



## International Programs, Level 3 Notes to Instructor

These activities are designed to help students with an intermediate knowledge of English (Level 3 of a 5 level program) begin to understand the importance of critical thinking, appreciate the concept of individuality, and feel more comfortable with the expectations of the U.S. educational system by applying critical thinking concepts to their everyday lives. By using materials that students naturally encounter both in their native countries and in the U.S. (i.e. commercials, cartoons, and music,) to introduce and practice basic critical thinking skills, students will feel more comfortable in Levels 4 and 5 when asked to think critically in more academic arenas.

In addition to understanding and applying critical thinking, language skills will be reinforced and expanded. These activities are designed for three courses: Speaking/Listening, Writing, and Reading. The culmination of each set of activities is a project.



Commercially Conscious  
Notes for Instructor  
For Speaking/Listening

Since the focus of this class is on speaking and listening skills, the methods used to assess learning often involve partner and small group interaction during which time the instructor circulates around the room, listening and intervening when necessary. It is, therefore, difficult to provide an "instrument" for assessing the learning taking place in some of these activities. Three suggestions for other types of assessment are presented at the end of this section.

Prior to beginning the first activity, class time should be spent discussing advertising and commercials in general. What is the standard commercial break? What is the average number of commercials included in an hour of TV watching? How are commercials designed? (With a savvy class, discussion might include the use advertisers make of psychologists, sociologists, and behavioral scientists.) The most common techniques of advertising must also be discussed and understood: Bandwagon, Glittering Generality, Empty Comparison, Meaningless Slogan, Testimonial, and Transfer.

Activities could be expanded to include print advertising.



Functions of this assignment:

- Become conscious of the intended audience for ads (awareness raising)
- Practice classifying information
- Practice making assumptions and generalizations
- Practice categorizing information

Assessment Criteria

- Each student can successfully predict the type of commercial which will be shown at a particular time of day
- Each student can successfully predict the intended audience

Assignment: Recognizing and Identifying the Advertising Audience

Have students watch TV at different times of the day and night over a period of a few days. If possible, include weekend days. Students should keep track of the following:

- The time of day of the commercial
- The type of program being shown
- The product being advertised

Students should compare their notes in groups of 3 or 4. Then put the results on the board—morning, afternoon, evening, weekend-- so that a larger body of data is available to all students. Discuss as a group who will probably buy each product. Develop an audience profile for several products using the information students collected on the time shown, type of program, and type of product advertised.



Functions of this assignment:

- Practice predicting and practice listening skills
- Becoming familiar with authentic language and culture used in commercials
- Practice comparing US culture with home culture
- Practice evaluating advertisers' claims

Assessment Criteria:

- Each student evaluates his/her level of understanding of everyday authentic language and culture
- Students can articulate their evaluations of advertisers' claims using appropriate vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency
- Students can understand others

Assignment: Recognizing Authentic Language and Culture in TV Commercials

Prior to viewing an instructor recorded commercial, have students predict what they will hear and what they will see. View the tape with the sound off and have students compare their predictions with what they see. Students can then revise their list. View the tape again with the sound on and compare predictions with what they hear.

Have students list the facial expressions, gestures, stereotypes, and communication patterns that they see/hear. Discuss how these points of culture are similar to or different from those of their native cultures and why this might be.

In small groups, discuss whether they agree or disagree with the advertiser's claims.



Functions of this assignment:

- Demonstrate an understanding of propaganda techniques used in TV ads
- Practice gathering different types of information from one source
- Practice working together as a group
- Practice listening to and using English to complete this activity

Assessment Criteria:

- Group accurately matches propaganda techniques to each commercial
- Each student can explain "why" his/her choices are correct
- Group can work together to identify any slogans.

Assignment: Recognizing and Identifying Propaganda Techniques used in Television Advertising

Go to the library and watch the prepared tape of TV commercials (it is on reserve in the Library Media Center) and answer the following questions for each commercial:

- What product is being advertised?
- How many different scenes are shown?
- How many people are on camera?
- Is there a narrator?
- Is there music or are there other sounds?
- Is there a slogan?

Work with the other students in your group to compare answers to the questions above. Watch the tape again as a group if there is disagreement.

Next, decide which propaganda technique was used as the focus of each commercial. Be certain that you can explain why/how you made your decision.



Functions of this assignment:

- Demonstrate an understanding of bias, assumption, and values
- Practice recognizing bias, assumption, and values used in advertising
- Recognition of personal bias and values
- Practice evaluating the effectiveness of advertising

Assessment Criteria:

- Ability to articulate clearly to a partner one's biases, assumptions, and values
- Ability to defend one's point of view

Assignment: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Propaganda Techniques used in Television Commercials

Choose two commercials from the tape in the Library Media Center to discuss. Each commercial must use a different form of propaganda. Discuss the following questions with a partner. The teacher will circulate around the room listening to each group several times. If there is class time, you may also be asked to share your responses with the whole class.

- What need, fear or desire does this commercial appeal to?
- How does the commercial do this?
- Whom do you think this commercial is aimed at?
- Do you share any of the attitudes and values that the commercial is appealing to?
- Does anything in this commercial cause you to think further about the product or cause you to be reminded of the product at another time?
- Is there anything about the commercial that causes you to feel negatively about the product? Why?

- Is this an effective commercial?
- If the commercial has a slogan, have you heard it before? Will you remember it? Is it effective? Why or why not?

Commercially Conscious  
Activity #5  
For Speaking/Listening



Functions of this assignment:

- Practice making inferences
- Practice working in a small group
- Practice expressing an opinion and supporting it
- Practice listening to and speaking English

Assessment Criteria:

- Ability to work in a small group to achieve consensus on the meanings and effectiveness of product slogans
- Accuracy in understanding the message of the slogan

Assignment: Thinking About the Product Slogans used in TV Commercials.

In your small group, select 4 slogans from TV commercials. You can use slogans from the tape in the library or bring in different ones you have seen while watching TV at home. Analyze and evaluate each of these slogans.

You will present your analysis orally to the class.

- What connection is there between the slogan and the product?
- What connection is there between the slogan and your life?
- Does the slogan have any real meaning for you and how you live your life?
- Which slogan do you think is the best? Why?



Functions of this assignment:

- Introduction to and practice using different search engines
- Practice evaluating a web site

Assessment Criteria:

- Ability to access a product web site
- Ability to apply criteria from the library handout in evaluating the product web site
- Ability to write a short evaluation which includes the complete URL

Assignment: Evaluating a Product Web Site.

Choose a product advertised in a TV commercial. Find a Web site for your product.

- Before you search for the site, make a list of the kinds of things you expect to find to be able to find on this site. List at least 5 things.
- How many search terms did you need in order to reach the site?
- Which search engine did you find easiest to use? Why?
- Did you arrive at the same site using both search engines?

Now, use the library handout to evaluate the product Web site. Your goal is to decide how useful the site really is.

- Is the information contained there useful, relevant, objective, current, and accurate?
- How did you decide?
- Are there links to other sites? If there are, list some examples in your evaluation. If there are none, explain why not.

- What are the different parts of the URL? What do they mean?
- What kind of information did you not find that you had expected to find? Why do you think it was not included?
- What kind of information did you find that was a surprise to you?

Hand in a short written evaluation that includes each step you followed.  
Include the complete URL for the site you evaluated.



Functions of this assignment:

- Opportunity to use the information, skills, and language used in the previous activities in a form that demonstrates learning has taken place.

Assessment Criteria:

- Ability to produce a final project that is clear and complete.
- Ability to present the final project using good pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.
- Ability to draw on the understanding of previous activities in order to produce a "professional" project.

Choose one of the following activities for your final project. Detailed instructions for each activity follow.

- **Group Project**

Select a product and create an original TV commercial for your product. You can invent something new or use a product we all know and recognize. You must determine the intended audience, time of day the commercial will run, what visuals will be presented, whether music or other sound will be used, the message you wish to send, and you must create a slogan.

- **Pair Project**

Go to <http://www.adbusters.org/spoofads> on the WWW. Choose two spoof ads from two of the categories (fashion, tobacco, alcohol, etc.) Compare them to currently shown TV commercials from the same company. If you are unable to see TV commercials, you may use print advertising from magazines.

Compare and contrast the ads. In an oral report, respond to the following questions:

1. How are the ads the same?
2. How are they different?
3. What is the message or what is the appeal of the real ad?
4. What is the message of the spoof ad?
5. How do you feel about the spoof ad? How do you feel about the product?

▪ Individual Project

Give a short persuasive speech. Your topic is whether there should be standards or laws regarding commercials. If you think "no," you must clearly explain why. If you think "yes," discuss the two most important standards and explain why they are important. You should use examples of specific commercials to defend your point of view.



### Using Journals or Logs for Self-Evaluation

Ask the students to discuss the purpose of evaluation/assessment, why it is necessary, what they like or dislike about it.

Review the functions and assessment criteria of the activity/unit.

Have students respond in a journal on this topic: *My Progress in The Class*. They should identify and write about areas of strength and areas of weakness. Students should end by writing a plan for improvement in the class.

OR

Students should keep a log in which they comment on their likes, dislikes, ideas, and feelings related to the activities of topics in the class. The students could also write about how they could improve their learning strategies as well as their attitudes toward learning English.

The instructor can respond to the log entries making comments on student progress etc. in writing. Talking about the students' ideas and comments in class (without mentioning the students' names) is an option. In addition, the instructor can revise the class objectives and materials to better suit the students' needs.

### Peer Assessment

Prepare an evaluation form which group members or the class can use to assess classmates. Average the student-assigned scores for each skill to get peer scores for each speaker. Combine all the comments on each

speaker to get peer comments. Keep the peer scores and comments anonymous.

The categories used in the evaluation form will vary. Consider: volume, pitch, enunciation, posture, gesture, eye contact, content, vocabulary, preparation, and organization.

### Self-Assessment Questionnaire

After pair or small group discussions, ask the students to answer these questions:

Did you and your partner come to an agreement?

How was the agreement reached? Did you agree all the time, or did you have to argue and try and persuade your partner?

How often did you understand your partner?

How often were you able to respond to your partner?

Do you think your partner was able to understand what you wanted to say?

Did everyone participate equally? in the preparation? in speaking?

Did everyone have an opportunity to learn what he/she wanted to?

Was each group member helpful to the others in the group?