

The Role of Advertisements in English Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching

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Abstrak

This paper aims at discussing the use of advertisements (ads) in English Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and focuses on some of the appealing uses of language, visual elements, and culture in advertising, and on how language teachers could exploit them in their classes. Advertisers have creative ways to use ads to attract people's attention and to be memorable by exploiting the language code, paralinguistic, illustration and culture value. The ways of advertisers to use the language, illustration, code, and culture could be considered by the language teachers in teaching. Language teachers appears to be very little exploitation of the fascinating uses of language and visual elements in advertising, and this paper attempts to present EFL practice by providing an overview of some of the interesting uses of language, culture, and visual elements in ads, and suggesting ways of exploiting them in classroom

Kata Kunci : advertisements, language code, illustration, culture value

Introduction

Advertising is an unavoidable fact of life in today's consumer societies, and advertisements (ads) are everywhere on television and radio, in newspaper and magazines, on hoardings and in mailboxes, on trains and buses, and now, of course, on the internet as well. In Japan they take up as much as 50 per cent of the space in newspapers, and just under 30 per cent of total magazine space (Moeran 1996: 191, 205-6). They can also be found in the English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, and most teachers will be familiar with a range of ad-based exercises. Advertisements can be used to practice grammar (e.g. the comparative), or to introduce specific vocabulary, such as words for item of clothing, or for skill practice. Classified ads, for example, are often used to teach reading for specific information. Job adverts are used as a stimulus to teach for writing, especially of letters of application and resumes, and also as a starting point for job interview simulations. The using of ads in EFL teaching have been categorized under the headings of language, content, language learning, technical and motivational qualities. Language of ads is authentic and up-to-date (Lutcavage, 1992:

24). Ads like literature, tend to focus on the code, upon the language itself, they can provide a valuable introduction to literature and its language. (Cook, 1990: 129). The contents of ads are valuable sources of information about a culture, both for what they show (paralinguistic; slices of everyday life), and for the cultural values that they reflect.

The subject matter of ads also ties in well with many common topics in language teaching, such as sports, transport, food, clothing, environmental issues (Davis, 1997: 13-14).

In language learning ads could provide a visual context, make it easier for learners to understand the language (Davis, 1997: 14). In television commercials, words are often repeated in the audio and visual channels, thus providing further support (Lutcavage, 1992: 34). In technical qualities ads are short, and therefore appropriate for the relatively short time-span of one language class and easy to find (Davis, 1997: 13). Ads can also as the motivational qualities means learners can enjoy ads and are motivated by them (Kelen, 1991: 9). A related idea is that because ads are creative, they stimulate learners to be creative (Chee, 1994: 155).

For that reasons, ads could be considered as a suggesting way to be used in EFL teaching, and in this paper the writer will offer some of interesting ways as recommendations to help language teachers in using ads in EFL teaching by exploiting the language code, the paralanguage, illustration and culture.

#### Linguistic and visual play in advertisements

Advertisers have the creative play to use ads to attract the people's attention by exploiting the language code, the paralanguage, illustration and culture. This explanation gives an overview of some of the ways in which advertisers exploit them. They are presented as follows:

##### Exploiting the language code

Advertising needs to attract people's attention, and to be memorable. One way of doing is to play with the language code and use poetic devices such as repetition, substitution, and word-play ( Myers, G: 1994). Pattern of repetition, such as alliteration, assonance and rhyme, can be found in headlines and slogans, such as in " Bersumber dari Indocafe", Indocafe Coffemix Jagony Ngemix". Types of substitution, such as methapor and simile, are also common. Boddington's beer describes itself metaphorically as "the cream of Manchester", and Florida oranges were promoted with the simile, "Breakfast without orange juice is like a day without sunshine". Advertisers also love to play words, their meaning, sound or spelling and puns are common.

##### Exploiting the paralanguage

Copywriters love to play with the materials form of language, with the shape, typeface, and layout of letters, words, and sentences. Cook (1992) uses the term 'paralanguage' to refer to this play. It can range from using an inverted R to Russianness, to replace words with icons as in the slogan 'I Love NY', in which 'love' is represented by a red

heart, to laying a text out in such a way that it resembles a text of another genre.

##### Exploiting the illustration

Rhetorical patterns can also be found in the illustration of ads. Durand (1987) analyzes this visual rhetoric using four operations: addition, suppression, pictures to stress shared or different features. 'Before and After' ads for slimming

products typically stress differences by showing a plump person on the left and the same person on the right looking slimmer (happier) after dieting. Suppression involves the complete or partial concealment of a visual element. For example, to advertise their ' Discman' product Sony used a picture of a portable CD-player stuffed into a Christmas stocking. Visual metaphor is a good example of the operation of substitution. Durand mentions a wine ads showing wine being poured not into a glass but into a flute shaped-shower. That resembles a wine glasses, suggesting that wine has a flower-like bouquet. The essential idea with figure of exchange, finally to get the elements in a picture which people expect to find together. But the relationship between them has been changed in some way. In the case of hyperbole, for example, one element is made to look larger than it normally would. In one Burger King ads, the hamburger in the illustration is so large that a young man trying to eat it is literally tearing his mouth open to get his teeth around it.

##### Exploiting the culture value

Advertisers assume that people can make connections between ads and other texts that are well known in their culture. Even when ads are not exploiting texts, they may well be exploiting a culture in other ways, especially the values that are shared by members of a community's values, but Fairclough (1989:207) has argued that it goes further than this, and that advertising has actually 'models for consumers needs, values, tastes, and behavior'.

How advertisements can be used

The uses of language, culture, and visual elements in ads can be highly creative and unconventional, but it is not necessary to use unconventional exercises to exploit these elements. The following explanation discusses how three conventional activities- completion, description, and creating parallel texts can be used to exploit the four aspects of advertising.

Exploiting the language code

Completing headlines and slogans: After introducing students to the use of assonance and alliteration in slogans or headlines, get them to try and complete one by themselves. They could try completing 'Nokia\_\_\_\_\_ people', for example. There are any numbers of ways to complete the slogan grammatically, but it is much more difficult to do so in a way that is both catchy and positive in meaning. Of course, students who are not familiar with this slogan are unlikely to hit the original "connecting", but that is not the point. Reaching, gathering, would all fit the bill to a greater or lesser extent.

Exploiting the paralanguage

Describing paralanguage: One highly challenging activity with catchy print is description (see Figure 1). In addition to dictating the words accurately, students have to convey the shape of the text. This involves using metalinguistic terms such as word, line, and sentence. The shape of the text in Figure 1 ( a Colgate ads) is also of key importance to its meaning : the pronoun 'this' at the end refers to the text's shape. Thus, if 'you' (a parent) do not look after 'their' (your children's) teeth, their teeth will come to look 'like this'—as irregular as the text..

Playing with print

Describe this ad to your partner. After you have described it, try to guess what product the ad is for. Useful words: sentence, line, comma, period, wavy.

Exploiting the illustration

Describing and guessing: Description is an obvious activity with illustrations. (See Figure 2). If one removes the name of the advertiser— Dettol Handwash in this example, one can continue with a discussion of what the advertisement may be for, a kind of completion activity. With a visual metaphor like this, the discussion centers on the 'child' of the metaphor, i.e. the expression between the woman( mother) and the expression of her child holding his stomach

Figure 1

If y<sup>o</sup>u d<sup>o</sup>n't l<sup>o</sup>k  
 A<sup>f</sup>t<sup>e</sup>r t<sup>h</sup>e<sup>r</sup> f<sup>i</sup>r<sup>s</sup>t t<sup>e</sup>t<sup>h</sup>,  
 T<sup>h</sup>e<sup>r</sup> s<sup>e</sup>c<sup>o</sup>n<sup>d</sup> t<sup>e</sup>t<sup>h</sup>  
 C<sup>o</sup>u<sup>d</sup> l<sup>o</sup>k l<sup>i</sup>ke t<sup>h</sup>i<sup>s</sup>

Figure 2



This picture is from advertisement. Describe it to your partner, and discuss what the advertisement is for:

- a stomach pill
- a naughty boy
- a hand wash soap
- something else

Figure 3



This picture is from advertisement. Describe it to your partner, and discuss what the advertisement is for:

- a head-ache pill
- a very sad man
- a tooth-ache pill
- something else

Exploiting the culture value

Creating parallel ads (values): Kramch (1993) discusses how she used an American Coca Cola' TV commercial to bring out some of the values of the students own culture and the target culture. One activity she mentions is to get the students to rewrite the commercial in such a way that it would sell the product in their own country.

Figure 4



The Super Bowl is known for hilarious commercials, but one from Coca-Cola is causing quite the stir on social media. American people started trending on Twitter after the ad debuted showing 'America the Beautiful' sung in different languages. The ad which was uploaded by Coca Cola Company on Feb, 2014 got reactions from American people, because the ad entitle "It's Beautiful" features the patriotic song " America the beautiful" sung in eight languages. The ad shows people of different ethnicities. They called the ad a disgrace and unpatriotic. The ad is considered is an insult to all American who speak English. They feel unlike because their proud song of America was sung in different languages, instead of English. The ad also shows two dads roller-skating with their daughter. This was the first Super Bowl ad to feature a gay family. In this ad the advertiser wants to show the freedom in America. Therefore, there are some cultural values to be considered in making ads to avoid misunderstanding of viewers, insulting, or touching the values of morality, patriotic, religious, cultures of other ethnicities.

The ad (Figure 4) could be used in similar way. For Indonesian students the task would consist of deciding which of the song would probably be allowed by Indonesian people. If the gay family is deemed unlikely or forbidden, for example, the students should try to replace it with other kinds of family that reflect concern about another aspect of happy family.

Conclusion

Advertising often exploits visual codes in a variety of highly appealing ways, and this outline sets out to show how this creative play could be value of EFL teachers by exploiting the language code, the paralanguage, the illustration and the culture value. In particular it was suggested that conventional EFL activities can work well with ads and a number of examples were given. These activities were mentioned as a starting point; hopefully they will inspire teachers to experiment with other conventional (and unconventional) ways of exploiting the genre

and encourage them to try some of the suggestion given. It is hoped this outline that the major EFL publishers will also be inspired to start producing more advertising-related materials. Access to a range of resource books and collections of appealing print and broadcast ads (with worksheet) would benefit us all.

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