed, it is often easier to distinguish them there than in more complex, highly elaborated patterns," (xviii). In several of the above heuristics, the mental as well as the physical dimension is used to absorb information.

This passage from *Visual Literacy in Ancient and Modern Man*, by Hillel A. Schiller, describes how important visual literacy has been for the evolution of human kind. Schiller states:

Ancient man was highly visually literate. The development of this complex perceptual/expression capacity took millennia to

evolve under the influence of a highly stimulating environment and a highly active imagination that combined to produce forms and patterns for interior and exterior manipulation. Early man's naming everything in sight that could be useful, dangerous, beautiful or a controlling classification, impossible without careful visual identification of properties older than what happened in the caves of Altimira and the more than 200 other caves found with human artifacts in them (265).

Schiller goes on to state, "humans have created a multitude of symbolic systems to deal with the complexities of living in a...technologically oriented world [which] demand[s] high levels of visual literacy." Because he sees writing as merely verbal sounds and symbols that have been given meaning, Schiller urges educators to rediscover visual literacy. Schiller offers several definitions of visual literacy, but her citation of John Hortin's definition is most succinct "the ability to understand the use of images, including the ability to think, learn and express oneself in terms of images" (267). Schiller adds:

Just as our notion of literacy in the past took many years to incorporate universal reading and writing, so again our notion of literacy, in the future will expand to incorporate visual literacy, in television literacy and computer literacy (269).

Focusing on the range of visual literacy, Norman A. Buktenica describes visual over-achievers in his article "Over-Achievers":

An interesting notion, presented by Silberberg and Silberberg (1967) suggests that some children have an especially high level of development in the visual modality. They introduce the concept of hyperlexia in reference to a specific word recognition skill referred to in the literature as "over-achieving" of young children which seems to exceed their general capabilities and intelligence. They feel that hyperlexia suggests a continuum of word recognition skills which may exist separate and apart from general verbal functioning and ability. They also report that some of the children that they have examined had extremely

well developed skills in visual perception and that the hyperlexia represented a specific talent. Perhaps children displaying this specific ability might account for some of the children referred to in the literature as "over achievers" (30-31).

But, of course, all sighted people are visual learners. Visual learning and visual knowledge is omnipresent in all world cultures. Humans exist in an inner and outer visual world. One of the most obvious inner visual realms is the dream, which is seen with the "mind's eye" in the conscious or unconscious state. Often humans think and visualize in picture form. Even while we are reading, pictures form in our minds, as John Gardner points out in *The Art of Fiction: a Guide for Young Writers*. Gardner describes what he calls the fictional dream:

We read a few words at the beginning of the book of the particular story, and suddenly we find ourselves seeing not words on the page but a train moving through Russia, an old Italian crying, or a farmhouse battered by rain. We read on—dream on—not passively but actively, worrying about the choices the characters have to make,

listening in panic for some sound behind the fictional door, exulting in the characters' successes, bemoaning their failures. In great fiction, the dream engages us heart and soul; we not only respond to imaginary things—sights, sounds, smells—as though they were real, we respond to fictional problems as though they were real: we sympathize, think and judge (31).

Gardner's description of the fictional dream shows the connection between reading, writing and visualization, and the way each informs the others through interaction. Although the capability for visual literacy is innate, much of it has to be learned.

In *Mental Representations: A Dual Coding Approach*, Allen Paivio discusses the ambidextrous nature of human cognition:

Human cognition is unique in that it has become specialized for dealing simultaneously with language system is peculiar in that it deals directly with linguistic input [in the form of speech and writing] while at the same time serving a symbolic function with respect to nonverbal objects, events, and behaviors. Any

representational theory must accommodate this functional duality (53).

Because students have this ambidexterity of dealing with both verbal and nonverbal input, teachers might employ both abilities, especially if students are having difficulty with logical and linguistic traditional forms. Paivio illustrates further the value of employing visual intelligence:

Pictures of familiar objects are recognized equally well when presented to either hemisphere whereas printed names are recognized better when presented to the left hemisphere, right visual field (265).

Immediate intake by the brain of pictures, photos, and closely related forms like paintings, drawings and cartoons is an innate ability that humans have developed and honed over the millennia. Thus, Paivio argues that use of visual intelligence is not going back to primitive standards or beliefs but a re-grasping and using of an ability modern society needs (264).

In chapter two, I use an original case study to illustrate the important role visuals might play in basic writing instruction.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CASE STUDY

My research employed the case study method in the tradition of Linda Flower (*Read-To-Write*) and Janet Emig' ("The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders"). The purpose of my research was to investigate the use of visuals in the form of travel brochures, cartoons and comic strips to assist students in understanding writing assignments and then producing effective compositions. The data were obtained from survey questionnaires, presentations and student essays. The research was initiated and completed during a ten week period during the Spring Quarter (March-June 2001) in a basic writing class (English 85B) at California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB). The class met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from noon to 1:50 p.m.

Twelve students began the course, but only ten students completed the course. The students were typical of student ethnic diversity at California's universities. Three students had Hispanic surnames, two students had Vietnamese backgrounds, two students were African Americans, one student was an African immigrant, another was an Egyptian immigrant and the tenth student was an

exchange student from Japan. The gender distribution was six females and four males. Class attendance was irregular. An average of five to seven students attended each class, which accounts for the missing students responses for some of the survey questions and the missing essays.

The University Bulletin states that the course objective is to prepare students for university academic writing. The instructor's stated objective on the syllabus are—"this course is designed to exercise and expand your fundamental writing skill and prepare you for the rigors of English 101 as well as the demands of cross disciplinary university writing." In addition the syllabus stated that students must complete three essays, all in some way reflecting an argument.

The 85B course is the second in the basic writing sequence of courses for students scoring in the lowest quartile on the English Placement Test (EPT).

The instructor's method was to present topic situations to the students, and then have class discussion. After discussion, the students then freewrote on these topics in class. Often after the freewriting, the instructor conducted a second discussion on the ideas the

free writing had generated. For example, after students had finished free writing about an argument they had had with a friend or family member, the instructor led them in a discussion of their argument responses, pointing out elements of argument they had used. The instructor selected a text for the course based on argument.

The course text was *everything's an argument*, by Andrea A. Lunsford and John J. Ruszhiewicz. According to the authors, their purpose for the text directly connects to current media use:

As the influence of visual and electronic media has become everywhere more pervasive, we've looked for a text that would show students, directly and briefly, that "everything is an argument." We wanted a book that would focus on concrete examples and would engage in understanding, criticizing, and most important—participating in arguments (*everything's v*).

Although the instructor did not make chapter 15 on visual arguments a focal point of her instruction, the chapter complemented my research with discussion captions such as, "The Power of Visual arguments, Shaping the Message,

Achieving Visual Literacy, Analyzing Visual Elements and Using Visuals in Your own Arguments."

The instructor gave the first essay assignment verbally. The essay, a reflective narrative, was to be based on a controversy that the student had experienced at the age of twelve with their peers, families or others. The essay had to be built around the experience of being a odds with the group. The instructor's objective was to help students recognize the tenets of argument they had employed as they defended their positions.

The second essay assignment was delivered to the students via the chalkboard. The students were to take a position on a topic and to argue for their positions. The students were directed to pick a small (a) topic, not a big (A) topic. As examples, she asked the students which taste better tea or coffee, Coke or Pepsi? The students contributed topics such as, showers or baths and who is the greatest basketball player Kobe Bryant or Michael Jordan?

The third essay was a research task that required students to search sources such as newspapers, books, magazines and Internet sites to obtain information about the day of their birth. They had to investigate news

events, cultural issues and social situations to discover a relationship between those elements and to make connection to themselves in their present lives. Some suggestions were to look at music, fashion, politics and social relationships. Students were to use at least one of those elements to show how it influenced who they had become.

While completing the three essays, the students were required to have six appointments at the Writing Center. In addition, they analyzed essays during peer editing workshops to learn how to collaborate with other students.

My involvement in the class was through my presentations and casual conversations with the students about their writing projects. My objectives were to reinforce the instructor's methods and to determine the effectiveness of the visuals. I used travel brochures for my first presentation (See Appendix A Figure 1). I had two objectives: I wanted to introduce visuals to the class before using them to assist students with their writing assignments, and I wanted to make a connection between the visual and the title of the textbook, *everything's an argument*.

The brochures advertised a variety of United States national parks, museums, wineries, and resort cities. I used no Southern California venues because I wanted an objective analysis from the students. I asked the students to carefully analyze the brochures to determine what made them effective advertising tools. They were reminded that someone had carefully planned the brochures. I then clustered their responses on the chalkboard. Some of their responses were, "exciting colors," "exciting language," "pictures of people having fun," "animation and prices." This helped students see how the advertisers argued for their products. The presentation lasted for 25 minutes.

For my second presentation, I focused on idiomatic expressions and clichés because the instructor had cautioned the students on the use of clichés in their essays. Most of the students did not know about idioms. After the instructor defined the term and gave verbal examples, I offered an example on the chalkboard using the word bottleneck. I explained that the term bottleneck was not only a word that represented a bottle's neck, but also a traffic condition. On the chalkboard, I drew a bottle with an extended neck. Next, I drew a freeway traffic condition. I showed how merging traffic seen from the air

would have the appearance of a bottle's neck. The presentation lasted thirty minutes.

To provide more examples for the students, I brought a visual handout to the next class. The handout featured two cartoon characters (See Appendix A figure 2) acting out situations that also were described in written text. The titles of the idiomatic cartoons are "Bite the Bullet" and "Face the Music." The message of the former is that one must endure in a difficult situation; the message for the latter is that one must accept the consequences for their actions. A student asked how such expressions developed. To further explain the idiom "Bite the Bullet," I gave a verbal example of someone needing painful medical care: amputation, tooth extraction and even childbirth before the use of anesthetic drugs, for example. I explained that the patient simply had to endure and bite an actual bullet or some other object as a distraction from the pain. After my explanation, we began a discussion of idioms and slang expressions used by the youth of today. The students suggested the following idiomatic expressions: "hold me down," which means take care of me, "I feel you," which means I can relate, and "off the hook," which means something that is well liked. Then they

enumerated alternative idiomatic terms for money: cheese, cheddar, paper, chips and dead presidents.

The focus of my third presentation was the first major essay assignment, the reflective narrative essay that dealt with a controversy that the students had experienced. The controlling idea was that the student had to be at odds with a group. The instructor required the students to give specific details in recalling the event. She wanted the readers of the students' essays to vicariously participate in the situations the students wrote about. She asked the class for examples of specific detail and received student input. The assignment was due in one week. For the next class meeting I brought a handout from a book of cartoons, *Hamburger Madness* illustrated by Hal Ziegler. The handout "Details" featured a detective wearing a raincoat and a hat. The detective is riding an elevator describing, apparently, an unfamiliar experience (See Appendix A Figure 3). My goal was to give students an example of the power of details in descriptive writing. While the students analyzed the handout, they had humorous looks on their faces and seem to understand the example. The presentation lasted thirty minutes.

The second essay was the focus of my fourth presentation. Again the instructor gave the assignment verbally. The students' task was to pick a non-serious topic and argue one side. Before giving this assignment, the instructor and I had discussed possible writing problems students might encounter. The teacher suggested the students might fail to consider their audiences as they composed their essays. To forestall that omission, I passed out a handout of a man miming a toaster and a fuse box (See Appendix A Figure 4). My purpose was to prompt students to remember their audience. I questioned the students as to how they thought the handout connected to their essays. At first the students did not connect the visual to their assignment, so I asked them, where could the character possibly be miming: a park, a stage, a bedroom? Finally someone said "audience." Then a discussion ensued about considering audience for their papers.

After the instructor gave the assignment for the third essay, the research paper, many students were not clear on what was required. Their confusion centered on the instructor requirement that they make a connection between the day of their birth and their present lives.

The students did not understand how the connection was to be made. To further illustrate what she wanted, the instructor used music as an example. She stated, "You might find something on the day of your birth about music and can connect to the kind of music that you enjoy today." After her explanation, the class seemed to have more insight on how to approach the assignment, but still some were puzzled. Because there had been some confusion, I developed my fifth and final presentation.

For my final presentation, I had a six page handout taken from the comic magazine *SHAZAM*, by Denny O'Neil (writer) and C.C. Beck (illustrator), which was featured in Harold Schechter's and Jonna Gronmerly Semeiks' text *Patterns in Popular Culture: A Sourcebook for Writers*. The authors contend that using popular media is an excellent method to reach students. I chose the comic strip, which had been formerly marketed as Captain Marvel in *Whiz Comics* in the 1940s, because I discovered four features that could possibly be used as connections for the students' research essay. The first connection centered on the protagonist Billy Batson. Similar to the task of the students, Batson takes the reader back twenty years in time (See Appendix figure 5). The earlier time does not

depict Batson's birth but the birth of the other half of Batson's character—Captain Marvel, the super hero. The second connection was Batson's meeting with the mysterious figure that led him to the wizard SHAZAM who transformed Batson into Captain Marvel. Batson's transformation connects to his present life in the comic book. This connection is similar to the connection the students had to make in their papers. The fourth connection I found was how O'Neil and Beck used written and illustrated text to create transitions as they told their story. In order for the students to create successful papers their transitions had to connect their paper cohesively as well.

I defined the term transition as change or movement that shows a relationship. Then, I explained why transitions are needed between words, ideas and paragraphs. To illustrate visually how transitions are used, on the chalkboard I drew lines representing a freeway containing on and off ramps. The freeway's on and off ramps represented transitions. Next, I asked the class to read through the SHAZAM text and find the transitions. They were able to locate most of the transitions of place and time. Two examples are, "It started a long time ago! I was a newsboy hawking papers at a subway entrance on cold

night..." and "We traveled to the end of the line, where my strange companion led me into the mouth of a cavern." The class seemed to be amused at the comic story and interested in how the comic strip could assist them in their writing. The duration for the final presentation was 55 minutes.

In addition to the visual presentations, I used two survey questionnaires. One of the survey instruments was Linda Flower's survey, "Reflecting on your writing process," which I used as Pre and Post analysis of the students' writing experience—how they compose and how they feel about writing. The second survey focused directly on the effectiveness of the visual, which will be detailed in the next chapter. Finally, in chapter 4, I will analyze one student's essays to see if visuals influenced the student's writing.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

This project centered on the effectiveness of visuals in assisting basic writers. Establishing a profile of the students' writing experience, I thought would be helpful for my research. Therefore, I used two survey instruments, one, which I created, to evaluate the effectiveness of the visuals ("End of the Quarter reflective Writing Survey") and Linda Flower's survey "Reflecting on Your Writing", which illuminates the writing experience and emotions of basic writers (See Appendix B). The survey I created was used once, at the end of the research period. The Flower survey was used twice—at the beginning and end of the research period. Although the Flower survey provided valuable data on students' writing experience, one limitation of the Flower survey is that it does not offer a specific link to the visual research. Therefore, I can only suggest hypothetical links. For example, question (3) asked students how they felt about school writing. Students might feel better about school writing if, through the use of visuals, they understood the assignments better. Questions (4) and (5) focused on time-

time spent on the actual writing and if the time spent was about what was needed for the project. Generally, students felt the writing took more time than it should. For this reason, students might be willing to invest more time writing if they understood what they were doing rather than groping, and their writing might be more productive as well (question (6)). Likewise, the students might start writing sooner (question (7)) if the visuals helped to make the assignment more concrete. In addition, the student might not feel so anxious (question (8)) if they felt sure about the assignment. These limited examples illustrate possible links between the Flower survey and the visual research. If I could begin this research again, I would ask specific questions connecting the visuals and the Flower survey. Still the data created by the Flower survey are significant because of the well rounded student profiles provided. The following are the survey questions and a brief summary of responses.

#### Flower Survey Questions and Responses:

1. List three pieces of writing you have produced in the last year. All students indicated limited experience in writing. Their experience varied: letter writing, journal writing and essay writing.

2. In general, how do you feel about writing? Although some students have not make a decision about their writing, others are disenchanting by academic writing.
3. How do you feel about school writing? Since there is not a definite mandate of opinion in their responses this indicates a decision has not been made by most.
4. Does you writing take about the time you think it should? Generally, students indicated that the writing projects take more time than it should.
5. How long did you spend writing the last three papers you wrote? One categorizing statement can't be made here because writing school workload and time needed to complete writing assignments are relative to each student. Yet often students indicated waiting until the last minute to complete assignments. Fear and procrastination are probably important to consider here as well.
6. Do you usually write a piece in one sitting, or do you work on sections? The optimal response for this question is that they are composing their papers in sections thoughtfully, not rushing at the last minute. The students indicated they are waiting until

just before the assignments are due to complete the assignment.

7. Do you often end up doing the actual writing of papers under pressure—at the last minute? Generally students indicated they were writing under pressure at the last minute. Writing under pressure was viewed negatively by some students, but others viewed writing under pressure positively because their writing was better.
8. When you receive a school writing assignment, what are the first thoughts that spring to you mind? The responses form two categories. One group experienced anxiety after receiving an assignment. The other group thought positively about completing the assignment.
9. Do you have any of these writing problems? The survey listed several areas where students usually have writing difficulties. The three areas students were most concerned about are, getting started, developing a thesis statement and not straying from the topic.
10. What rituals help you write your best? Time of day, atmosphere, equipment, and sleep are important for the students.

11. What is your greatest strength as a writer? For the most part students did not think of themselves as having strength as writers.

12. What three elements of writing would you like to work on this quarter? Their responses ranged widely over the writing process, but indicated students are aware of the writing process and would like to develop their writing.

Student responses to the Flower survey although not specifically linked to the visual research do, however, provide valuable data in three areas: students' reactions to writing assignments, their writing process and how they view themselves as writers. This more rounded picture might suggest future composition pedagogy. For example, in the future perhaps visuals might be used to explain a writing assignment prior to the assignment being given, which might lessen the anxiety experience by many students when an assignment is received. Conversely, the "End of the Quarter Reflective Writing Survey" does provide a specific link between students' responses and the survey instrument.

## Findings and Conclusion

The major problem reported for the essays, regardless of the topic, was finding a topic and a path to approach the topic. Generally, the students found that the visuals helped them understand the assignment and drafting their essays. Visual (E), the comic strip entitled "Research Paper," was favored by the students. This is probably due to the connections made to their final writing assignment and their familiarity with the comic book genre. Additionally, the presentation was longer than the others (55 minutes); Likewise, the presenter and students were more experience with the use of visuals as a teaching heuristic.

Overall, the conclusion that can be drawn is that any teaching tool that half a class finds useful might be considered for use in writing classrooms. However, teachers and students should have prior knowledge of visuals and their usefulness. Teachers should carefully choose visuals that are applicable for the writing assignment. Future research might focus on how one predicts and finds visuals that are beneficial for both students and teachers.

The data provided by the surveys though significant is only partially informative of the possible influence of visuals. However, if the use of visuals has influenced the written product, evidence should be apparent in student essays.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ESSAY ANALYSIS

Essay analysis was needed to determine if the visual were effective in assisting students with the actual written product. The essays were requested on a voluntary basis. Due to the instructor's illness and therefore poor attendance near the end of the research period, I was able to acquire only one complete essay set (See Appendix C).

As previously stated, the first essay assigned was a reflective narrative based on an event or situation in which the students found themselves at odds with their peers, families or others.

As the assignment required, the essay begins with a general to specific introduction. The student describes America as a good place to study and have new experiences as background information but gets to the point of her essay in the last sentence in the first paragraph:

A lot of Japanese are studying aboard in various countries, and lately a number of Japanese have been wanting to do that. Almost everyone has hankered for America at least once. I am one of them. The image of the U.S. is that it is big,

it has freedom, and it makes us feel like we can put our possibilities to a good account. Moreover, it might be the most wonderful experience for everyone in the whole in the whole life. However, it is not easy to study abroad. Many problems arise when a student goes and lives in, another country. Outsiders think it is good and envy me because I decided to study in America, but my parents and my close people opposed my decision (1).

Although her position is not explicitly stated in the thesis statement her thesis statement demonstrates she is addressing the assignment. Her essay goes back to an earlier time and shows discord with her family and close friends. The student's method of argument is to present the claims of her parents' argument and then to counter their argument with her claims.

The second paragraph states the first claim of her parents' argument:

It is believed in Japan the environment in America is dangerous because America is a gun society. The information reported on television and in newspapers planted the image of an

dangerous America the biggest reason for opposition of my parents was that point. in addition, I am a girl, so the possibilities of being a victim of a crime is higher (1).

The parents' argument is that America is a dangerous place especially for females. In the third paragraph the student counters the claim of the parents. She states, "Many non-Americans can live in America safely because trouble does not always happen and there ways to avert danger." Then she list the ways foreign students can avoid danger:

Choose comparatively safe places...know about such things as environment, legislation, customs, culture, and life style of America's dangerous areas and safe areas... live in dormitory or stay with host family...use a company that fixes up studying abroad (2).

The support the student provides for her claim neutralizes the claim made by her parents.

Although danger was the core of the parents' overall argument, the logistics of when and where the student should attend school and travel formed their second claim. Since the student was already attending a university in Japan, the parents wanted the student to finish her

education in Japan and then travel to the United States. The student counters their claim in paragraph five. She states that American universities are better than Japanese universities for several reasons:

In Japan, students don't study, classes are large and passive, whereas in America the classes are student oriented and America offers an irreplaceable experience (3-4).

She goes on to support her claim with the following points:

Most of all classes are too big, as huge as a lecture class in the U.S., and the classes are passive lecture for students. Regardless what students are doing a professor begins and finishes the class without caring. For instance, although some students sitting in the classroom are chatting and some are talking by cellular phone, a professor does not scold. What both professor and students are doing in the class are just talking, writing on the blackboard without any enthusiasm, and taking notes (4).

This quotation illustrates the use of details in description as the typical Japanese classroom is

described. Perhaps the visual "Details" assisted the student in creating the description.

The last claim in her argument is that studying abroad is a valuable experience. She underpins this claim with the following examples:

It also supplies a ton of irreplaceable experience. I can learn many cultures from various people from other countries. I can learn their languages, cultures and customs. We have rarely opportunities to have international friends in Japan. To know them and to learn each country each other are good for everyone (4).

The student's claims are supported by a thorough and convincing argument.

The second essay "Home stay vs. Dormitory" is an inductive rhetorical essay. The visual presentation for this essay centered on reminding students to consider their audiences. Instead of arguing and supporting one side of an argument, the student presents possible positive and negative aspects of the argument and then informs readers of her position in the last paragraph:

Therefore, although both home stay and dormitory have strong points and weak points, home stay is

better way to live in foreign country. Through the life in home stay, we can learn not only English but also a lot of new culture and customs. We can experience a lot of irreplaceable activities in new country. To know real American life, it is best to be in American family and to live with them (5).

The overall positive points she made for both sides of the argument are that both offer exposure to the American culture for the foreign student. The following illustrates one of the specific points made for living with a host family:

According to Shogo Ishida, who used to live with host family, 'he could be very friendly with his host family. He had a conversation time after the dinner, and it was very beneficial for him to improve his speaking skills. In the weekend, his host family took him somewhere such as parties, amusement grounds, and shopping. His family treated him a member of true family' (2).

The major negative points she presented for both sides of the argument are the difficulties foreign students have interacting with native speakers of English. The following

quotation is from an interview she conducted about dormitory life:

Moreover, according to kyoko Suda, who used to live in the dormitory, 'If the roommate is not a good person and he/she is not getting along very nicely with each other, it is hard to live in the same room.' She felt that she was always watched out everything such as her action and her stuffs by her roommate. It made her tired to be with her roommate because of cultural differences (5).

The students examples and interviews demonstrate her effort to develop an informative and interesting essay.

The third essay assignment required students to research and develop an essay based on the day of their birth. Specifically, students had to make a connection from the day of their birth to their current lives and the person they have become. Although somewhat underdeveloped, the introduction clearly demonstrates the assignment was understood:

Everyone has his or her won history so far. Each person has walked on his or her path. We have been influenced by the aspects of life with

unconscious. The character comes by the way of wearing clothes. The thing related with me closely is the trend in fashion in the year I was born influenced my life(5).

The thesis statement confirms that the student understood that her essay must go back to the day of her birth; in addition the essay must show how that day has influenced the person she is in her present life.

In the second paragraph the writer takes the reader back to the place and day of her birth—Yokohama Japan, August 31, 1980. Then she begins her discussion of the connective influence in her life—fashion:

In this year [1980], in Japan, many popular singers started to come out of the world of entertainment, and they created a sensation of fashion...they were called 'New tra', 'Hama tra,' and 'Surfer Fashion' (1).

In paragraphs 3 through 5 the writer describes the different fashion styles and with whom those styles became popular. In her sixth paragraph she makes a direct connection to the present time and to herself:

Especially in my life for twenty years, I feel some relations with the fashion when I was born.

When I was a high school student, began to be interested in the trend in clothes. I read a lot of fashion magazines and went to various fashionable clothes shops in order to follow current fashion. These fashions connects with current fashion. I liked rather than be interested in fashionable brands such as LOUIS VUITTON, PRADA, AND CUCCI. Not only I but also other teenagers liked these brands and they got expensive goods. It was what is called boom. To have goods as regarded as a kind of fashionable person. People collected brand goods solidly. The brand popularity rose again when I was 18 to 19 years. I took Newtra fashion in my fashion... As this time, the Surfer boom arose. Young people favored tropical items such as accessory made of shells, hibiscus, and they wore colorful t-shirts and sandals. A lot of young people tanned their faces and bodies. They looked surfer all over. I was also absorbing in Surfer fashion (3-4).

In the third essay, the writer has applied the lessons of the visual entitled "Research Paper." For example, just as

the character Billy Batson has done in the comic strip, she takes the reader to an earlier time (about 20 years) to the day of her birth and connects that day to the person she has become in her present life. Captain Marvel is the connection for Batson. Fashion is the connection for the student. Transitions were used in the comic strip. One example is stated by Batson, "That was the beginning." This statement returns the reader to the present time. The student writer used two sentences to create a similar transition, "These trends in clothes are not only in the day I was born...These fashions connect with current fashion." Captain Marvel is an important part of Batson's life. Fashion is an important part of the student life.

Thus, the student understood each assignment and responded well. In the first essay, a point counter point argument is argued persuasively. For the second essay a contrastive argument was constructed, demonstrating the differences and similarities in Home Stay and Dormitory living for foreign students. In the third essay, the student was able to complete a challenging research project, successfully researching the day of her birth and finding a connection to her present life. From the essays alone, I cannot say with certainty that the visuals

directed and guided the decision made by the student as the essays were written. However, considering the student's survey responses as well, the influence appears likely.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

When conventional methods are not working or have not worked for all students, an unconventional approach is worth considering. Teachers and researchers are recognizing the need for alternative strategies that offer students a way to approach writing tasks that is instructive and fun. Since students possess multiple learning intelligences and innate propensities for visual stimuli, teachers should tap into these resources to aid students. If through the use of other intelligences besides the logical and the linguistic, students are helped to confront assignments and the negative feelings associated with writing assignments are reduced, other intelligences should be employed.

One study in itself cannot provide evidence of the value of a particular kind of alternative methodology in the basic writing classroom. Therefore, I hope further research will test the effectiveness of visuals as a heuristic on other populations of writers using the stimuli I have employed as well as other visual stimuli. Future research need not be limited to basic writers but

might include other levels of university academic writing. However, freshman courses across the curriculum are a good place to continue. According to Dr. Carol Peterson Haviland, CSUSB's Writing Center director, students come to basic writing classrooms and writing centers, believing they need more grammar, but in fact "they need ideas to get started and once they have their ideas and something to say, they can write (Haviland)." For students perhaps visuals can help to bridge the gap between the chaos they experience after receiving a writing assignment and the production of the final drafted essay.

APPENDIX A

FIGURES

# Where have all your heroes gone?

Annie Oakley, Sitting Bull, C. M. Russell,  
Frederic Remington, William F. Cody and more.  
Find them all in the four museums of the Buffalo  
Bill Historical Center.

*FOUR MUSEUMS UNDER  
ONE ROOF FOR ONE  
ADMISSION PRICE*

Buffalo Bill Museum  
Plains Indian Museum  
Cody Firearms Museum  
Whitney Gallery of Western Art  
McCracken Research Library



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# YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

TRAVELER INFO GUIDE

Wildlife Services  
Wildlife Spots  
Wildlife Section  
Wildlife  
Wildlife  
Wildlife



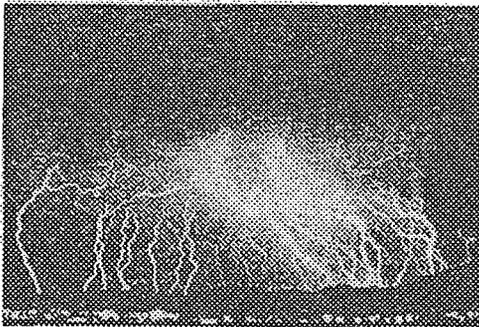
Fig. 1. Travel Brochures, from Buffalo Bill Historical Center. Cody Wy.

The Mohave Museum of History and Arts and the Bonelli House are high on the list of historic points of interest. And Kingman's multitude of restaurants and motels offer the amenities and ambience that every traveler appreciates.

Kingman has earned its reputation as the major crossroads of Highway 93 from Phoenix to Las Vegas, Nevada and Interstate 40 between Los Angeles and Albuquerque, New Mexico. But travelers are just beginning to discover that Kingman is a destination in its own right...a great place for sightseeing, relaxation and recreation.

Make a date — *anytime!* The climate here is moderate all year through. Kingman's 3,336 foot elevation is responsible for its cooler summer and mild winter temperatures. Enjoy a round of golf, a day trip through Arizona's rich mining history, or one of our spectacular Southwestern sunsets.

Whatever you choose to do in Kingman, you'll find it's worth the trip.



— Kingman —

Chamber of Commerce • 120 W. Andy Devine  
P.O. Box 1150 • Kingman, AZ 86402-1150  
520 753-6106

"In Cooperation with the City of Kingman"

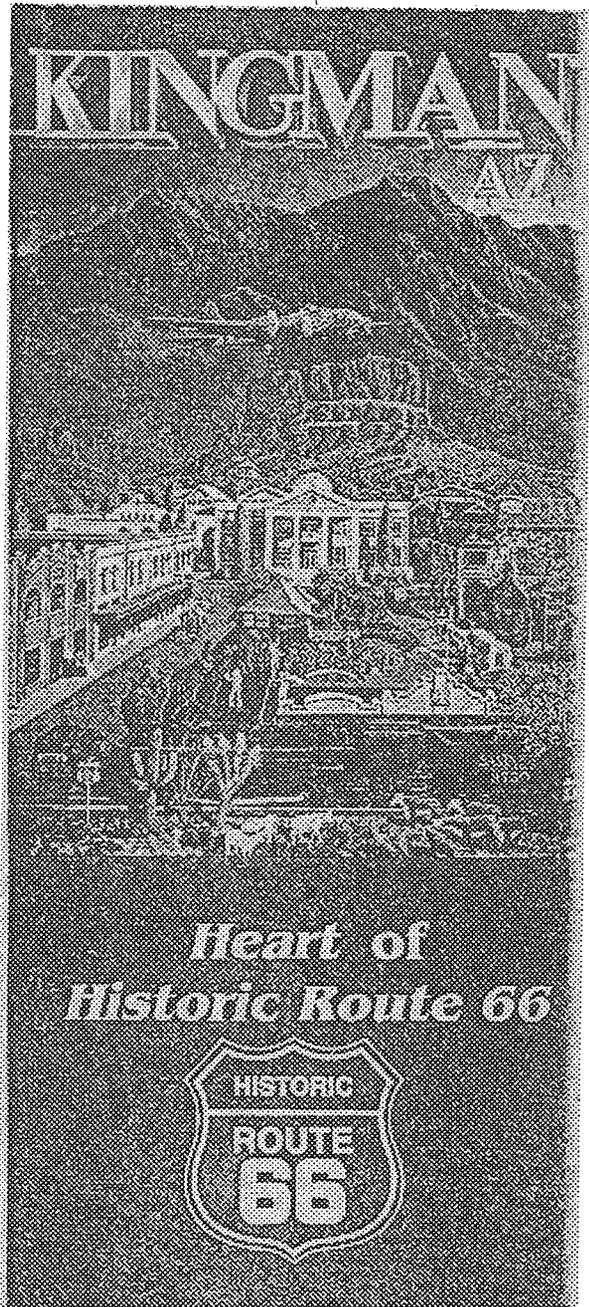
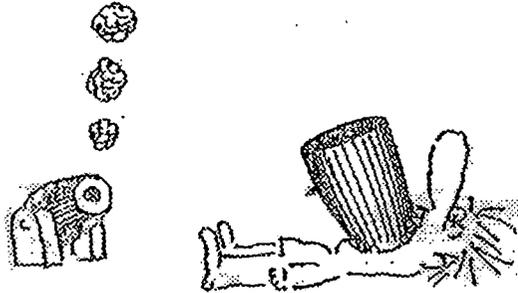


Fig. 2. Travel Brochures, from Kingman Chamber of Commerce. Kingman AZ.

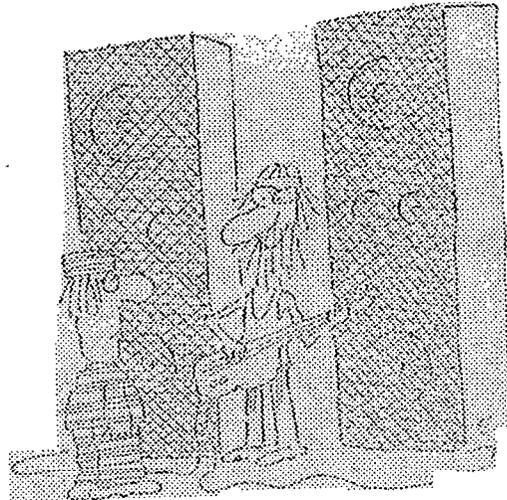
## Bite the Bullet



(endure in a difficult situation)

We really had a frightening experience when we went hunting last month.  
What happened?  
We got lost in the wilderness and had to bite the bullet until help arrived.  
Did you manage OK?  
Barely. We weren't prepared for the cold weather and we couldn't find any shelter. We had to endure in a very trying situation. We almost froze by the time they found us.

## Face the Music



(accept the consequences)

It's no wonder you have a stomachache. I told you not to eat so many green apples. You don't listen, and now you're going to have to face the music.  
The trouble with me is that I can't stop with just one or two, especially when they're so tart. I'll admit that I tend to forget that eventually I'm going to have to accept the consequences for what I've done. I sure hope it was worth it!

Fig. 3. "Idioms," Source unknown.

# DETAILS



Fig. 4. Cartoon titled "Details," from Jack Ziegler, *Hamburger Madness*. New York: Harcourt, 1978.



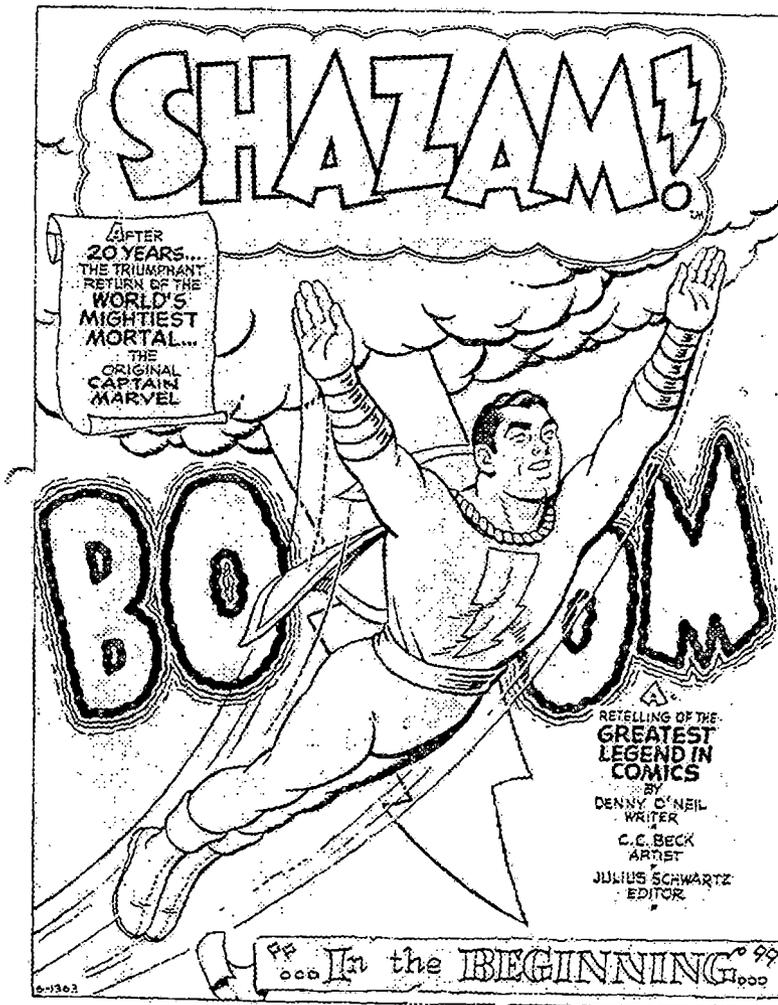
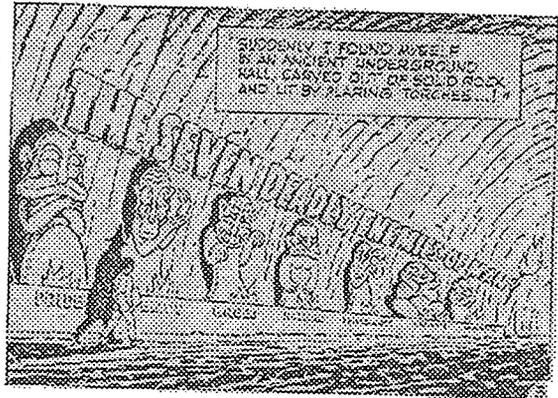
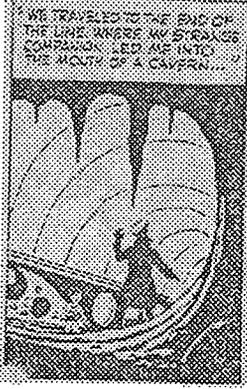
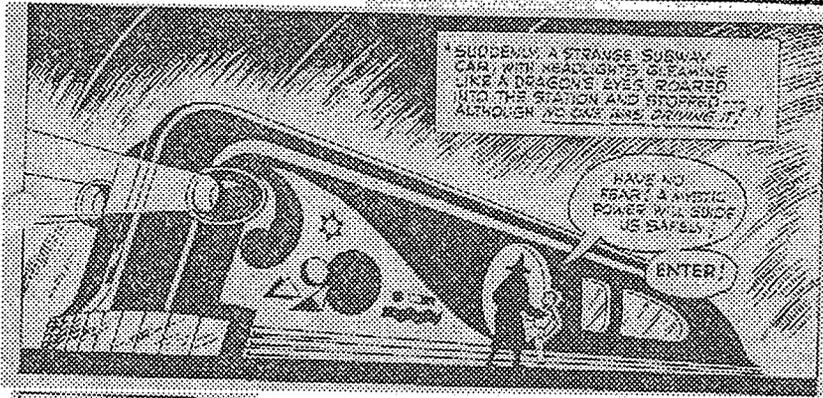


Fig. 6. Comic Strip, from Harold Schechter and Jonna G. Semeiks, *Patterns in Popular Culture: a Source Book for Writers*. New York: Harper, 1980.







2;



APPENDIX B  
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

Table 1

End of the Quarter Reflective Writing Survey

| The survey asked students to respond to each of the three writing assignment                    |   |
|---|---|
| Question  | Answer  |
| What problems, if any, did you struggle with as you tried to complete your writing assignments? | <b>Essay Number 1:</b><br><br>(1) Trying to think of a topic.<br><br>(2) Struggled about organization, and how I should write to persuade with people.<br><br>(3) Lot of problem with |

writing a topic.

- (1) Went easy and was good
- (2) Finding an argument with a group of people is my life to argue with.
- (3) Time is the problem. To make time to do the writing assignment, but the thesis is a problem too.
- (4) Is how to put everything together.
- (5) Try to find a topic to write on after that it was easy.
- (6) My problem is to sit down and concentrate on

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>writing.</p> <p>(7) Things that happen in our lifetime.</p>   |
|  | <p><b>Essay Number 2:</b></p> <p>(1) Researching a field that I really didn't know much about (Police work).</p> <p>(2) I also struggled about organization. I didn't know how to write "argument."</p> <p>(3) I had a lot of work on it get some source how to write.</p> <p>(4) Hard to find out what I was going to write about.</p> <p>(5) Some finding research on each</p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>topic.</p> <p>(6) No response</p> <p>(7) Looking up information.</p> <p>(8) Finding an argument topic to write about was easier than I thought.</p> <p>(9) Finding out new ideas.</p> <p>(10) Argument.</p> |
|  | <p><b>Essay number 3:</b></p>  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>(1) Putting ideas into longer paragraphs and transitioning.</p> <p>(2) I struggled because I haven't found out incident connect with me.</p> <p>(3) I have no clue how to start it.</p> <p>(4) Hard to put my events of my birth on the paper and get quotes.</p> <p>(5) I really haven't had any problems with this essay.</p> <p>(6) No response</p> <p>(7) Have not started yet, but started to look information, but hard to</p> |
|--|---|

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>relate to it.</p> <p>(8) Trying to find information about my birth date.</p> <p>(9) Time</p> <p>(10) Events that happened during my birthday (getting my ideas together).</p> |
| <p>Generally for the three essays, finding a topic and developing that topic was a problem for students.</p> |  |
| <p>The second section of the survey asked students two</p>   |  |

questions: First, what contribution, if any did our analyses of travel brochures, cartoons and the comic strip make to your understanding and producing your assignment?

- (1) Being more descriptive as a writer.
- (2) The analysis of comic strip was very understandable for me for writing essay.
- (3) It got me a little understand what the topic was. It is very helpful.
- (4) Gave me more ideas on how to describe things.
- (5) It made or helped me to better describe situations in my essay and stay focused on point of paragraph.
- (6) Help discover more of the product we write.

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>(7) Some of them I understood and some I didn't.</p> <p>(8) From the brochures and cartoons/comic strips, I was able to give more details about the situation.</p> <p>(9) It was very helpful.</p> <p>(10) It help a little.</p> |
| <p>Second, what other methods do you think might assist you in understanding and producing your assignments?</p> | <p>(1) Confused about the format and even quoting in the body of the paper.</p> <p>(2) Comic strip because it is understandable with interesting.</p> <p>(3) Nothing actually I thought</p>   |

about.

(4) No response

(5) Maybe reading other  
peoples papers or reading  
a writing major student's  
paper.

(6) Don't know.

(7) Some of them I understood  
and some I didn't.

(8) I would just need more  
examples of any kind.

(9) Videos, pictures.

(10) Like a game (cartoon).

The final section of the survey asked students to evaluate the visuals.

Tables 2

(A) Travel Brochures--focus, the making of an argument

| Helped A<br>Great Deal | Helped A<br>Little | Not Helpful | Absences |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------|
| 4                      | 5                  | 0           | 1        |

Table 3

(B) Cartoon "Details"--focus, details as description

| Helped A<br>Great Deal | Helped A<br>Little | Not Helpful | Absences |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------|
| 4                      | 5                  | 0           | 1        |

Table 4(C) Cartoon "Idioms"--focus, clichés and idioms

| Helped A<br>Great Deal | Helped A<br>Little | Not Helpful | Absences |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------|
| 3                      | 2                  | 2           | 3        |

Table 5

(D) Cartoon "Audience"--focus, audience awareness

| Helped A<br>Great Deal | Helped A<br>Little | Not Helpful | Absences |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------|
| 1                      | 5                  | 2           | 2        |

Table 6

(E) Comic Strip "Research Paper" focus, connections,  
transitions

| Helped A<br>Great Deal | Helped A<br>Little | Not Helpful | Absences |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------|
| 5                      | 3                  | 0           | 2        |

Table 7

Totals

| Helped A<br>Great Deal | Helped A<br>Little | Not Helpful | Absences |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------|
| 17                     | 20                 | 4           | 9        |

APPENDIX C  
STUDENT ESSAYS

### “Argument about studying abroad”

A lot of Japanese are studying abroad in various countries, and lately a number of Japanese have been wanting to do that. Almost everyone has hankered for America at least once. I am one of them. The image of the U.S is that it is big, it has freedom, and it makes us feel like we can put our possibilities to a good account. Moreover, it might be the most wonderful experience for everyone in the whole life. However, it is not easy to study abroad. Many problems arise when a student goes and lives in, other country. Outsiders think it is good and envy me because I decided to study abroad in America, but my parents and my close people opposed my decision.

The first argument was about troubles in the U.S. It is believed in Japan the environment in America is dangerous because America is a gun society. Besides, there was news about Japanese students caught up in a crime and some were killed in America. The information reported on television and in newspapers planted the image of a dangerous America. The biggest reason for opposition of my parents was that point. In addition, I am a girl, so the possibility of being a victim of a crime is higher. My parents were afraid of such a case. However, my point of view of America is different.

To be involved in trouble does not always happen. Actually, numerous people who are not American can live in America safely. There should be ways to avert the dangers. First of all, it is better to choose comparatively safe places. Therefore, it is necessary to know about such things as the environment, legislation, custom, culture, and life style of America's dangerous

areas and safe areas. In addition to that, it is a better idea to live in a dormitory or stay with a host family until one is accustomed to American life. Then, by surrounding with people such as friends and a host family, and students can gain a broad knowledge of America. To avoid the dangers, students should use a company that fixes up studying abroad, though it is expensive. In fact, I used one such company to study abroad. It was very helpful for me to learn about studying abroad in America. The adviser in the company not only introduced a college which was suitable for me, but also helped me with everything which was required for studying abroad such as the visa, college application, and housing. Besides, they taught me many things about America, like the environment, life style, college life, and what I can do when I get sick. Whenever I have anxiety and other problems, the company helps me and guides me. They have much information about the college I chose and its surroundings because they send students to study abroad at the same place every year. Therefore, I can know exactly about America and have an image of my new life. In addition, I can prepare myself for hard life. Although, certainly many students can study abroad by themselves for a lower cost, using the company is a good way to avoid troubles. I am trying to go into an unknown world, so there are many things that I do not know. Therefore, the anxiety might soften by using such a special institution. Like these, there are some ways to avoid dangers such as my parents worried about.

My parents also had another reason to be against me. Actually, I went to the university in Japan, and my parents wanted me to finish the university. Although, my parents had not experienced studying abroad, they knew how difficult it was for foreigners to study in a strange language, unfamiliar culture, and new life style. Also, it is difficult to learn slang in Japanese. It is even more difficult in English. It is more understandable to study my major, nutrition, in Japanese than in English. My parents thought it would be more effective for me to finish my

classes are passive lectures for students. Regardless what students are doing, a professor begins and finishes the class without caring. For instance, although, some students sitting the back of the classroom are chatting and some are talking by cellular phone, a professor does not scold. What both a professor and students are doing in the class are just talking, writing on the blackboard without any enthusiasm, and taking notes. On the other hand, in the U.S., students do not have to decide their majors before they start their academic work. This is very reasonable. There is the time to consider what we really want to do, and what we are interested in and decide what is suitable for us after we go to college. Moreover, students have an opportunity to try variable subjects during they are in school, and it is available to change the major when they are interested in another major. In addition, the relationship between the professor and students is closer and the professor cares about whether students can understand or not. Therefore, asking questions and responding the questions by both of professors and students are common in the classroom. The faith bond between both of them is strong. Thus, the class is students oriented. It is better for me to be surrounded by such an environment.

Furthermore, I can experience some valuable things only by studying abroad. Although, it has a lot of problems and challenges as I described earlier to study abroad, it also supplies a ton of irreplaceable experiences. I can learn many cultures from various people from other countries. I can learn their languages, cultures, and customs. We have rarely opportunities to have international friends in Japan. To know them and to learn each country each other are good for everyone. By knowing these, the outlook might be spread, and I can see everything from different views.

Therefore, as I described earlier, there are a lot of problems and solutions to study abroad. One of the problems was the danger in new environment. The scene and form of Japan

studies in Japan, and go to America to further my studies by receiving my master's degree. It is possible to study abroad any time such as after I graduated from a Japanese university and while I am still a university student. In addition, jobs are tight, especially for women. In effect, many companies prefer the people who have a high educational background. Even people who graduate from the best university have difficulty finding jobs. Besides, it is more difficult for the people who study abroad. However, I did not think the way my parents thought. I had experienced going to a Japanese university, so I knew the educational system of the university was bad. The educational system of the U.S is completely different from the Japanese system. Generally speaking, it is thought that American college students study harder than Japanese students. Actually, I could study my major even in Japan, but I did not want to study in Japan. I have a reasonable reason for this.

American universities have more advantages. The biggest difference is the entrance system. In Japan any university has an entrance examination, and Japanese students have to pass an entrance examination to enter any university. It is hard to pass the examination of the university that they want to go to, so students studied hard. Moreover, unfortunately, Japanese students have to decide their majors before they go to college, so they do not know what major is suitable, and what they really want to study. Then, after they enter the university, they do not study as much, because it is possible to get higher grades and even to graduate from the university without too much study. Instead of that, they work hard at a part time job, and then they enjoy their time without studying. Nothing brings to them. I did not want to be in such an environment. I was almost becoming the typical student. It is a pleasure and certainly fun, but it is not true pleasure because it has no meaning for us. Besides, there is another problem in the Japanese college. Most of all classes are too big as huge as a lecture class in the U.S., and the

are different from the U.S. like a sort of crimes and the frequency of crimes. However, knowing right information and everybody's consciousness can avert it. Another argument was an education system. It is better to study at proper circumstance for each person by considering features of the education system. Above all things, studying abroad brings many irreplaceable experiences like adventure, new life style, and exchange with foreigners, and intercultural communication. Although, it has many troubles to overcome in my mind, if I overcome this situation, it will be big treasures and people great matured. We can gain precious time and experience by studying abroad. Instead of hard, suffering, and fear, it reflect us more splendid experiences in our whole lives.

### "Home stay vs. Dormitory"

Living in foreign countries is not easy. If you are an oversea student, you need to decide the place to live. In addition, if you want to learn language and cultures, it is necessary to choose right place to live. There are some choices for housing such as apartment, home stay, and dormitory. For foreigners, it is better way to choose home stay or dormitory. Both of them are very useful for unaccustomed people to live in new country. Besides, these are better ways to be familiar with new custom. Each home stay and dormitory has each feature. Home stay is the best way for foreign students, because they can get both capacity of conversation and American culture and customs directly.

At first, I am going to argue about home stay. It has many merits. Through the life in host family, we can learn everything about American life and customs. We can experience that personally. Just being in the house with host family, we can learn American habits. By living with American family, the conversation skills develop fast. In the host family, we have more opportunities to speak English increases, because everything is English in the family. They try to listen to our broken English patiently, and eagerly to understand what we want to say. Especially, they try earnestly understanding our peculiar pronunciations. This is not only thing they do but

areas and safe areas. In addition to that, it is a better idea to live in a dormitory or stay with a host family until one is accustomed to American life. Then, by surrounding with people such as friends and a host family, and students can gain a broad knowledge of America. To avoid the dangers, students should use a company that fixes up studying abroad, though it is expensive. In fact, I used one such company to study abroad. It was very helpful for me to learn about studying abroad in America. The adviser in the company not only introduced a college which was suitable for me, but also helped me with everything which was required for studying abroad such as the visa, college application, and housing. Besides, they taught me many things about America, like the environment, life style, college life, and what I can do when I get sick. Whenever I have anxiety and other problems, the company helps me and guides me. They have much information about the college I chose and its surroundings because they send students to study abroad at the same place every year. Therefore, I can know exactly about America and have an image of my new life. In addition, I can prepare myself for hard life. Although, certainly many students can study abroad by themselves for a lower cost, using the company is a good way to avoid troubles. I am trying to go into an unknown world, so there are many things that I do not know. Therefore, the anxiety might soften by using such a special institution. Like these, there are some ways to avoid dangers such as my parents worried about.

My parents also had another reason to be against me. Actually, I went to the university in Japan, and my parents wanted me to finish the university. Although, my parents had not experienced studying abroad, they knew how difficult it was for foreigners to study in a strange language, unfamiliar culture, and new life style. Also, it is difficult to learn slang in Japanese. It is even more difficult in English. It is more understandable to study my major, nutrition, in Japanese than in English. My parents thought it would be more effective for me to finish my

Sometimes, we feel we cannot have ourselves time, but individual room is secured in any home stay. We have to be like real children, so we have to participate in any family activities even though we do not want to do that. Besides, there are many host families, and they have different purposes to have students, so some host families are good, but some are not good. Therefore, it is difficult to meet suitable family for each student.

Of course, there are also matters about privacy in the dormitory life. It is no privacy in the dormitory, because whenever and wherever, someone are in the dormitory. It is difficult to have our own time. We have to share one small room by the other people. If we live with a roommate in one room, even they are friendly, the friendship is getting worse and worse, because we can find the offensive side each other. In addition, we have to use small bathroom by some people, so we cannot take a time to take a shower. Moreover, in the dormitory, it is so noisy because of loudly music, chatting and some sound from anywhere. Therefore it is more difficult to have our own time than home stay.

Therefore, although both home stay and dormitory have strong points and weak points, home stay is better way to live in foreign country. Through the life in home stay, we can learn not only English but also a lot of new culture and customs. We can experience a lot of irreplaceable activities in new country. To know real American life, it is the best to be in American family and to live with them.

## "The day I was born"

Everyone has his or her own history so far. Each person has walked on his or her path. We have been influenced by the aspect of life with unconscious. The character comes by the way of wearing clothes. The thing related with me closely is the trend in fashions. The trend of fashion in the year I was born influenced my life.

I was born 31<sup>st</sup>, August 1980. I grew up in Yokohama in Kanagawa prefecture, which is near Tokyo and bayside city. In this year, in Japan, many popular singers started to come out the world of entertainment, and they created a sensation of fashion. Young people with new styles came out, and new fashion was born. Three clothes styles came into the fashion. They were called "New tra", "Hama tra", "and Surfer fashion". "New tra" was a mintage of "New traditional fashion"; "Hama tra" was a mintage of "Yokohama trad". In addition, "Surfer fashion" is surfer like fashion.

Newtra fashion has started in Kobe where is western bay area of the mainland Japan, and the fashion is conservative fashion. When "JJ", which is the young female and a lot of young women 's favorite magazine, was published, the Newtra fashion was prosperous because of "JJ". According to 1980' encyclopedia, "the characteristic of this particular fashion was wearing multi colored skirt or pants with triple necklace made of chain and wedge sole shoes caught young women's attentions" (<http://sakura.soc.or.jp/1980.htm>). The upstart brand such as GUCCI, HERMES, CELINE, FENDI, and so on were obtained by ladies. However, in this year, these brands

tree, banana, and shells, hibiscus, pineapples were decorated in of course, disco, coffee shop, and pubs. Essential goods of surf coordinate are accessories, which looked like handmade. The accessories were made of hibiscus, shells, and beads were popular. Moreover, coral and silver were also in favor. Wearing many plastic bangles was favored style.

These trends in clothes are not only in the day I was born. These fashions connect with current fashion. Especially in my life for twenty years, I feel some relations with the fashion when I was born. When I was a high school student, began to be interested in the trend in clothes. I read a lot of fashion magazines and went to various fashionable cloth shops in order to follow current fashion. I liked rather than be interested in fashionable brands such as LOUIS VUITTON, PRADA, and CUCCI. Not only I but also other teenagers liked these brands and they got expensive goods. It was what is called brand boom. To have brand goods as regarded as a kind of fashionable person. People collected brand goods solidly. The brand popularity is going on still now. In Japan, in Newtra fashion, its popularity rose again when I was 18 years to 19 years. I took Newtra fashion in my fashion. Young people got cloths from their mothers, because the clothes, which mother's generation people wore, are suitable for Newtra fashion. In Hamatra fashion, it was familiar to me, because I grew in Yokohama, so I know Yokohama brands well, and I was familiar to that. I liked Yokohama brands like "FUKUZO", and I wore the clothes of the brand. Although I did not take Hamatra fashion in my fashion completely, I was Hamatra fashion in some way. For example, when I was a high school student, the navy blue socks, which was one of the symbols of Hamatra fashion with school uniform. Recently, "Courrages" bag, which was also a part of Hamatra fashion, is in trend in Japan.

began to be popular in university female students. It was the dawn of the brand boom age. Even though, these brands are very expensive, imitations and fake goods were all over.

At the same time, in Yokohama, girlish Hamatra fashion came into with folding the tide of Newtra fashion. Hamatra fashion was born in downtown called "Motomachi" in Yokohama. According to 1980' encyclopedia, "the representative Hamatra fashion is the polo shirt made by "Fukuzo", which is one of famous Japanese clothe brand from Yokohama. Tartan lap-skirt, navy blue socks, and shoes are made by "MIHAM", which is Japanese shoe brand from Yokohama, shoulder bag is made by "COURRAGE" or "KITAMURA", which is also Yokohama bag brand" (<http://sakura/soc.or.jp/1980.htm>).

Between both brand the Newtra and Hamatra fashion, "surfer fashion" was also popular in young people. According to 80' the Fashion, "the figure of basic surfer fashion was suntanned pitch-black face with a clear blue eye shadow, dye hair with wild hairstyle, and the necklace made of shell, wearing aloha shirt and rough surf-pants, and the last is rainbow color beach sandal" (<http://www.melon.nu/raymy/m02-fashion/index.html>). The surfer fashion was referred "FINE", which is the magazine popular in teenagers. The popular t-shirt, polo shirt, and sweatshirt were "Town and Country", "KIKI", "Life guard" which are surf brands. There were various type pf aloha shirts, such as normal type, lady's type, pullover, and button-down collar type. As a bottom, surfer pants and flared skirt were popular, as jackets hooded a stadium jumper, quilting type jackets, denim, and short jackets made of pigskin and mouton. Shoes were sneaker, sandal, and bags were cane basket and handmade like bags. The things, which can remain like tropical, were popular, because surfer remained southern country. Young people preferred whatever the things looked like tropical. Many foliage plants like palm

Like this, we take Hamatra fashion in our fashion apart not at the same time. We are always developing our fashion. In surfer fashion, when I was 17 years old, "ROXY", which is surfer brand was surprisingly popular in teenagers. It was often sold out clothes and goods in any "ROXY" shop. Teenagers include I hunt for "ROXY" goods. Essentially, t-shirts were very popular. As this time, the surfer boom arose. Young people favored tropical items such as accessory made of shells, hibiscus, and beads, and they wore colorful t-shirts and sandals. A lot of young people tuned their faces and bodies. They looked surfer all over. I was also absorbing in surfer fashion.

Therefore, like this, the trend in clothes fashion, which was when I was born, goes hand in hand. The trend such as "Newtra fashion", "Hamatra fashion", and "surfer fashion" was taken in my fashion in some ways. Everyone has such this relation with incident, which he or she was born. That our birth era background influences present our life makes me marvelous feeling.

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