Externalism and rhetorical communication: creating a model for audience analysis

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Externalism and rhetorical communication:

Creating a model for audience analysis

by

William Scott Thune

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INTRODUCTION

While browsing through my e-mail recently, I came across a message from a young woman seeking advice on how to complete her application to graduate school. She had no trouble with her transcripts, her GREs, or her letters of recommendation, but she found herself at a loss as to how to best compose her statement of purpose. At this point in her message, she wrote:

But the real question is the statement of purpose. I feel that though I am an excellent writer and (in my opinion) a clear thinker, I don't really know what they want.

Can anyone comment on approaches to take in writing the statement? Perhaps someone who has successfully written a statement of purpose can give me some hints.1

Although she understood that she faced a rhetorical problem, she had no idea how to begin creating a solution with potential for success.

I believe her dilemma underscores a problem we continue to encounter in teaching undergraduate composition. Even when we train our students to write and to think clearly, and even when we teach our students the need to attend to matters of audience, we do not prepare them for the kinds of rhetorical problems they will encounter in the real world. In short, although we teach our students questions they should ask in audience analysis, we fail to provide them with an adequate method for finding the answers to those questions.

I certainly needn't convince anyone of the practical difficulties we face in our efforts
to teach awareness of audience to our students in the composition classroom. Despite the native rhetorical skill many students demonstrate in their conversations with peers (and sometimes even with instructors), we still manage to mystify most of them with our talk of rhetorical triangles and situations, real and constructed readers, and audience analysis and audience adaptation. In a sense, we face the same situation as scholars of walking theory would in teaching the most effective way to walk: what comes naturally becomes almost impossible when examined with too keen a gaze. An unexamined life may indeed not be worth living, but a life examined too closely may not be livable.

Despite the practical problems we face, few in composition studies would deny the necessity of instruction in audience analysis. Even Peter Elbow, that champion of expressive writing, reluctantly concedes “it’s not that writers should never think about their audience. It’s a question of when” (1987, 51). But even after we define when, we still face the question of how. Composition scholars have put forth considerable effort in providing both a theoretical context and a practical methodology for those who must help students communicate with greater awareness of their readers. With no definitive answers yet in hand, the giants in the field at first glance seem to have run the Red Queen’s race these past thirty years. But while Alice ran across a static landscape as she rapidly went nowhere, our giants have run across unstable ground, seeking answers to questions which shift with the latest winds of philosophical fashion.

As I enter this enterprise with my own contribution toward the teaching of audience analysis, I recognize I cannot offer a definitive solution even though I build on the efforts of
those who have come before me. On the one hand, the diverse beliefs of those within composition studies preclude universal acceptance of what I have to offer. On the other, what I offer remains in the early stages of development. Nevertheless, I believe the model I develop in this thesis presents a synthesis of the cognitive and social views of writing as suggested by various writers (Witte 1992, 242; Bizzell 1982, 239; Faigley 1986, 528) and provides a tool composition students will find useful in their attempts to understand their readers.

In order to provide a context for my discussion this model, I begin with a short examination of the methods and models of audience analysis suggested in several handbooks available for use in freshman composition at Iowa State University. After this initial examination, I review four competing theories of writing in composition studies, giving particular attention to the conception of audience germane to each theory. In these first two sections, I underscore the need for an underpinning of contemporary theory and research for audience analysis models we can use in the classroom.

In the third section, I present the elements of a proposed two-part model we can give our students as we introduce them to concepts of audience analysis. Although I draw much of my inspiration for this model from Mikhail Bakhtin, I also borrow selected concepts from Chaim Perelman, Karl Bühler, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Donald Davidson (the latter by way of Kent's *Paralogic Rhetoric*). Nevertheless, except for concepts I can directly attribute to these scholars, I have made no attempt to cite their material to justify my design. Throughout this section I include comments on how the model functions as an aid for
students attempting to grasp the concept of audience.

In the fourth section, I present two examples of how we can use this two-part model in the classroom. I derived the first example from class discussions in my freshman composition classes during the fall semester of 1993, and I devised the second example as an assignment for a junior-level composition course such as business or technical communication. While these examples provide a starting point for those interested in working with this model, I intend them only as suggestive of what we might do.

I must confess up front that much of what I suggest in my model will seem little more than simple commonsense to the skillful writer. However, I believe that most students need our assistance in understanding what seems so painfully obvious to those of us who have made a career of studying human communication.
CURRENT METHODS AND MODELS FOR AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

While I do not pretend to provide a complete and comprehensive examination of the methods and models used in composition classrooms at the university level, I believe the material I consider in this section provides an adequate picture of the common approaches to teaching audience analysis for two reasons. First, the general agreement among textbook authors suggests that college and university English departments prefer a certain approach to the problem of audience. Second, few of the sources I consulted recommend any radical changes in the way we teach audience. I have no doubt that many instructors deviate from the norm I describe here, but as yet, I do not see these deviations forming a unified alternate to general practice.

In the following examination of our pedagogical practices, I consider two aspects of how we present the concepts of audience to our students. First, I look at the treatment audience receives in five handbooks available for use in freshman composition at Iowa State University. Second, I critique a communication model widely recommended as a tool for teaching audience awareness. In both aspects, textbook writers and researchers have tended to borrow freely from various theoretical approaches to composition without sufficient regard for the implications. My examination of these two aspects of our current approaches to the teaching of audience underscores the need for developing an approach grounded in a theoretical understanding of human communication.
Audience in the Handbooks

Although instructors of freshman composition at Iowa State commonly use a variety of rhetorics and readers in addition to handbooks, I have limited my examination of textbook approaches to handbooks alone. Rhetorics such as Ramage and Bean's *Writing Arguments* tend to limit discussion of audience to structural recommendations for argument construction (see Part III of Ramage and Bean as an example), and readers such as Spurgin's *Strategies for Argument* tend to provide only limited advice. Of course, the treatment of audience in rhetorics and readers reflects the general purposes of such texts and does not indicate an omission on the author's part.

I don't mean to suggest that handbooks offer decidedly superior instruction in audience analysis. Indeed, I argue that what handbooks offer fails to provide students with a useful understanding of how to deal with readers. Nevertheless, the handbooks I examine offer a fairly consistent approach to audience analysis, and perhaps more to the point, I strongly suspect that if students keep any of their textbooks from freshman composition, they most likely keep the handbook, since it offers the most comprehensive treatment of writing issues. If students do indeed keep their handbooks, then when they face writing problems in the future, they will quite likely turn to the handbook for answers. Unfortunately, I believe the answers they find regarding how to treat the problem of audience will not prove helpful.

I have selected five handbooks for my examination: Lunsford and Connors' *St. Martin's Handbook*, Rosen and Behrens' *Allyn & Bacon Handbook*, Fowler and Aaron's *Little, Brown Handbook*, Beene and Vande Kopple's *Riverside Handbook*, and Hairston and
Ruszkiewicz' *Scott, Foresman Handbook*. I have used both *St. Martin's* and *Scott, Foresman* in the classroom, and I have reviewed the other three as possible choices for classroom use. Of these five, all except *Riverside* have been available to freshman composition instructors for the past two years, and *Riverside* has been added to the handbook list for the coming fall semester.

Not surprisingly, these handbooks show some variation in both the amount of space devoted and the advice given as how to approach audience or reader issues. With regard to the differences in space, *Scott, Foresman* devotes fourteen pages to audience concerns, *Allyn & Bacon* devotes seventeen pages, *Riverside* and *Little, Brown* both devote nineteen pages, and *St. Martin's* devotes thirty-four pages. In each handbook, material on audience has been scattered in two or three page clumps throughout. At first glance, this may seem a significant difference in the amount of material presented, but when we consider that *St. Martin's* indexes material regarding tone and word choice as related to audience concerns whereas the other handbooks do not, the percentage of pages devoted to audience in these handbooks works out to a little over two percent. With so little attention given to audience, students quite likely regard the authors' claim in *Scott, Foresman* that "developing a sense of audience is critical to any writer" (15) as an overstatement of the case, especially when a topic such as pronoun usage receives four entire chapters all to itself.

With regard to the differences in advice, we find some variation on the questions of when to attend to audience and whether to write to a real audience or a constructed audience. *Scott, Foresman, Allyn & Bacon, and Little, Brown* recommend keeping the audience in mind
throughout the composing process from first to final draft. *Riverside* recommends putting
audience concerns aside until the final draft. *St. Martin's* provides no specific advice on this
question, merely noting that writers need to attend to audience concerns sometime during the
composing process. All the handbooks acknowledge writers write to real readers, but even
so, the authors generally recommend students select or define an appropriate audience for
their papers. *St. Martin's* does lean more toward defining the audience based on the real
readers, and *Riverside* carefully distinguishes between situations where the writer can define
the audience as desired and situations where the writer must define the audience based on the
real readers.

Despite these differences, all five handbooks use the same basic approach to audience
analysis, one variation or another of a heuristic method first suggested by Pfister and Petrick.
This particular method consists of a series of questions regarding both demographic and
specific features of a real audience.\(^5\) Demographic features considered include such factors
as age, race, social class, and religious values, while specific features include such factors as
how much the reader knows about the topic, what opinion the reader holds regarding the
topic, how much the reader knows about the writer, and the degree of shared experience,
attitudes, values, and interests between the reader and the writer. The questions suggested
by Pfister and Petrick closely parallel questions we can find in speech textbooks from the late
1970s (see for instance Ehninger et. al. 1978, chapters 5 and 6).

In suggesting this method to students, handbook authors apparently assume students
will always either write to general audiences or to specific readers best treated as a general
audience. For instance, *Allyn & Bacon* tells students they will most likely write for specific professors during the college careers but nevertheless warns students to treat their professors as editors reviewing the paper for its appropriateness for a general audience (63). However, even though writers cannot know or anticipate *every* reader who will use a document during its existence, my reading of the literature in business and technical communication suggests that in the writing situations most students will encounter in their lifetimes, the writing situation will require adaptation to a limited number of specific, known or knowable readers. Even those documents intended for mass distribution such as users' manuals or journal articles will need to actually pass muster with only a small number of real, knowable readers. In such situations, asking demographic information about the readers gives the writer no useful information.

Demographic information has value only when used for large audience blocks where the desired effect consists of persuading a portion of the audience to accept the writer's viewpoint. When addressing a large audience, the writer can measure success in terms of the percentage of listeners who change their viewpoints in the desired way. When addressing a single reader, the writer can measure success only in terms of the reader's acceptance or rejection. In the case of a single reader, writers have no graduated measures of success. When students use demographic information to adapt for a single reader, they can grossly misjudge the reader's opinions.

Consider, for instance, a writer who wishes to address the issue of birth control for a reader she knows belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. Since the church holds a position
of strong opposition to birth control, she might guess her reader holds similar views. If she polls members of the local parish and finds ninety-five percent support the church’s position, she can conclude her reader, as a member of this parish, shares those views. However, she has based her conclusion on faulty reasoning. If she randomly selects members of the parish, she can expect the subgroup she forms to show a division between supporters and nonsupporters similar to that of her poll. But each individual member will either support or oppose the church’s position on birth control. The demographics of a group cannot predict the characteristics of any specific individual.

As Russell Long points out, while we would condemn such faulty reasoning within the argument of a student’s paper, we condone such reasoning as a valid approach to audience analysis (1980, 223). Long goes on to suggest we teach our students to ask not who the audience is but rather who they want the audience to be (225), and as I noted earlier, we can find this viewpoint reflected in some of the textbooks examined here. Unfortunately, with the demographic questions provided, students who attempt to build a desired audience will more likely build an idealized stereotype rather than anything resembling a real reader or even a collection of real readers.

However, since most students will rarely have the luxury of choosing the reader they wish to adapt to, the advice to build the audience as desired probably does more harm than good. Even if students ignore the demographic questions as Long suggests and attend only to the specific questions regarding the reader, by building the reader they want rather than attempting to understand the reader they have, they face the risk of utter failure. After all,
a writer who works for mean-spirited, bigoted blockhead does himself no favors by picturing
instead a kind, open-minded genius. Although the writer faces a more difficult writing task
by attempting to adapt to the real reader, he cannot successfully appeal to such a reader
without accounting for the overwhelming negative characteristics.

Now although these handbooks provide inadequate advice on how to deal with the
problem of audience, I don't mean to suggest either incompetence or ill-will on the part of
the authors. Rather than finding fault, I would like to suggest the current state of instruction
in audience analysis comes as an unavoidable result of the unsettled theoretical climate we
must work within as we move from a rhetoric based on Aristotelian ideals to a rhetoric based
on postmodern, anti-foundational ideals. While some scholars recommend we avoid teaching
contested concepts until we have settled on what we believe or until our students have
reached sufficient maturity to deal with the current ambiguity (Comprone 1983; Augustine
and Winterowd 1986) or at least approach the teaching of these concepts with caution (Ewald
1991), the political reality appears to dictate otherwise. We have little choice but to teach
our students something about audience.

I suspect many composition teachers approach problem of audience with the same
hope expressed by Beene and Vande Kopple in The Riverside Handbook:

Even though you may not be able to answer all these questions for a given
audience, asking them will help you determine where your audience stands in
relation to you and your perspective on a topic. Your answers will also help
you discover your meaning and thesis; organize your ideas; integrate evidence
and arguments, as well as anticipate and address objections and controversies;
and select and refine the diction and tone of your text (97).
Unfortunately, for all but our best student writers, the simple act of asking the questions found in our handbooks cannot live up to this hope. Unless we provide our students with not only the questions they need to ask about their readers but also with the tools for developing meaningful and useful answers to these questions, they will continue to struggle with the very aspects of writing Beene and Vande Kopple envision them mastering. And as I demonstrate in the following section, the models of communication we present our students create additional problems that work against this hope.

**Audience in Communication Models**

When choosing communication models for use in the composition classroom, we have no shortage of models to choose from. Creating new models of communication seems to be something of a cottage industry in departments of English, speech, and philosophy. Nevertheless, whether by accident or design, many instructors continue to use some variant of the original Kinneavy's Communication Triangle shown in Figure 1 (Ewald 1991, 148; Spilka 1988, 209), and instructional texts for beginning composition teachers recommend one variant or another (Lindemann 1987, 12; Tarvers 1988, 10). Unfortunately, significant problems remain in these variants as we can see by a close examination of the changes made in the progression from the original model designed by Kinneavy to the variants used in the classroom.

In *A Theory of Discourse*, Kinneavy describes the four elements of his communication triangle as “a person who encodes a message, the signal (language) which carries the
message, the reality to which the message refers, and the decoder (receiver of the message)." (1971, 19). His choice of terms suggests a view of communication which many researchers no longer accept. For instance, by regarding the message as something encoded, carried, and decoded, Kinneavy places the message outside the communicative event, thus implying that the message itself remains unaffected by the communication process. Recent research, however, suggests that meaning (and hence the message) emerges from the communicative event through the actions of the participants rather than existing apart as an immutable entity (Langer 1986; Haas and Flower 1988; Kaufer and Geisler 1989; McGinley and Tierney 1989; Spivey 1990; Ackerman 1991; Greene 1993). By placing the message outside the communicative event, Kinneavy gives the person encoding the message the full power and authority for creating meaning.

Furthermore, by casting the receiver of the message as a decoder, Kinneavy creates
“the misimpression that the audience’s role is merely to receive and decipher the writer’s message” (Ewald 1991, 148). In other words, Kinneavy’s choice of terminology allows the naive reader to treat the communication process as involving nothing more than the mechanical transformation of message into signal for the writer and the mechanical transformation from signal to message for the reader. This misimpression suggests that any problems which occur in communication result not from the conceptualization of the message but from some fault in the acts of encoding or decoding, or perhaps from some fault in the environment which distorts the signal.

However, Kinneavy puts no special emphasis on his selection of terms, assuming that researchers can merely change the terms to reflect their specific approach without disturbing the basic relationships in the model (19–20). Some theorists in composition studies have apparently taken this as license to correct the problems with the model by choosing terms which reflect their particular viewpoints. Unfortunately, in doing so, they have overlooked some of the basic assumptions which underlie the model’s structure. According to Kinneavy, the signal has a specific reference to reality which the encoder and decoder use in the communication process. In his view, the structure of the model has greater importance than the terms used for the elements. Although he admits the model and terms are abstractions, Kinneavy nevertheless regards them as an accurate and appropriate representation of communication.

Despite the structural implications of Kinneavy’s model, researchers and instructors with quite different theoretical viewpoints have appropriated and adapted the model for use
The adaptations to the model include such things as changing encoder and decoder to writer
and reader, changing signal to message, changing reality to subject, and placing the point of
the triangle pointing up rather than down. Lindemann notes that with the proper changes in
terminology, the model can serve as a reminder to the student of the sorts of questions writers
need to ask about the relationships between writer and reader, writer and subject, and reader
and subject (12). Such a terminologically correct version of Kinneavy's model appears in
Figure 2. Even with these adaptations, others have found the model lacking. For instance,
the model cannot represent the complexity of writing situations in the workplace, thus
reducing its effectiveness in teaching audience to students in business and technical
communication (Spiika 1988, 209–210; Driskill 1989, 127).

Unfortunately, the problem with the communication triangle as a teaching tool runs

![Figure 2: A Terminologically Correct Variant of Kinneavy's Communication Triangle (Lindemann 1987, 12)]
deeper than Kinneavy's choice of terms. In a sense, he correctly assumed that the theoretical implications of the structure of the model could remain untouched by any changes in terminology, though I doubt he intended to refer to the problem which survives. Part of this problem arises from Kinneavy's decision to depict the signal as a triangle connecting the other elements. The lines of the triangle appear to directly connect the encoder with the decoder, the encoder with reality, and the decoder with reality, leaving the signal floating in the middle with no apparent connection to the other elements.

For the student using a terminologically correct version of Kinneavy's model such as the one shown in Figure 2, this can create the impression of direct, unmediated relationships between writer and reader, writer and subject, and reader and subject. Part of the difficulty we face in teaching audience analysis lies in convincing students that such analysis holds substantial benefit. A student who sees a direct connection between writer and reader will quite likely have difficulty believing that the need for attending to audience exists.

The situation echoes a problem Targowski and Bowman create for themselves in their model of communication. Among the many communication paths they identify for their model, they include telepathic communication, apparently as a catch-all for phenomena they cannot otherwise explain (Targowski and Bowman 1988, 17-18). Of course, once they suggest telepathy as a path, they not only eliminate the need for the other paths they identify, they also eliminate any need for their communication model. Similarly, if our models suggest a direct connection between writer and reader, the need for audience analysis disappears.

When an instructor presents the communication triangle in the classroom, the
impression created by the graphic representation will quite likely outweigh even the most carefully crafted lecture or discussion, especially if the instructor uses the triangle as a reminder of the questions students should ask about the relationships between writer and reader, writer and subject, and reader and subject. By using the triangle in this way, the instructor reinforces the impression of direct, unmediated relationships between the elements. The free-floating message serves no purpose, and indeed, some versions of the triangle do not include a mediating element at all (Tarvers 1988, 10).

Kinneavy's representation of the signal contrasts sharply with other graphic models which place the signal or language at the center of the other elements. For instance, Karl Bühler's model (Figure 3) uses a graphic representation which seems more intuitively in line with Kinneavy's description of his model. Although Kinneavy intends the signal to connect the other elements as does Bühler's organum, the graphic representation he selected creates

![Figure 3](Karl Bühler's Organum Model of Language (Bühler 1982, 147))
a much different impression.

However, even a terminologically correct version of Bühler's model would not come without its difficulties. As Bühler himself notes, a naive interpretation of his diagram suggests a causal chain with things functioning as a stimulus source for the sender to create an organum as an intermediate stimulus source for the receiver who then apprehends the original stimulus source (Bühler 1982, 147–148). While we can easily imagine a communicative event which illustrates such a causal chain—Bühler describes one person seeing rain outside a window announcing the fact to another who then looks out the window and confirms the information received—many communicative events do not lend themselves to such simple analysis. Any discussion of metaphysical issues will serve as a case in point.

Rather than a causal chain, Bühler intends his model to represent the mediated relationships between sender and receiver, sender and things, and things and receiver, with language serving as the mediating organum (Bühler 1982, 150–154). Bühler even regards the sender and receiver as “partners in the exchange, and therefore . . . [he allows that] it is possible that the medial . . . product indeed exhibits its own specific sign relation to one and to the other” (153). A charitable interpretation here places Bühler in good stead with recent research on how writers and readers create meaning during communication, and this suggests that Bühler's model might provide a better fit with the popular philosophical sentiment in English departments than the Kinneavy model.

Of course, critics such as Kent would fault the model's reinforcement of the Cartesian conception of the mind (1993, 102). According to Kent, the placement of any mediating
object between us and reality condemns us to knowing only the models we build to represent reality. Those who find no problem with this state of affairs and the residue Cartesian anxiety (see for instance Cherwitz and Hikins 1990) would have little objection to using Bühler’s model in the classroom. After all, properly presented, Bühler’s model can fit into a variety of philosophical frameworks.

However, I suspect many would find even Bühler’s model an inadequate representation of communicative events. As with most communication models, both the Bühler and Kinneavy models begin with the basic structure of a dyad, that is, of two individuals acting within a communicative event. In a quest for universality and simplicity, model makers generally reduce communication to a single exchange between the two individuals. While this presents certain benefits for researchers interested in isolating variables for examination, it cannot reflect the rich complexity of communication. In particular, dyadic models include at best a thin representation of the social aspects of communicative events. Because of this, dyadic models simply do not provide the composition instructor with an adequate tool for teaching their students about how to deal with the problem of audience (Driskill 1989; Spilka 1990). As Nystrand notes, in order to overcome this inadequacy, we need to provide our students with a social model of communication (Nystrand 1989, 66–67).

Implications of the Current Methods and Models

In this section, I have illustrated the inadequacy of methods and models commonly used in the teaching of audience analysis. This inadequacy appears to stem in part from a
lack of theoretical consistency in the development of the methods and models. The question lists presented in handbooks come to us from similar lists used in speech classrooms with no apparent consideration of the significant differences between oral and written communication in rhetorical situations. The models presented in both books and in the classroom have been generally derived from the Kinneavy model with little regard for the theoretical intentions of the original model or the limitations of the graphic representation. In both cases, those designing instructional material apparently assume that a little cosmetic work with terminology can fix the problems that question lists and Kinneavy models bring with them.

I get the impression from reading the journals that many of those who teach composition believe theory has its place, and that place is not in the classroom. I have heard some of my fellow graduate students claim that we should use what works in the classroom rather than worry about the theories which underlie the methods and models we use. While I understand that an in-depth discussion of our theoretical stances would not serve the needs of our students, I do not believe this frees us from the need to build our methods and models with theory well in mind. After all, the judgment of what works depends as much on the theoretical outlook of the researcher as it does on what happens in the classroom.

With this in mind, I want to provide a theoretical context for the model I have built. However, since I could have selected any of several theoretical approaches available, I need to first provide a brief overview of the approaches I considered in designing my model. In the next section, I review four contemporary theories of composition with regard to the conception of audience germane to each.
CONTEMPORARY THEORIES IN COMPOSITION STUDIES

Having shown the inadequacy of current methods and models used in composition classrooms, I'd like to now consider some of the theoretical approaches we have available for designing methods and models better suited to teaching audience analysis. Researchers and theorists have suggested a variety of schemes for categorizing the communication theories driving recent research in composition studies. While some might quibble with the choices I've made here and want to add such groups as feminists, Marxists, or current-traditionalists, I have nonetheless divided communication theories according to the categories suggested by combining the work of Lester Faigley, James Berlin, and Thomas Kent. The merger of their ideas creates four categories: expressivists, cognitivists, social constructionists (Berlin 1988, 477–478; Faigley 1986, 527–528; Kent 1993, 98), and externalists (Kent 1993, 103). The views of each group imply specific approaches to the problem of audience, and I have built the following discussion around an examination of the conception of audience germane to each group.

Audience According to the Expressivists

Expressivists hold a decidedly romantic view toward writing and valorize the individual creative act in written communication (Faigley 1986, 529–530). For expressivists, the matter of putting words onto the page revolves around the individual projecting his or her inner thoughts into the world through words (Elbow 1973, 23). At the philosophical level,
some expressivists view these inner thoughts as ideal representations of reality, while others view these inner thoughts as schemata which shape our understanding of reality (Kent 1993, 99). However, both views reduce the process of writing to getting in touch with the inner self (100). In his critique of the expressivist viewpoint, James Berlin notes the implications of this narrow focus of the self:

[According to expressivists,] authentic self-expression can . . . lead to authentic self-experience for both the writer and the reader. The most important measure of authenticity . . . is the presence of originality in expression; and this is the case whether the writer is creating poetry or writing a business report. Discovering the true self in writing will simultaneously enable the individual to discover the truth of the situation which evoked the writing, a situation that, needless to say, must always be compatible with the development of the self . . . (Berlin 1988, 485).

This emphasis on the self suggests from the outset that expressivists have little use for audience as a driving concept in the writing classroom.

Nevertheless, expressionists such as Peter Elbow claim they do not completely ignore the problem of audience. Despite this claim, Elbow tends to regard the audience as an impediment to good writing (1987, 51). Elbow pictures two extreme effects of audience awareness: in the best case, the writer imagines an audience which inspires great thinking and great writing, and in the worst case, the writer imagines an audience which completely blocks thinking and writing. Nevertheless, most of the time, “awareness [of audience] disturbs or disrupts . . . writing and thinking without completely blocking it” (51). To overcome this effect, Elbow recommends that writers either disregard audience or choose the “wrong” audience as they begin to write (52).
While I might agree with Elbow that ignoring the audience can sometimes help overcome writer's block, he goes far beyond this simple recommendation and suggests that when writers completely ignore the audience, they produce better writing (1987, 53). What makes good writing good comes from "the writer's having gotten sufficiently wrapped up in her meaning and her language as to forget all about audience needs" (54). In good writing, "involvement in subject determines all" (54).

After such statements, I find it difficult to conceive of any role Elbow could assign to the audience aside from that of cheerleader. Indeed, Elbow reduces the role of audience to a measure of good writing after creation rather than a factor of good writing during creation. A writer need only attend to the concerns of audience during revision "in order to figure out which pieces . . . of prose are as good as they are [sic]—and how to discard and revise the rest" (55). Presumably, if students can find or imagine a reader or group of readers who like what they write, then they have done well. I believe many students would find this assumption meshes quite well with their attitudes toward composition instructors.

Unfortunately, few students will find this attitude helpful in other classes or in the real world. A teaching assistant I know who teaches in another department tells of a student who complained about receiving an F on a essay question. The student contended that she had expressed her ideas clearly and eloquently, and the teaching assistant agreed with her contention but defended the grade since the answer not only failed to address the question but also contained factual errors. The student took her complaint to the teaching assistant's supervisor who gave her partial credit to avoid further controversy. While this student may
someday find a job with a company that will continue to reward such behavior, I suspect she will find that eloquent self-expression counts for little in the corporate world.

Perhaps most students would not take the expressivist philosophy to quite the extreme this student has. Nevertheless, the expressivist assumption which equates the empowerment of the individual with isolated self-expression does not provide a solid basis for composition studies. I will concede that our students need to find their own voices when they write, but I believe we need to help them define those voices within social discourse. In order to do so, students need to develop an understanding of audience which goes beyond the conception offered by the expressivists.

**Audience According to the Cognitivists**

Although we can trace the beginnings of cognitivist theory to the early work of Janet Emig (Faigley 1986, 531), few would disagree that some of the most influential contributions to the cognitivist view of writing in the past decade have come from the research of Linda Flower and John Hayes (Berlin 1988, 481). With this in mind, I center my discussion here on the concepts they have developed.

Flower and Hayes build their cognitive process model and theory of writing on four basic points:

1. The process of writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing.
2. These processes have a hierarchical, highly embedded organization in which any given process can be embedded within any other.
3. The act of composing itself is a goal-directed thinking process, guided
by the writer's own growing network of goals.

4. Writers create their own goals in two key ways: by generating both high-level goals and supporting sub-goals which embody the writer’s developing sense of purpose, and then, at times, by changing major goals or even establishing new ones based on what has been learned in the act of writing (1981, 366).

Working from these basic points, Flower and Hayes develop a graphic representation which includes three elements: the task environment, the writer's long term memory, and the writing process (369). Of these three elements, the task environment most concerns us here since it “includes all of those things outside the writer's skin, starting with the rhetorical problem . . . and eventually including the growing text itself” (369). While the two parts of the task environment exist outside the writer, Flower and Hayes focus not so much on the actual external factors as on the mental representations the writer builds of those factors. Accordingly, the rhetorical success or failure of a document depends on the adequacy of the representations of the rhetorical problem and the text the writer has built while writing.

We can see this focus most clearly in their explanation of how the writer constructs a representation of the rhetorical problem (Flower and Hayes 1988). Rather than treating the rhetorical problem as something the writer uncovers by careful investigation, Flower and Hayes see it as “an elaborate construction which the writer creates in the act of composition” (93). They consider this distinction important because their research suggests that rather than solving a rhetorical problem as given, writers solve the rhetorical problem they create. Hence, faced with the same external situation, writers can often generate radically different documents in response. Any instructor of composition can certainly attest to the truth of this
Flower and Hayes divide the rhetorical problem into two basic units: the rhetorical situation, which consists of the external exigency and the external audience which give rise to the need for communication; and the writer's own goals, which consist of the change the writer wishes to create in the reader, the image of self the writer wishes to present, the meaning the writer wishes to build, and the structure the writer wishes to use for constructing the text (95). But rather than develop a unique representation of each rhetorical problem encountered from scratch, writers begin with a set of previously created representations of such rhetorical problems as writing a thank-you letter (96). Nevertheless, in their study, Flower and Hayes found "the most telling differences between [their] good and poor writers was the degree to which [writers] created a unique, fully-developed representation of [a] rhetorical problem" (96).

For instance, poor writers tend to develop a view of audience that does not extend beyond the task at hand. In general, poor writers focus on a thin representation of their readers, choosing such limited conceptions as viewing their composition instructors as malicious, anal-retentive grammarians. Good writers, on the other hand, build a rich and complex image of their audience. In essence, good writers create a specific target, thus ensuring that the text created produces a more effective result than if they had aimed at a vague stereotype (97). In addition, good writers decide on a specific effect they wish to have on their reader, while poor writers concentrate on merely getting down what they know about the topic at hand (98).
While Flower and Hayes do not point out any direct connection between building a specific audience and selecting a specific effect, the image a writer builds of the audience places clear limitations on the range of possible effects, and the effect selected by the writer places clear limitations on the possible images of the audience. For example, an experienced writer who envisions her boss as a Neanderthal would not likely choose to convince him that women have abilities and rights equal to those of men. Instead, she might choose a less confrontational goal such as convincing him that her vice presidential duties preclude her from taking responsibility for making coffee for the entire office every day.

But if she wishes to choose the more lofty goal, she would need to modify her image to something a bit more accommodating, such as an anti-suffragist, who still has chauvinistic attitudes toward women but at least has some semblance of rational faculties she can appeal to. Attempting to maintain an image of audience incompatible with the desired effect places the writer in much the same position as building an image of audience that bears little or no resemblance to the actual reader. In both cases, the writer will create a text which has little chance of achieving the desired result.

Now even though the mental constructs hypothesized by Flower and Hayes do suggest useful issues to consider in audience analysis, the cognitivist theory has definite limitations and liabilities in this regard. Although Flower and Hayes present this as an explanation of both how and why writers do what they do (366), the actual model merely describes the process writers go through without adequately accounting for the choices made in the construction of a text (Bizzell 1982, 222). For instance, Flower and Hayes do not account
for how good writers build their rich interpretations of rhetorical situations; they merely note this characteristic of good writers and include a few excerpts from protocols to back up their claim. Furthermore, even though the model does attend to the problems of audience, “the changes made [in a text] . . . are not seen as substantially altering the meaning . . . because [meaning] is based in the underlying structure of thought and language” (217) rather than the exchanges of discourse. The interplay I describe between image of audience and selected effect, however, contradicts this assumption. Certainly any changes a writer makes in the selected effect due to the image created of the audience has some impact on the meaning constructed.

However, although cognitivists do see meanings as constructed by the writer rather than merely discovered in the deep recesses of the psyche, their assumptions reduce meaning to a commodity which can transmitted via text. As a result, the role of the writer in adapting to the reader becomes reduced to that of a manufacturer attempting to develop the most efficient package for containing the meaning. Conversely, the role of the reader becomes reduced to that of a consumer attempting to open the package in such a way as to remove the meaning without undue damage. In short, cognitivists appear to reduce the process of communication to a mechanistic activity.

Despite this, I find the cognitivist view offers significant insights into the behavior of writers as they struggle with the concept of audience. Indeed, much of the scholarly criticism aimed at cognitivists faults them for doing what they do too well (Pemberton 1993, 47). For instance, Berlin charges that cognitivists have “continually isolated the task environment—the
social context—from the writing processes which take place in the writer's consciousness” (Berlin 1989, 772). Such criticism, however, neglects the distinction we should maintain between communicative action and communicative interaction. Cognitivists have focused their research on the individual communicative actions of writers and readers in isolation rather than on the complete process of communicative interaction. Flower herself readily agrees that her research provides insight into only a small portion the overall writing process, and she calls for research which studies “what happens when the social and cultural context of writing is interpreted by the goal-directed cognition of an individual writer” (Flower 1989, 768).

While her concession still bears a marked cognitive bias, Flower appears to believe researchers concerned with the whole of communication can use the findings of cognitivists such as herself in building a comprehensive model of the communication process. To the extent that these findings illuminate the observable actions of writers and readers, I am inclined to agree with Flower. However, to the extent that cognitivists believe their models reflect the actual mental actions of all writers and readers, I must disagree. At best, we can consider their models as useful hypotheses of what appears to happen in the writer's mind, but as Peirce warns, we should not confuse a useful hypothesis with the reality it attempts to explain (1955, 230).
Audience According to the Social–Constructionists

The social–constructionists currently appear to have a large following in university and college English departments in the United States. According to Berlin, social–constructionists “share a notion of rhetoric as a political act involving a dialectic interaction engaging the material, the social, and the individual writer, with language as the agency of mediation” (1988, 488). For the social–constructionist, reality does not exist as an independent and directly knowable phenomenon but rather emerges through the interaction of the individual, the discourse community, and the world. Although critics charge social–constructionists with promoting solipsism and relativism, social–constructionists maintain that since meaning and reality reside in the discourse, the continual interaction of the three elements of communication prevents solipsistic or relativistic beliefs from taking hold. Noting one implication of this viewpoint, Faigley reports that “reading is neither an experience of extracting fixed meaning from a text nor is it a matter of making words mean anything you want them to” (1986, 535). Conversely, working from this viewpoint, we cannot regard writing as an exercise in packaging a pre-existing meaning into a string of words.

Although the social–constructionist viewpoint seems like an excellent candidate for providing theoretical context for developing models for audience analysis, this does not prove to be the case. Since social–constructionists vaunt the social aspects of writing, methods for instilling audience awareness into students center on creating writing communities in the classroom (Kroll 1984, 180). According to the assumption driving this approach, students gain an understanding of discourse communities and how to interact within them through
such activities as peer review and collaborative writing. Some approaches to building writing communities incorporate writing-across-the-curriculum, where students write within their academic fields.

While I agree that the increased interaction among students has benefits for the novice writer, social-constructionists do not appear to provide any substantial approaches to teaching about audience. The methods seem based on the belief that immersion in communities will instill a sufficient understanding of readers for students (Kroll 1984, 181). Presumably, writers cannot direct their texts to individual readers since whatever readers the writer has in mind belong to the same discourse community, and thus they read as members of the community rather than individuals.

Working from this assumption, writers must instead aim their texts at the whole community by using their sense of what the community expects or requires. Of course, how writers and readers actually gain this sense of community expectations remains rather vague (Nystrand 1989, 71–72). More importantly, the manner of defining discourse communities also remains rather vague (Kent 1993, 81–84). As a result, I do not find that the social-constructionist viewpoint provides a suitable context for developing methods and models for teaching audience analysis.

Audience According to the Externalists

The application of the externalist viewpoint to composition studies has come about only in the past few years, most notably in the work of Thomas Kent. Externalists set
themselves apart from the approaches discussed above by categorizing these approaches as *internalist*. For the internalist, "knowledge of the world and of other minds is relative to some sort of conceptual scheme, and they presuppose that discourse production can be reduced to a process that represents, duplicates, or models these conceptual schemes" (Kent 1993, 101), and language serves as the mediator between the external world and the internal conceptualization of the world (102).

The externalist, on the other hand, rejects the Cartesian split between mental states and the world (Kent 1993, 104). Although externalists do not deny the existence of internal mental states, they do deny that we can learn much about how we use language by the examination of these internal mental states. For the externalist, we can only examine what exists outside our skins, and at best, we can only make inferences about what might occur in our minds as a result. What we know of ourselves and the world comes directly from what we observe, and we interpret any new observation based on interpretations of prior observations (Kent 1993, 117). Since interpretation requires interaction with others, we communicate, and thus our "internal mental states derive from communicative interaction" rather than the other way around (117).

Donald Davidson offers one way in which we can examine communication from an externalist perspective (Kent 1993, x). According to Davidson, rather than working from a fixed conceptual scheme during discourse production, speakers and listeners employ a set of interpretive strategies which they adjust during discourse in order to maintain the assumption that communication can occur (85–86). What we know of these strategies we find traced in
the concrete utterances of a communicative event. Davidson distinguishes between two types of interpretive strategies: the prior theory and the passing theory.

For listeners, the prior theory represents the strategy they use as they first begin to interpret a speaker's words, whereas for speakers, the prior theory represents the strategy they believe listeners will attempt to use. For listeners, the passing theory represents the actual strategy listeners use to interpret a speaker's words, whereas for speakers, the passing theory represents the strategy they intend their listeners to use. Rather than regarding these as completely distinct, Davidson sees the prior theory evolving into the passing theory during discourse. Or as Kent describes it,

As a speaker speaks and a listener listens, they both possess prior theories that undergo modification as they speak and listen. As they guess about the meaning of one another's sentences, they together arrive as a passing theory, a unique hermeneutic strategy, that will enable them to understand one another in their own singular situation ... the passing theory, in a sense, disappears to become part of a prior theory that may or may not be used in future communication situations (87).

From this viewpoint, miscommunication occurs when speaker and listener, for one reason or another, fail to work together toward a mutual passing theory. We can guess these reasons as ranging from the unintentional failure to realize the differences in each other's prior theories to the intentional disregard of those differences.

One primary element of the externalist view of communication lies in the specific prior knowledge communicants assume they have of each other. Rather than a vague and wide-ranging mental picture that could describe an entire group, this knowledge applies to specific persons, and communicants gain this knowledge as a result of communicative
interaction (Kent 1993, 104). This assumption suggests that the most productive way for
writers to understand their readers is through communicative interaction. From an externalist
perspective, approaches such as peer reviews and writing communities work, not due to a
heightened awareness of the discourse conventions of the group, but rather due to a specific
understanding of the individual members of the group.

Unfortunately, Kent contends that the externalist viewpoint leads to the conclusion that
"no body of knowledge exists that can be taught" regarding composition, rhetoric, and
audience (1993, 158). Insofar as the externalist viewpoint precludes such concepts as
discourse communities and mental processes universal to all writers, I agree. However, I see
in this viewpoint the seeds of a model we can use to instruct our students in the ways of
rhetorical communication. In particular, I believe we can work from the externalist viewpoint
to help student writers understand how to better guess the prior theories of their readers and
how to develop more effective passing theories they can use in the development of their
documents.

Implications of Contemporary Theories

Although the externalist viewpoint has fewer adherents than the other theories
discussed here, I believe externalism has far more useful implications for the teaching of
audience analysis. In particular, externalism suggests a focus on the specific communicative
event rather than the universal problem of communication or the internal mental gymnastics
of the writer as suggested by the other viewpoints. Instead of presenting an obscure
abstraction to our students, we can present the problem of audience analysis as a concrete, understandable phenomenon.
A EXTERNALIST MODEL OF RHETORICAL COMMUNICATION

Having now discussed both the inadequacies of our current methods of teaching audience analysis and the theoretical climate of composition studies, I can present the model I have designed as an instructional tool for audience analysis. Before I begin this discussion, however, I want to address one small but vital point regarding the use of models in the classroom. I believe a large part of the problem we face in finding suitable models for the classroom lies in the criteria we use for making our selection. As I show in the next section, using an inappropriate set of criteria can lead us to reject models we need not reject and to accept models we should not accept.

The Problem of Models as Instructional Tools

In his critique of models in composition studies, Pemberton urges researchers to exercise extreme caution in the design of any model, noting that

in order to make observations and interpret them, one must have a model of data; in order to make generalizable claims about how writers construct texts, one must operate from within a preconceived theory of writing processes. Because of the imperfect match between subject and source, mapped through the medium of a preferred analogy, any model of writing behaviors or writing processes will, by definition, be a flawed representation, failing to account for all the possible variables which influence writing and all the perspectives which can be used to interpret those variables. The imperfections inherent in models, then, are natural consequences of the interpretive act (1993, 53).

Pemberton does not suggest that we abandon models as a tool in research, and indeed, he believes we could not even if we wanted to (54). Nevertheless, he maintains that even the
most carefully crafted model cannot avoid misrepresenting the target phenomenon to some degree. Because of this, the researcher must take pains to minimize this misrepresentation by carefully attending to the assumptions which underlie the model and by explicitly stating the theoretical and interpretive limitations of the model (55).

However, Pemberton's caution regarding models has its limitations since he focuses his attention specifically on models designed to aid scientific inquiry. We judge the validity of these models by such criteria as accuracy, internal consistency, comprehensiveness, and clarity (Barker and Barker 1992, 637). When we consider models used as instructional aids, however, we see that these models have an intent quite different from scientific models, and we should judge their validity by a different set of criteria, such as simplicity, understandability, and media richness (637). In order to judge the validity of the models we use, we need to keep the intent of the models well in mind when selecting our criteria.

We all too often attempt to use models for purposes outside their intended spheres, and as a result, we condemn models using inappropriate criteria, much like the weekend carpenter who complains bitterly about the screwdriver which breaks when used as a chisel. To condemn exceptionally complex models such as the Campbell–Level model of communication (1985, 40) as inappropriate for the classroom has a measure of truth, of course, but only vacuously so since Campbell and Level do not intend their model as an instructional tool. On the other hand, if we find that this model meets the criteria for a valid tool for scientific inquiry, we shouldn't assume that it works well in the classroom. 7

Unfortunately, when we do find a model that meets the criteria for classroom use, we
face great difficulty in avoiding a gross misrepresentation of reality. The goals of simplicity, understandability, and media richness do not lend themselves to adequate representations of the world. Consider, for instance, the Bohr model of the atom commonly used in the chemistry classroom. This model pictures a central nucleus surrounded by orbiting electrons. Now even though intended only to help students understand the energy levels of electrons, the illustration suggests much more. A naive student who takes the model literally will see a wondrous symmetry between the micro-world of the atom and the macro-world of the solar system. However, when interpreted from the viewpoint of quantum physics, such symmetry between atom and solar system does not exist.

While I doubt this misinterpretation harms most students as they muddle on through life, when we consider the situation in the composition classroom, we do not have the luxury of allowing our students to leave with a comparable misunderstanding of how communication works. After all, few students need to know what atoms really look like, but all students need to have an understanding of communication that does not include concepts which misrepresent critical aspects of communicative interaction. My objections to Kinneavy models stems from this point: although Kinneavy models may meet the criteria for good classroom models in most respects, they also create misimpressions which hinder a student's understanding of the complexities of communication.

I don't want to suggest that models we use in the classroom should meet the criteria we use for judging scientific models. A fully comprehensive model of communication would no doubt overwhelm even the brightest of our students. Nevertheless, we do need to attend
to the impressions and misimpressions suggested by the models we do use. While we cannot completely avoid misrepresentation in our efforts to present a model of communication to our students, we need to strive to ensure that whatever misrepresentations we allow cause minimal harm. In the two-part model I have designed, I have tried to maintain simplicity, understandability, and media richness while avoiding misrepresentations which lead students into a compromised understanding of how communication works.

An Overview of the RSM and SOTS Models

Working from my understanding of the externalist perspective, I have designed two related models which when used together can help students understand not only what questions they should ask regarding their readers but also where they should look for the answers to those questions. As I mentioned in the second section, Donald Davidson identifies two kinds of interpretive strategies used by a speaker and a listener engaged in communicative interaction: prior and passing theories. The speaker and the listener begin with different prior theories, with the speaker's prior theory consisting of a guess as to what the listener's prior theory might be. As the speaker and the listener interact, they modify their prior theories until they come to share a single passing theory.

When we move from oral to written communication, this description seems at first inappropriate. After all, the writer creates a document which the reader picks up at some later time. While we can imagine the evolution of two prior theories into a single passing theory in an exchange of correspondence, this seems at first glance impossible when we look
at something like a research article or technical report. In many writing situations, a writer appears to create a suitable passing theory without extensive interaction with the reader.

However, the situation appears this way only if we treat the creation of a document as an isolated communicative action. To paraphrase Bakhtin, no document exists in isolation but rather exists as part of an elaborate web of prior documents and anticipates those documents which will follow (Bakhtin 1986, 75–76). If this holds true for a document, than it should also hold true for the creation of the document. Rather than viewing the creation of a document as an isolated, discrete event, we must view it as small part of a much larger event.

Seen as part of a web of communicative actions, we can regard the creation of a document as the communicative event in which a writer works out the passing theory intended for a reader. Prior documents used by the writer provide the prior theories, from the initial call for the document's creation to the final draft. For example, we might consider the assignment given to a student as the initial call for the creation of a document, and all subsequent communicative interaction between instructor and student as the evolution of the prior theory to the passing theory. Or if we play a little with the terminology here, we can consider the creation of a document as the action of the writer in combining and modifying two or more interpretive strategies into a single strategy.

This suggests that a writer does not merely invent a reader out of thin air, but rather that the writer interprets the reader from prior communicative interaction. Or, in keeping with the externalist perspective, the writer does not merely guess at the appropriate passing
theory but rather builds the passing theory from prior communicative interaction. This in turn implies that the writer has the option of identifying and analyzing this prior interaction in order to develop the best possible informed guess regarding the appropriate interpretive strategy to use for a document. Moreover, writers can seek out documents which they were not initially privy to and use these documents as rhetorical source materials for building a suitable passing theory. For instance, an employee writing a request for equipment previously denied can examine previous requests and the responses to find hints for building a passing theory with a greater potential for success.

We can extend this notion of a web of documents much further than this, however. In addition to examining documents which they were not initially privy to, writers can also solicit documents from others who have had dealings with their intended readers. For instance, when writing term papers for a particularly perplexing professor, graduate students commonly seek rhetorical advice from fellow students who have successfully worked with the professor in question. While the intended readers do not participate in such interactions, they nonetheless appear as the topic of communicative interaction.

To an experienced writer, what I describe in the previous paragraphs no doubt seems painfully obvious. However, I believe the majority of our students do not come into freshman composition with such a sophisticated view of writing. Most prior instruction in writing has taught them to view the creation of each new paper as an isolated event, and few students have any notion of writing for a reader. Many of my students have seemed to initially regard adaptation to the reader as a matter of either magic or luck. I doubt my
students are atypical in this belief.

Unfortunately, when we rely on the methods and models for audience analysis I discussed in the first section, we do little to change this view. At best, we give our students an awareness of the need to adapt to readers, but we give them nothing they can reasonably use in real writing situations. We need to teach our students not only how to identify the source materials they can use for information about their topics but also how to identify the source materials they can use for information about their readers. We need to teach them the painfully obvious process of building a passing theory by using rhetorical information from both prior communicative interaction and interaction with others familiar with the intended readers of a document.

For simplicity, I have divided the process of building a passing theory into two parts, and I have designed a separate model for each part. I have named the model for the first part the RSM model for what it helps writers identify in a communicative situation: the rhetorical source materials they have available for audience analysis. I have named the model for the second part the SOTS model for the aspects of an interpretive strategy it identifies for analysis: self, other, topic, and situation. A writer uses the RSM model to identify the source materials available and then uses these source materials in conjunction with the SOTS model to build a suitable passing theory. I will cover this process in more detail in the next two sections.
The RSM Model: Building a Picture of a Communicative Event

In order to build a suitable passing theory for a specific document, a writer must first identify prior communicative interaction that can be used as rhetorical source material. The RSM model gives the writer a tool which allows the building of a graphic illustration of a communicative event augmented by verbal description. The model itself consists of three types of elements: communicants, artifacts, and relationships.

A communicant is simply any person capable of participating in a communicative event. Minimally, a communicant must be able to either write or speak and to either read or listen; however, we can assume that most communicants can write, speak, read, and listen. In the RSM model, no communicant necessarily has any specific role assigned, that is, we do not identify a communicant as a writer, speaker, reader, or listener. By avoiding such role identification, we allow the building of a communicative event which includes a much longer span of time than we would otherwise allow.

As soon as we restrict the role of a communicant to a single communicative action, we must exclude all artifacts which would require the communicant to assume an additional role, and this in turn limits the time frame we can consider. Of course, in practice, we will certainly include communicants with quite restrictive roles. These communicants, however, will play only a small part in the particular communicative event.

The second type of elements we have available in the RSM model I have called artifacts. An artifact, in the simplest terms, is a physical communicative object within the communicative event. For instance, the disturbance of air caused by the vocal chords forms
an artifact. If this oral communicative occurs in a face-to-face context, then non-vocal actions such as expression and gesture also form part of this artifact; in other oral contexts, the vocal disturbance alone forms the artifact. With written communication, the term artifact refers to the object produced during writing. A letter to a colleague forms an artifact. A departmental memo forms an artifact. This holds true for both objects traditionally associated with written communication (e.g. ink and paper objects) and objects only recently introduced (e.g. electronic mail).

In some respects, the notion of artifact I intend here parallels Bakhtin’s notion of the utterance (Bakhtin 1986, 71). However, I have reservations about how Bakhtin develops his conception of the utterance. In particular, I find a problem with Bakhtin’s claim that “the finalization of the utterance is the possibility of responding to it” (76, italics in original). Bakhtin seems particularly insistent that when we respond to an utterance, we respond to the whole. Of course, what I have done in this paragraph brings out the fallacy of this restriction on the conception of utterance. I have not responded to the entirety of his essay but only to a small portion.

To avoid this contradiction, I focus solely on the actual physical object produced. Unfortunately, this choice does not come without problems of its own. For instance, multiple copies of a memo which contain the same words in the same order and in the same format constitute distinct physical objects, and this suggests that we should treat each copy of the memo as a distinct communicative object as well. However, in such a case, the physical distinctness does not confer communicative distinctness on any one copy. If, however, a
communicant adds a note to a copy and this note does not appear on any other copy, then that copy does become a distinct communicative object. But if a communicant accidently tears a copy of the memo and no other memo has similar tears, that copy still does not become a distinct communicative object.\textsuperscript{10}

The composition classroom provides another example of how I intend to use artifact as a term. When a student creates successive drafts of a paper, each draft constitutes a unique communicative artifact. If the student brings several copies of one draft to class for peer review, those several copies constitute a single artifact. However, after other students add their comments to the various copies, each copy becomes a unique communicative artifact. Of course, these new artifacts may not prove useful to the student, but they do nonetheless constitute unique artifacts.

This characteristic of artifacts suggests that the difference between oral and written communication extends beyond the physical form of the artifacts created. Because of their ephemeral nature, oral artifacts cannot be reproduced and altered in a manner comparable to what we can do with written artifacts. However, we cannot consider written artifacts to have a permanent form since any communicant can alter a written artifact and thus change the functionality of that artifact. Consider for example the difference between reading an unmarked copy of an article and reading a copy with extensive marginal comments. If we assume that the comments call the argument into question or dispute major points, we can reasonably conclude that the person reading the unmarked copy will potentially form a different opinion than the person reading the marked copy.
Clearly my notion of artifact raises questions which I cannot fully deal with here. Nevertheless, the focus on the physical object should not prove problematic for the average writer. An understanding of the concept of artifact which does not deal with the theoretical problems has certain pragmatic advantages over a more fully developed understanding. Such an understanding allows the writer to build a representation of a communicative event, and I don't intend the RSM model to account for more than this. No one should take the RSM model at its present level of development as a tool for communication research.

Now the third type of elements we have available in the RSM model I have called relationships. The relationships in this model allow the connection of communicants to artifacts and artifacts to communicants. A simple example of how these connections occur appears in Figure 4. Of course, the graphic illustration alone does not provide sufficient

![Figure 4](A Minimal RSM Model)
information. What we see in Figure 4 could be a writer who created a document for a reader, two writers creating a single document, two readers using separate copies of a document, or any of a number of other possibilities. If we draw a graphic illustration of a far more complex communicative event, this problem becomes compounded. In order to remove this ambiguity, the RSM model requires a verbal description of the relationships between communicants and artifacts in addition to the graphic representation.

Unfortunately, the lack of specific roles for communicants and the lack of permanence for artifacts creates some conceptual difficulties in describing these relationships, especially when we try to describe the relationships involved in written communication. Despite this, I still want to avoid characterizing communicants as either writers or readers since this implies a restriction on the possible communicative actions of each. In practice, we rarely see communicants restricting themselves to a single kind of action. Writers usually both write and read the artifacts they produce. Readers often both read and write the artifacts they use.11 Both writers and readers create meaning as they interact with artifacts, so we can characterize the relationships as creative, but that offers little help in resolving the underlying difficulty here.

The resolution of this problem lies in the perception a communicant has of an artifact. A communicant who creates an artifact will regard that artifact as self-produced even when reading it. Similarly, any other communicant who encounters this same artifact will regard it as other-produced even when writing it. If we apply this distinction to the graphic illustration in Figure 4, we can eliminate the ambiguity. For instance, we could describe this
simple event as follows: the upper communicant has a self-productive relationship with the artifact while the lower communicant has an other-productive relationship with the artifact. We could enhance this description further by including details regarding the exchange of the artifact, such as the upper communicant sent the artifact to the lower communicant who wrote a short response on the artifact and then returned it.

The verbal description of an RSM model provides substance to a graphic illustration which would otherwise have none. We might even regard the graphic portion as superfluous, and indeed, it is. An experienced writer with a reasonable degree of rhetorical savvy would have little difficulty developing a workable verbal description of even a complicated communicative event without an accompanying graphic representation. However, in keeping with the characteristics of a model for classroom use, the graphic illustration adds to the media richness of the model. In addition, the graphic illustration helps simplify the verbal description and provides a scheme for organizing the description.

Admittedly, the RSM model is not completely intuitive. Because of this, we need to include a set of guidelines for building a model of a communicative event when we present the RSM model to students. These guidelines need to help the student reduce the complexity of the event while avoiding ambiguity. I have developed eight guidelines for this purpose:

G1. Include only those communicants directly affected by the outcome of the communicative event.
G2. Identify each communicant with a unique descriptive label (names are a good choice).
G3. Include only those artifacts which have a direct bearing on the outcome of the communicative event.
G4. Identify each artifact with a unique descriptive label.
G5. Communicants may be in relationships only with artifacts.
G6. Artifacts may be in relationships only with communicants.
G7. Communicants may have relationships with any number of artifacts.
G8. Artifacts may have relationships with any number of communicants.

Guidelines 1 and 3 serve to limit the scope of the communicative event. Without these two guidelines, we could in theory extend an RSM model indefinitely. Guidelines 2 and 4 serve to reduce ambiguity in the model. Guidelines 5 and 6 serve to reduce the perception that communicants and artifacts have direct, unmediated relationships within the communicative event.\textsuperscript{12} Guidelines 7 and 8 serve to encourage the development of a wider scope for the communicative event.

One small problem appears to crop up, however, with the first guideline. This precludes the inclusion of a third communicant commenting about the intended reader unless this third communicant will be directly affected by the communicative event. I intend this exclusion of the third communicant as a way of simplifying the RSM model. The third guideline provides the solution to the apparent dilemma I create with this intention. Although we might need to exclude the third communicant, we would still include the artifact since it has a direct bearing on the outcome of the communicative event.

Writers following the last four guidelines as absolute edicts, of course, would find themselves with a model that quickly becomes unwieldy and unusable, both with regard to the graphic illustration and the verbal description. A writer could, for instance, develop a graphic illustration similar to the one in Figure 5. Even an appropriate verbal description would do little to improve the usability of this model. To solve this problem, I have included
two corollaries to these eight guidelines:

- **PC1.** Communicants who have the same type of relationship with an artifact can be bundled together as a group.

- **CC1.** Contraindication: A communicant who could be included in a group must be excluded if he or she has a type of relationship with an artifact others in the group do not share.

- **PC2.** Artifacts which have the same type of relationship with a communicant can be bundled together as a group.

- **CC2.** Contraindication: An artifact which could be included in a group must be excluded if it has a type of relationship with a communicant others in the group do not share.

Using these corollaries, we can bundle artifacts A2, A7, and A13 together as a group without question so long as they share the same type of relationship with communicant C1. Other possible groupings include A4 and A5; A6, A8, and A15; A3 and A12; and A10 and A14. With these groupings, however, the decision becomes a bit more complex. For instance, if A4 and A5 share the same type of relationship with C1 but A4 has a self-productive

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**Figure 5** An Unwieldy RSM Model
relationship with C2 and A5 has an other-productive relationship with C2, we cannot use the corollary to bundle A4 and A5. On the other hand, if A4 and A5 both have a self-productive relationship with C1 and an other-productive relationship with C2, then we can use the corollary to bundle them into a group.

I must stress at this point that a writer using the RSM model does not necessarily develop a description of a past communicative event. If the writer decides to request insights from a third communicant, the artifact from this interaction becomes part of the model even though it may not yet exist. Since the writer can also include artifacts she did not originally have access to, the model she creates describes the unfolding communicative event she is part of. With this in mind, I want to suggest that even though the writer will seek out existent artifacts, these artifacts have no relationships with each other except through the writer, even if one artifact refers to another. The writer creates these relationships rather than merely discovering what exists a priori. The dialogic aspect of artifacts described by Bakhtin occurs only through the actions of a communicant (1986, 105ff). Artifacts may suggest relationships that the communicant should build, but she alone creates the relationships.

Although the RSM model requires no small amount of effort to become familiar with, I believe the expanded vision of writing the student gains more than offsets this disadvantage. Classroom exercises and assignments such as I describe in later sections can provide the student with sufficient experience to use the model reasonably well. Of course, the mere ability to model a communicative event does little more than give a student another excuse to avoid beginning to write. Without the SOTS model, the RSM model has nothing
particularly valuable to offer writers struggling with the problem of understanding and adapting to their readers.

The SOTS Model: Building a Picture of an Interpretive Strategy

In the course of building a communicative artifact, writers must at some time attend to the problem of developing the interpretive strategy they intend their readers to use. Even from an externalist perspective, we regard this interpretive strategy as an internal image in the communicant's mind. Nevertheless, although we might assume communicants have such mental images, we claim nothing universally valid regarding the nature of these images. We present the interpretive strategy as a hypothesis to explain how communicative interaction occurs without commenting on the internal workings of the individual mind.

The challenge for the externalist, of course, lies in explaining how communicants come to share a common interpretive strategy. As I mentioned earlier, communicants in a face-to-face context begin with tentative strategies which they modify during communicative interaction, eventually arriving at a shared strategy. If we reject mystical explanations of how this occurs, we must conclude that a communicant includes traces of his or her current strategy in the communicative artifact produced, and that other communicants can interpret these traces and use them to modify their own current strategies.

We can assume that such traces also exist in artifacts produced during written communication. Each artifact holds traces of the interpretive strategy intended by the communicant who built the artifact. While we normally attend to these traces without deep
reflection, we can distance ourselves from the artifact and attend to the traces in a deliberate and orderly fashion. This, of course, is nothing much different than the time honored tradition of rhetorical analysis.

However, as I have seen it practiced in the classroom, rhetorical analysis amounts to little more than a rhetorical post mortem. Students generally take an artifact with no current relevance and describe the traces they find of the intended interpretive strategy. The traditional rhetorical analysis assignment of an article selected from a reader serves as an example here. This exercise has potential benefit, to be sure, but many students fail to see the point. Even in classes where rhetorical analysis forms a vital part of the writing assignment, I suspect that most students perform the analysis after the artifact has been constructed and lies ready to be presented DOA to the instructor.

The RSM model moves rhetorical analysis from a disconnected exercise students must survive as part of their composition classes to an essential part of the writing process. In constructing an RSM model of a communicative event, writers identify sources which can yield interpretive traces useful for guiding the construction of an interpretive strategy. Rhetorical analysis provides the means for identifying and interpreting these interpretive traces. Following rhetorical tradition to a large degree, I have differentiated five types of interpretive traces a writer can find in an artifact: information about the self, information about the other, information about the topic, information about the situation, and information about how the other four aspects interrelate.

Drawing a graphic representation of these five types of rhetorical information presents
no small dilemma. Since this information corresponds to the interpretive strategy used by a communicant, any graphic representation holds the potential of misinterpretation as an illustration of the image in the communicant's mind, even when intended only as an illustration of the types of interpretive traces that can be found in an artifact. However, this does not seem the sort of misinterpretation which will hinder the student's understanding of audience analysis. Many cognitivists, after all, function reasonably well in communicative interaction despite their belief in mental schemata.

Even accepting this potential for misrepresentation leaves the problem of how best to illustrate the relationships among the traces. Conceptually, all four aspects of an interpretive strategy interact and blend (thus introducing the fifth aspect), making clear differentiation impossible. In addition, the self, the other, and the topic all form part of the situation, and none of these three traces can be interpreted apart from the situation trace. I have tried several approaches to solving the problem of developing a suitable graphic representation, and those which seemed theoretically most satisfying proved undesirable for the classroom. My current attempt at a graphic representation for the SOTS model appears in Figure 6. While I do not find this representation particularly satisfying theoretically, I believe writers using the model will find it meets their needs in audience analysis.

The SOTS model serves as a prompt for the kinds of questions we need to ask about an artifact while reminding us of the interrelations among the answers we come up with. If we have a self-productive relationship with an artifact, we need to ask questions such as
If we have an other–productive relationship with an artifact, we need to ask similar questions such as

- What role does the other person want me to accept in interpreting this artifact?
- What image does the other person want me to adopt of him or her in interpreting this artifact?
- What opinion regarding the topic does the other person want me to come away with after interpreting this artifact?
- What understanding of the encompassing situation does the other person want me to come away with after interpreting this artifact?
• How do the answers to these questions interrelate and affect each other?

In the first case, we ask questions about the interpretive strategy we want traced in the artifact we will produce, and in the second, we ask questions about the interpretive strategy the other communicant has traced in the artifact. Herein lies the heart of the SOTS model when used with the RSM model: we use the interpretations we make from the interpretive traces in other-produced artifacts to create the answers we will use as a guide for developing the interpretive strategy we trace in our artifact.

This in turn leads to the inherent difficulty students must overcome in order to use the model well. The terms I have used make the model appear ego-centered, even for the more mature student. From this viewpoint, when a communicant interprets a self-productive artifact, self refers to the communicant's own self and other refers to the other communicant. When a communicant interprets an other-productive artifact, self still refers to the communicant's own self and other still refers to the other communicant. This in itself causes no problems.

However, when attempting to interpret an other-productive artifact intended for a third communicant, we run into trouble. In this case, which communicant should be identified as self and which as other? More importantly, since we want to use this artifact as a source of information for building an interpretive strategy, how do we interpret the traces to meet our needs? In other words, how do we relate the information we find in such an artifact to the questions we must answer regarding the interpretive strategy we need to build?
The solution to this little dilemma lies in disallowing a completely ego-centered interpretation of the SOTS model. Accordingly, when speaking of interpretive traces, *self* always refers to the communicant who produced an artifact, and *other* always refers to the communicant who is the intended reader. From this viewpoint, relating information to the appropriate question then becomes a matter of mapping traces to the corresponding aspect of the interpretive strategy. In developing our mapping, we want to identify the paths of influence from a trace to a specific aspect of the interpretive strategy. For many artifacts, this mapping presents no major difficulty.

When we interpret a self-productive artifact, the self trace maps to *self*, the other trace maps other, the topic trace maps to topic, and the situation trace maps to situation, as shown in Figure 7. When we interpret an other-productive artifact where we are an intended reader, the self trace maps to other, the other trace maps to *self*, and the topic trace and the situation trace map as before, as shown in Figure 8. Admittedly, the mappings for these two cases are trivial, but nonetheless, they form the basis for understanding more complex mappings.

When we interpret an other-productive artifact where we are *not* the intended reader,

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**Figure 7**  Mapping SOTS Traces for a Self-Productive Artifact

**Figure 8**  Mapping SOTS Traces for an Other-Productive Artifact
the SOTS mapping becomes more difficult. Since we want to interpret this artifact as a step in building our interpretive strategy, we can assume that for most such artifacts, at least one of the communicants involved is the communicant we want to adapt for.\textsuperscript{15} Even so, we cannot use just a simple mapping without misinterpretation. Instead, we must map the traces from the artifact to the intended reader's interpretive strategy rather than directly to our own, and from the intended reader's interpretive strategy, we then map to the appropriate aspects of our interpretive strategy. In mapping from the traces to the reader's interpretive strategy, we can proceed much as we did in the trivial cases, taking into account whether the reader's relationship with the artifact is self-productive or other-productive. But when we map from the reader's interpretive strategy to our own, we must map both the self and the other aspects to the other aspect of our interpretive strategy. An illustration of how this mapping would look appears in Figure 9.\textsuperscript{16} This particular mapping should help us avoid misinterpretation

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig9}
\caption{Mapping SOTS Traces for an Other-Productive Artifact with a Third Communicant as the Intended Reader}
\end{figure}
of the traces no matter which of the communicants we intend as our own reader. While the self trace and the other trace have intrinsic interest, we will find the relationship we can interpret as existing between the communicants much more useful for our purposes.

We encounter similar mapping difficulties when we interpret an other–produced artifact received from a third communicant which offers insights on how we might adapt to the communicant we intend as reader. In such an artifact, the topic trace offers the most useful information. We still need to attend to the other three traces, of course, but we do not directly use the information from these traces in the interpretive strategy we build. Once again we need to picture an intermediate interpretive strategy. We map the traces to this intermediate strategy as with any other–productive artifact, but when we map from our intermediate strategy to our intended strategy, we include only the information from our interpretation of the topic trace, mapping this information as shown in Figure 10.

![Figure 10](image_url)  
**Figure 10** Mapping SOTS Traces for an Other–Productive Artifact where a Third Communicant Comments on the Communicant Intended as a Reader
The SOTS mappings I have described here certainly do not exhaust all the possible mappings we might encounter in our analysis of artifacts. Nevertheless, I believe these four mappings cover the most common types of artifacts writers will encounter. By using appropriate mappings of the artifacts identified using the RSM model, student writers can build interpretive strategies far more complex than the thin strategies composition instructors commonly encounter in the assignments they receive.

Now the question remains as to what we have after going through this SOTS analysis. The interpretive strategy formed remains in the mind, unseen and unknowable by other persons. However, in building our artifacts, we leave interpretive traces which we or some other person can use to produce a hypothetical description of the interpretive strategy we used. For the purposes of an assignment, an instructor might ask students to point out the interpretive traces in their papers and to correlate these traces with their interpretation of relevant artifacts. I discuss the design of such an assignment in the last section of my thesis.

I cannot conclude this section, however, without commenting on the differences between real and constructed readers implied by the RSM and SOTS models. In the RSM model, we identify a real person or persons we either want or have as readers, and we also identify artifacts we can use to gather rhetorical information regarding these real readers. In our SOTS analysis, however, we interpret the information from the interpretive traces in the artifacts to build an appropriate interpretive strategy to use in constructing our own artifact. Although we specify actual persons as readers, we nonetheless respond to our interpretation of those persons based on the rhetorical information in the artifacts.
While this interpretation cannot reflect the depths and complexities of real persons, I maintain that when done skillfully, an interpretive strategy built using the RSM and SOTS models will provide a more effective adaptation to the reader than whatever a writer might contrive using conventional methods and models.

An Assessment of the RSM and SOTS Models

At the beginning of this section, I stated that we should evaluate the models we use in the classroom by the criteria of simplicity, understandability, and media richness. I also stated that we need to attend to the impressions and misimpressions suggested by the models we choose. Having criticized the Kinneavy model and its variants for their failures in this regard, it seems only fair that I apply the same standards as a test of the RSM and SOTS models.

With regard to simplicity, I certainly cannot claim the RSM and SOTS models as ranking among the simplest models of communication. But then again, few other models attempt to provide such a comprehensive picture of communication, and even fewer models attempt to provide a method for representing real communicative events. Although the RSM and SOTS models lack the level of simplicity of such as the Kinneavy models, I don't think this serves to disqualify them as useful classroom tools.

The matter of intent comes into play here: whereas most models intend to portray an idealized picture of communication, the RSM and SOTS models intend to give students the tools they need to picture and analyze real communication. A more proper comparison might
be found in the schematic diagram symbols used in electronic engineering. Although this model of electronic circuitry lacks simplicity, its utility makes it appropriate for the classroom. I believe the same argument holds for the RSM and SOTS models.

With regard to understandability, again I must admit the RSM and SOTS models do not present an easy learning task for students. Both models require classroom practice before students become comfortable with them. But even though these models present a more challenging learning task for students, I have found that most of my students did begin to understand how to use the models after working with them for a while.

Several students even found the SOTS model provided a convenient pattern for organizing their rhetorical analysis assignments. Of course, I did strongly recommend that they use the SOTS model on the assignment sheet, but that they felt comfortable enough with the model to use it with reasonable success indicates some level of understanding. The success I had with using the RSM model in a classroom discussion also would seem to indicate an acceptable level of understandability. Unfortunately, I have not yet tested both models as part of a single assignment. Nevertheless, I believe that students generally find models they can actually do something with far more understandable than models which merely represent abstractions.

Both models shine, however, in regard to media richness. The combination of graphic and verbal representation tied to concrete objects and events provides a degree of richness lacking in the Kinneavy variants. The hands-on nature of the models adds an interactive element which contributes to this richness. Since we can use the models to picture a wide
variety of communicative events, we can also create a much richer set of examples we can use to illustrate the models in action. Unlike standard rhetorical analysis, the RSM and SOTS models lend themselves to analysis of artifacts as part of understanding the entire event rather than as just an isolated illustration.

As for impressions and misimpressions, I have already touched on a few of this in my discussion of the models. As I noted earlier, the SOTS model certainly suggests a specific schema as existing within a communicant's mind. However, since the model identifies the internal mental states as mapping from the interpretive traces in an artifact, I don't believe this misimpression should cause appreciable harm to a student struggling with understanding communication. Similarly, the RSM model suggests that communicants have no relationships with each other not mediated by an communicative artifact. Regardless of how we might decide this compares with reality, this impression actually proves beneficial to students. If students should come to believe this as a truth, then (assuming they have learned something of logic from us) they should conclude that their only connection with their readers lies in the artifacts they create.

Although certainly not the perfect answer for helping students learn audience analysis, I do believe the RSM and SOTS models give students a far more usable approach than what many instructors currently teach. In the next section, I present two examples of how we can use these models in the classroom.
TWO EXAMPLES OF THE RSM AND SOTS MODELS
IN A CLASSROOM SETTING

Now that I've described the structure and intent of the models, I will present in this section two examples which illustrate how we might use them in the classroom. In the first example, I have revised and augmented an illustration I used in my freshman composition class where my students built an RSM model of the rhetorical sources they had available for their last assignment. In the second example, I have designed an assignment for an advanced composition class I intend to help students learn how to use the RSM and SOTS models to analyze real situations.

A Sample Classroom Exercise

Prior to presenting this exercise to the class, I introduced the students to the elements of both the RSM and the SOTS models. Students worked in small groups in class and practiced using the RSM model to illustrate a variety of sample communicative situations, including writing a letter of complaint to the university president, writing a letter of application to a prospective employer, writing a collaborative report for a class in their majors, and making small talk at a party. To practice using the SOTS model, students completed one in-class group project and three individual assignments. For the group project, students performed SOTS analyses on Plato's Euthyphro and Crito. In the first individual assignment, each student performed a SOTS analysis of a character in a Gene
Figure 11 An Inadequate RSM Model of the Last Assignment

Kelly film using the dialogue as the rhetorical source material; in the second, each student performed a SOTS analysis of an article he or she selected from the reader; and in the third, each student performed a SOTS analysis of Plato's *Apology*.

On the Friday before we worked on this exercise in class, I drew an RSM model on the board similar to the one shown in Figure 11 and asked students whether it adequately represented the rhetorical source materials available for the last assignment. Fortunately, several students volunteered that what I had drawn didn't come close, and two or three began suggesting possible additions to what I had drawn. However, since I wanted everyone to consider how to build a more adequate model, I told students to think about the problem over the weekend and to come to class on Monday with their ideas for completing the model. To give some direction to their ponderings, I asked them to include their reasons why they would add each of the artifacts they came up with.

As I expected, on Monday about a third of the students showed up with their ideas on paper, a few claimed to have thought about the problem but hadn't had time to write
anything down, and the rest admitted that they had forgotten the assignment. I drew the inadequate model on the board once again and asked students to suggest additional artifacts, reminding them that I would expect some justification for each suggestion. The class managed to identify most of the shared artifacts quite quickly, but they needed some prompting to think of artifacts I had no access to and artifacts they had no access to. However, I only needed to remind the class of the type of artifact before the more engaged students volunteered possible additions of that type. In addition, students provided insightful (albeit crudely stated) rationales for their suggestions.¹⁷

Now rather than provide a faithful and true-to-life description of how my students built their RSM model of the last assignment, I have taken the liberty of editing and augmenting the class discussion to provide a more coherent and concise presentation. In this illustration, an exceptionally brilliant student named Lori develops an RSM model she intends to use to identify the rhetorical sources she can use in filling out her SOTS analysis of the rhetorical situation. While the rationales I include here exceed the level of reasoning demonstrated by my students in some cases, I have avoided including reasons they did not bring up. And while the diagram of the RSM model presented at the end of this discussion has a far more elegant design than what I actually drew on the board, I have included only those artifacts suggested by my students.

Lori begins building her RSM model by first using the SOTS model to remind her of the questions she needs to answer in order to successfully adapt her paper to my interests and inclinations. She personalizes the SOTS model by filling in the specific information for each
She then uses her personalized SOTS model to develop a list of specific questions she needs to answer so she can make informed rhetorical choices in how she constructs her paper:

- What opinion does Mr. Thune have of me as a person?
- What opinion does Mr. Thune have of me as a writer?
- What opinion does Mr. Thune have of my abilities to handle this topic?
- What aspects of my paper will Mr. Thune consider in assigning a grade to my paper?
- What knowledge does Mr. Thune have about megalithic monuments and their history?
- What reason does Mr. Thune have for reading my paper other than to give me a grade?
- Why do I find this topic interesting?
- What do I believe about megalithic monuments?
- How do my beliefs about megalithic monuments compare with Mr. Thune's beliefs?
- How willing is Mr. Thune to accept my beliefs regarding megalithic monuments?
- What things does Mr. Thune find worthwhile?
- What things does Mr. Thune find interesting?

Of course, Lori can answer most of these questions with little trouble, but the answers she can think of at the moment don't offer her much help or comfort. For instance, she knows immediately that she can answer the last question with cats of all shapes, colors, and sizes, but this answer gives her no rhetorical information relevant to her topic.

Having developed a list of questions she needs to answer, Lori begins the build her
RSM model. She starts with a diagram much like the one shown in Figure 11, drawing in herself and me as communicants and the paper she will write as her artifact. Since this artifact does not yet exist in final form, Lori knows she needs to identify other sources she can use in her rhetorical analysis. Remembering what I have said in class, she adds in the assignment sheet as an artifact. By this time in the semester, she feels reasonably confident that she knows what I look for in grading student papers, but she knows each assignment has specific requirements she must meet to get the grade she wants.

Without much hesitation, Lori next adds in the previous assignments she has written for this class, making use of corollaries PC2 and CC2 to group these artifacts together. She notes that this group includes not only what she wrote for the assignments but also the comments and grades I gave her. She knows these assignments provide her with a primary source of information regarding what has worked and what hasn't worked in reaching me as a reader. She also notes that assignments five and six will prove especially helpful since the some of the comments I made on these two assignments reveal my response to the topic she wants to discuss in assignment seven.

After a few moments of reflection, Lori adds in the conferences she has had with me during the semester. Of course, the conferences have only an ephemeral existence, and Lori can refer only to her memory or notes of each conference. Nevertheless, she knows she can gain valuable insights into my personality from what she remembers of our interaction during the conferences. Lori has enough political sophistication to realize that she can't interpret our interaction without a context, so she adds the class discussions as an artifact. Again, the class
discussions have only an ephemeral existence, and Lori must rely on her memory and her notes. Aside from providing a general overview of me as a public person, Lori notes that the class discussions provide examples of how I interact with other students. By developing an understanding of how I treat others, she knows she can build a context for evaluating how I treat her.

At this point, Lori decides to take a break from her model building, and she goes down to the vending machines to get a Diet Coke®. As she passes the computer labs on her way, she remembers the e-mail exchanges she has had with me during the semester. While these exchanges were both few and brief, Lori realizes that she can find valuable information in them as an augmentation to her memories of conferences and class discussions. In particular, she knows she can find examples of specific wordings I used in answering her questions, and she decides these will give additional insights into my expectations. She goes into the lab to print out a copy of the responses I sent her, thankful that I included her original messages in my replies. She decides to also print the general messages I sent to the entire class to use as context. When she returns to her room with her paper copy of the e-mail exchanges, her Diet Coke®, and assorted other snacks, she adds e-mail as a group of artifacts in her model, and she notes how she intends to use them as rhetorical sources.

After her short break and fortified with junk food and caffeine, Lori returns to her model building with renewed vigor. She reviews what she has done up to this point and realizes she has focused solely on artifacts she and I share. She decides to add one last shared artifact to her model: the departmental correctness standards. She recalls that I have
indicated my opinion regarding the standards several times during the semester, and she reviews her class notes to refresh her memory. From what she has written down, she guesses that these standards are only a part of the overall departmental policy regarding English 105, and she realizes that to some degree I will be constrained by this policy. She adds in the departmental policy as an artifact which I have access to but she does not. She notes, however, that the correctness standards give her an indication as to the nature of the overall policy.

Since she has already started adding artifacts to her model that only I have access to, Lori decides to focus on identifying a few more of these artifacts. She adds in my education as a group of artifacts which will influence my reading of her assignment. She knows, of course, that she can only make inferences as to how these artifacts will influence me, but she reasons that she should include them nonetheless. In particular, she knows from what I've said in class discussions and conferences that although I have a degree in computer science, my educational strengths lie in the humanities. She notes that although she lacks specific information regarding these artifacts, they do provide important clues for choosing how to present her topic.

Lori next adds two more groups of artifacts that only I have access to: her class mates' papers and all previous student papers I have read. She knows these artifacts provide me with a context for judging the quality of her writing and research abilities. Although she has no direct access to these artifacts, she knows she can build a reasonable guess as to what they might be like from what she remembers of her class mates' rough drafts. Since I don't
routinely read students' rough drafts, Lori adds this group of artifacts to her model as one she has access to but which I don't. She notes that the value of these artifacts lies in helping her guess the overall quality of English 105 papers, and that this in turn will help her answer the question about how I view her as a writer.

Lori realizes she has a fairly complete model at this point, and once she identifies a few more artifacts she alone has access to, she'll have an adequate selection of rhetorical sources she can use to complete her SOTS evaluation. She decides to add in comments her friends have made about her papers. Since her friends aren't in this class and don't know me personally, Lori recognizes their comments have serious limitations as good rhetorical sources. However, the comments they have made after reading her graded assignments have given her some insight into how I compare with other freshman composition instructors, and she decides that their comments can help her fine tune her image of me.

Lori decides next to include the comments she received in peer reviews, both for her previous assignments and the current assignment. Since I don't generally read peer reviews, Lori knows these have no direct relationship with me. Nevertheless, Lori reasons that since these reviews come from classmates who have struggled with the same assignments, she can use these reviews to help in her rhetorical analysis. She notes that the most useful comments are those which question how well her approach meets my expectations.20

After the peer reviews, Lori decides to consider the articles she has gathered for her assignment. These also have no direct relationship with me, but Lori reasons that she can use them as guides by analyzing how other writers have treated their readers. In addition,
she knows she can use these sources to help her in building the persona she presents in her assignment. And, of course, her sources provide her with much of her knowledge about the topic she will discuss.

Lastly, Lori adds in the previous English classes she has taken. She knows many of her opinions about writing have come from these classes, and that some of what she carries from these classes has helped her and some has hindered her. In particular, she knows that she invariably compares me to her previous teachers, and if she knows that if she notes the similarities and differences, she has a better chance of constructing an effective interpretive strategy for her assignment.

Lori decides at this point that she has an adequate model of the rhetorical situation surrounding her final assignment. Her diagram of communicants and artifacts looks something like the diagram in Figure 12. She has a good set of artifacts and memories of artifacts she can use in answering the questions she must about self, other, situation, and topic in relation to me. She could (and perhaps should) add in a few more artifacts, but if she makes good use of the artifacts she has identified, she should come up with some reasonable answers to her questions about how to adapt her assignment to fit my expectations.

Let me emphasize two important points about this illustration. First, the graphic drawn of the communicative event is not sufficient as a model without additional verbal description. In other words, a complete model of any communicative event must include both a drawing and a narrative. In the illustration, Lori not only drew in blocks representing artifacts and artifact groups, but she also noted the relationships between the artifacts and the
communicants, and she identified the sort of rhetorical information she hoped to develop from each artifact or group of artifacts.

Second, no artifact or group of artifacts can be adequately analyzed in isolation. As Lori built her model, she noticed relationships between various groups of artifacts. For instance, she included several artifact groups in order to provide a context for interpretation of other artifacts or groups. However, in keeping with the distinction I made in the previous section, recall that the relationships between artifacts do not exist \textit{a priori}. Lori had to build these relationships during her analysis.

I believe taking students through this exercise helps them develop a sense of rhetoric
far beyond what they would develop using the standard question lists provided in handbooks, and I believe this exercise would benefit advanced students as well as freshman. However, advanced students should have reached a level of sophistication which will enable them to use the RSM and SOTS models in a simulation of a real rhetorical situation. I have designed the assignment discussed in the next section with this in mind.

A Sample Out-of-Class Assignment

When designing assignments for business or technical communication classes, we face the challenge of providing students with a writing experience which will prepare them for the writing tasks they will encounter in the real world. Case-studies have been widely used as a method of designing assignments to meet this challenge, and researchers have both praised and condemned the use of case-studies in the classroom. Those who praise this method point to the richer level of creativity required to successfully complete such assignments while those who condemn the method point to the inherent artificiality.

In a recent examination of the case-study, Freedman et. al. discuss both the flaws and the virtues. As noted by the critics, case-studies cannot provide a social context which accurately mirrors the workplace since the reasons for writing in the classroom differ radically from the reasons for writing in the workplace (Freedman, et al. 1994, 221). In particular, qualities such as originality, which are highly prized in the classroom, do not rank highly in the workplace, which prizes shared knowledge over originality (209). Nevertheless, Freedman et. at. conclude the case-study provides a useful experience for students despite
its limitations, if only as an introduction to the discursive practices of the workplace (220).

As Freeman et. al. note, a case-study can never fully mirror the social environment of the workplace because of the constraints of the academic situation. Students will learn the social environment only through “exposure to relevant professional contexts” (Freedman, et al. 1994, 222). However, just because we cannot teach students in real social environments doesn’t mean we can’t provide them with strategies for learning those environments once they’ve entered the real world. The assignment I have designed using the RSM and SOTS models attempts to provide students with the experience of building a rhetorical model by tracking down the correspondence and documents which define a specific rhetorical situation.

I envision this assignment fitting into either a business or technical communication syllabus as the second or third assignment. Prior to beginning work on the assignment, students would receive instruction in the RSM and SOTS models, and they would work on small in-class projects similar to those described in the previous section. In addition, students would be introduced to the politeness strategies described by Brown and Levinson. These strategies would serve as a rhetorical repertoire for students to use in designing their responses to the case-study.

The assignment sheet given to students would read as follows:

*Situation*

After graduation from college, you land a job with ShowMe Manufacturing, a medium-sized corporation. Since your job actually uses what you learned in school, since you enjoy the company of your co-workers, and since you find the pay and the location superb, you wouldn’t mind spending the rest of your life working here.
However, one problem keeps coming up when you're sharing power lunches with your colleagues. Although not required to by law, ShowMe performs random drug testing of every employee each month. The topic generates heated debate among employees whenever it comes up, with some fully in favor of the policy, and some wholly against it. Only a handful have no opinion on the subject.

Recently, you have been appointed by your supervisor as departmental representative to the Employee Morale Committee. At the first meeting you attended, the committee voted to draft a memo opposing the company drug testing policy. Since you have earned the reputation as a writer of superior skill, the committee appoints you to write the memo to the company CEO, R. L. E. Biggs.

Assignment

You need to create three documents to minimally complete this assignment. These documents include: a memo to the CEO opposing the company drug testing policy; an RSM model which describes the rhetorical situation; and a SOTS analysis of the rhetorical situation.

Procedure

In order to gather sufficient information to complete the assignment, you will need to exchange e-mail messages with your co-workers at ShowMe. To do this, log onto Vincent and enter the command showmecase at the prompt. The computer will display a list of people you can send messages to. Based on your knowledge of the company, select the 4 people you think can best help you develop your memo. A list of the employees you can initially contact appears at the end of this assignment sheet.

You will receive replies to your initial queries within 24 hours. After you read the replies, you should print paper copies using the commands described in the course packet. If you choose, you can also send out additional messages to other employees. You can send a total of 8 additional messages, 4 messages per session. Note that the selection of potential recipients may change each time you send messages.

Since you need to allow for a 24-hour turn around time for each session, you should start working on the assignment as soon as possible.
Drafts

The Employee Morale Committee meets next Friday to review drafts of the memo. You should bring a sufficient number of drafts so each member can have a copy to comment on. If you do not bring any drafts, you will be barred from the meeting, and the committee will send a nasty memo to your supervisor.

Do not bring rough drafts of your RSM model or your SOTS analysis to this meeting.

Keep in mind that the other members of the committee may have different views of the situation. If someone seems to have access to information you overlooked, feel free to discuss the matter.

Right Answers

Since each of you will quite likely select different co-workers to send messages to, each of you will have a slightly different view of the overall situation. Obviously, no single solution exists. What I want to see is that the memo you write uses strategies appropriate for the rhetorical situation you describe in your RSM model and your SOTS analysis.

Please note that Vincent will keep track of the queries you make. If you use information you obtain from a conversation with a class mate, your RSM model and your SOTS analysis should indicate this.

Your Co-Workers

R. L. E. Biggs       CEO
C. D. Guys        Vice President for Human Resources
G. D. Ideas        Vice President for Research and Development
N. T. Bolts        Vice President for Manufacturing
P. R. Manning     Head of your department
J. L. Overly         Your supervisor
B. B. Brains     Your best friend
M. T. Bucket  An obnoxious person from down in accounting
K. R. Package     Mail room supervisor
N. O. Ital         Company gossip monger
W. W. Wings       Your mentor
Warning: Do not expect everyone you contact to reply in a courteous manner. A few of the folks at ShowMe can be real jerks, and you should take their messages as indicative of their lack of character. Do not assume, however, that these jerks have nothing useful to say.

The replies you receive may direct you to other potential sources of information, and some replies may help you interpret the information you uncover during your investigation.

In addition to the assignment sheet, students would receive a diagram such as the one in Figure 13 to serve as a starter for their RSM models.

Obviously, the mechanics of this assignment require a minimal level of computer knowledge on the part of the instructor, or at least acquaintance with a willing and competent programmer. We need two programs to manage the logistics: first, we need a program which logs student requests for messages; and second, we need a program which automatically processes the request log. Although neither program requires a great deal of skill to

![Diagram]

Figure 13  A Starter RSM Model for the Case Study Assignment
design, they do require a thorough knowledge of the computer system used. However, if the necessary programs are properly designed, even instructors with minimal computer experience should have little trouble using this assignment.

The greatest difficulty with this assignment lies in designing the web of messages students can select from. All messages need to add to the rhetorical information students have available, but a few need to also direct students to additional sources. For instance, students should read the actual drug testing policy before writing a memo condemning it, and the assignment does not bring up this issue. Four of the employees listed seem likely to suggest this: C. D. Guys, P. R. Manning, J. L. Overly, and W. W. Wings.

In addition, students should include in their memos current information from business journals supporting the argument against the drug testing policy. Again, C. D. Guys, P. R. Manning, J. L. Overly, and W. W. Wings seem likely to suggest this. Although these four should rank high among a student’s initial choices, I realize some students will not have the political savvy to place these four among the first group of inquiries. To give everyone a fair shot at finding this information, some messages should suggest contacting one of these four persons.

Another difficulty we encounter in designing the web of messages lies in developing convincing personalities for the characters. Each needs to speak in a unique voice, and yet we need to achieve a balance in pro and con. I do not intend the characters listed on the assignment as sufficient for this. In addition, we probably need such people as the shop steward, the union representative, the CEO of the drug testing firm, a buddy from the legal
department, an employee addicted to cocaine, the public relations director, and the company archivist. No doubt other characters could be added as well.

As I indicate in the assignment sheet, some characters need to respond with rude messages. This, of course, requires no small degree of skill in writing, and students will need repeated warnings not to take the messages personally. One character who I imagine should probably should be rude is R. L. E. Biggs. Although Biggs may be willing to consider a formal protest to the drug policy, an informal query from a lowly worker would be regarded as a serious breach of protocol in most companies. In addition to care in writing these rude messages, the opinions of the rude characters should also balance across pro and con with regard to the policy in order to maintain a somewhat realistic picture.

I admit this assignment would require an enormous amount of work to initially create. However, once the programs and messages have been created, it could be maintained by changing a few messages each semester to create a slightly different rhetorical climate. I also believe that the work required to create this assignment would prove worthwhile because it provides students with a learning experience lacking in most case studies. In the typical case study, the instructor must tread lightly between providing too much information and providing too little information. The assignment suggested here has the potential to provide students with far more information than necessary, but since we can hide the information in the web of messages we create, students need to synthesize the rhetorical situation rather than merely read it off an assignment sheet.

This assignment also avoids another problem common to case studies. Students who
typically do well on case study assignments either have a highly creative imagination or substantial work experience to draw on. Such students find augmenting the material given in the assignment a far easier task. This assignment should prove a greater challenge to them since they will need to redirect their efforts toward working with the material provided. In addition, students who have had their imaginative spirits crushed by years of oppressive education or who lack work experience will have a greater chance of success since they will not need to invent or recall material to fill out the rhetorical situation. Even so, I suspect this assignment, like most writing assignments, will still favor those with imagination, experience, or both.

**Implications of these Examples**

These examples I have provided illustrate how we can use the RSM and SOTS models as instructional aids for teaching audience in the classroom. However, I do not intend either to serve as the definitive manner for using these models. The classroom exercise, after all, has been used only three times, twice with what I judge as success, and once with what I judge as a failure (albeit intentional failure). And the assignment, of course, has yet to be fully designed, let alone tested in the classroom. Both examples require further testing to determine whether they do indeed improve students' understanding of the role of audience in creating documents.

Nevertheless, although untested and unproven, I believe the RSM and SOTS models offer a viable alternative to the current methods we use for teaching audience analysis.
NOTES

1. I quote this material with the writer's permission.

2. Elbow's concession, however, seems more of a rhetorical ploy to divert his critics than a genuine acknowledgement of the need for attention to audience.

3. While most researchers place the beginnings of composition studies in the early 1960s (Bizzell 1982, 214; Corder 1982, 4; Faigley 1986, 527), Nystrand et. al. argue for a starting date in the mid to late seventies (270). Although I find their argument convincing, I have opted to follow the majority and use the earlier date.

4. I have taken these counts from the pages listed for audience or reader in the index of each book after checking for more than the mere mention of the word on the page.

5. The specific pages for each book: Scott, Foresman 17; Riverside 96–97; Allyn & Bacon 62–63; Little, Brown 27; and St. Martin's 20–21.

6. Even those model builders who attempt to avoid such extreme reduction still use the dyadic base and thus cannot escape it. Most attempts at avoiding reduction merely explicitly allow such phenomena as turn-taking and feedback, something other model builders would no doubt concede.

7. I leave open the question as to whether the Campbell-Level model meets the criteria for a valid scientific model.

8. See also Chang 1986, 28.

9. Of course, such an artifact has only an ephemeral existence unless recorded in some manner. I leave open the question of the relationship between spoken words and a transcription or audio recording.

10. From my years working in the university archives at Iowa State, I note that this concept of artifact parallels the distinction archivists make between disposable copies of a document and unique copies. If the archivist has ten completely identical copies of a memo, the one in the best condition can be kept and the rest thrown away. However, if any of these copies has any mark which makes it communicatively distinct (such as a hand-written response), then that copy must be kept as well.
11. I use “write” in a fairly loose fashion here. A reader who writes marginal comments does not produce the entire artifact, of course, but the addition of those comments does create a unique artifact.

12. I don’t mean to suggest here that people have their relationships completely mediated by communicative objects. However, *communication* among persons does require mediation by communicative objects, and thus in a communicative event, I believe we should reflect this mediation.

13. This use of *trace* echoes Heidegger, but I do not intend to endorse his rather mystical view of language.

14. I originally called this type *information about the object*. However, many students misinterpreted *object* to mean *the writer’s purpose* rather than *the thing talked about*. While not philosophically precise, *topic* seems a better choice for a classroom model.

15. In practice, we may intend to aim at all, some, one, or none of the communicants involved with a particular artifact. This last possibility needs a bit of explanation. If we use a source for information regarding our topic, none of the communicants may have any direct relevance to our purpose in writing. For instance, if I use something written by Aristotle, I can safely assume that all the original communicants have long since died. However, my interpretation of what Aristotle writes (ignoring, for the moment, the problem of the translator) depends to some degree of how I interpret the self trace and the other trace in the particular artifact, and this in turn may provide useful information in adapting to the intended communicant.

16. For simplicity, I assume in this figure that the topic and the situation traces are directly relevant to the interpretive strategy under construction. This may or not be the case, and even if it is the case, we need to take care in our interpretation.

17. To test students’ natural awareness of rhetorical sources prior to instruction, I tried using this illustration with a class where I introduced the RSM and SOTS models in lecture but had not yet had them to work in small groups and individual assignments. While the complexity of the models might explain the inability of this class to create an adequate RSM model, I believe the lack of experience with using rhetorical sources also contributed to the failure of the illustration in this situation.

18. In my classes, I have dispensed with the fiction of having students write to a “general” audience. By using the RSM and SOTS models, I suspect students become more aware of the process they use for making rhetorical choices and can approach future writing situations with greater sophistication.

19. A student in my Spring 1994 section actually used this topic.
20. A student writing about euthanasia started her papers with both a definition and a phonetic spelling despite my comments that I found this approach boring and a little insulting. She changed her opening paragraph only after one of peers wrote, "I know he's kind of a stupid old fart, but he's not THIS stupid!"

21. I will have both programs available for use on Project Vincent at Iowa State University by Fall of 1994. Since systems vary widely from university to university, these programs will not run on other systems without modification.

22. In order to achieve an air of authenticity to the drug testing policy, I have consulted John Fay's *Drug Testing*. Aside from having an impressive résumé, Fay shows evidence of substantial research behind his book. But more importantly, he includes samples of all the documents needed to institute a drug testing program, including several sample policies.
WORKS CITED


