

Exploring Pedagogical Possibilities of Commercials in English Language Classrooms of Kerala

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Abstract- Video-based teaching learning methodology is not a new concept in language classrooms. With the advancement in Internet and technology platforms like YouTube and social media the accessibility of short video clips, educational documentaries, advertisements or films has become very popular and impulsive among the mob. Despite of language, all age groups watch and share such interesting videos, but short commercials are less used as a teaching tool even it constitutes as a greater resource. Though studies are very few on exploring commercials in Language education, using selective and appropriate linking of commercial video in to the academic lessons, definitely will be a wonderful experience and it can positively affect the language learning. Students have been exposed to advertisements or commercials in their daily living which enable them to think, speak and write when responding to commercials. This paper explores a few possibilities of pedagogical applications of short commercial videos to enhance English language skills, particularly based on the of high school English Language textbook of Kerala. The methodology used for the study is textual analysis of a unit in the IXth Standard English textbook and the content review of short commercials. This paper also tries to unfold positive means of commercials in enhancing language skills with an urge that, Educationists should build the capacities of the spirit of critical review, creativity, entrepreneurial and social leadership among students.

Keywords: short commercials, pedagogical applications, enhancing, English language skills.

Introduction

TV Commercials are very short, dynamic and trendy. Short commercials can be utilized in classrooms, with careful selection and incorporation, resulting a positive teaching learning process. TV commercials boost motivation and participation by gathering the attention of all types of learners and providing them with essence of living language (Allan, 1985, p.48) According to Hoodith (2002), commercials became an affordable tool for teachers other than textbooks, blackboards and audio tapes. Videos are often considered an alternative or substitute to traditional media used in listening comprehension activities such as tapes and CDs (Wilkinson, 1984). According to Medina (2002) and Weyers (1999) proves that the cognitive

development supported by video may help second language learners acquire grammar, improve vocabulary and develop the linguistic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The present society can never avoid television or internet or any such sophisticated media. So, the best profile is to make sure the children are aware of the 'real' from the virtual media and encourage them to receive and reject the media contents accordingly. Though research studies are very few on exploring commercials in language education, by using selective and appropriate linking of commercial video in to the academic lessons, definitely be a wonderful experience and it can positively affect the language learning of the students.

TV commercials in English Language classrooms

In English language teaching, video materials, and especially TV commercials, have proved very useful and highly interest boosting. With the reference, Stempleski and Tomalin (1990), through television and videos people's interest is fostered. As for TV commercials, Tuzi, Mori and Young (2010) assert that teachers can use different commercials for focusing on different linguistic or cultural elements for the students of different levels. In addition, as stated by Oddone (2011), popular video-sharing websites are familiar to students and learning becomes more informal and easier.

TV commercials present a number of advantages, mostly commercials last for 3 to 5 minutes; are precise and thematic in whole; can be easily connect to themes of any text to introduce, review, or wrap up lessons. They are designed to evoke curiosity, entertainment; contain a variety of visual, verbal, and written images; contain culturally-politically loaded sachets of modern society. As a teaching tool it allows the learners to see the context of the discourse and other visual aids for comprehension, and other learning activities. Also, the visual clues of a TV advertisement provide scaffolding for students to assist them to understand the lingual, cultural and social embodiments in the commercial.

Commercials are, in essence, repetitive, so learners are aided in the memorization of language bits, through the catchy phrases or slogans of television commercials. Consider, for instance the slogan of a period Boost is the secret of my energy. Every child of that generation repeated it in various instances and the cricket God Sachin Tendulkar was the main reason for such grant popularity of that advt., how many times we repeat a jingle or phrase from a commercial, in our lives. This entertainment value is another benefit and a reason to recommend their use in Language classrooms. Commercials are compressed texts that contain deliberate or scripted vocabulary paired with visual and other audio elements. These carefully chosen words are often repeated to encourage viewers to remember the main points. Thus, commercials are a good way to introduce vocabulary in context along with different connotations. Teachers can also use them as an entry to related content (e.g a laundry detergent commercial can begin a lesson on clothing or housework).

TV commercials introduce specific grammar structures in their scripts. They typically repeat words and phrases, which encourage meaningful memorization. Through commercials variety is added to the lesson and Learners with special learning needs will also benefit from the visual and auditory input and interactive nature of commercials, which address us on a personal level. The receptive (reading and listening) and productive (speaking and writing) skills are practiced covertly. Commercials are rich in providing instances of figurative language that is learning about the non-literal meaning of words and expressions and figures of speech, such as metaphors, alliteration or onomatopoeic words. Indeed, commercials employ figurative language in order to ‘play’ with the language to achieve a powerful effect and to capture viewers’ attention and consequently consumers’ interest.

How to find and select TV commercials

Apart from a few blogs which provides the links of various advertisements, in these days, TV commercials are large in number and it is not an easy task to select appropriate ads which can satisfy the teaching learning objectives. The major steps for teachers to browse YouTube and try to find and choose TV commercials for language learning purposes:

By setting the objectives first, proceed searching for the appropriate TV commercial by using key words; secondly from general objectives to specific objectives, the teacher can make a list of commercials. And lastly finalize the TV commercials that are suitable for the lesson and incorporate it flexibly for the further activities. After this stage, teachers can develop a variety of activities, some of the techniques are explained below:

Different Techniques

1. The teacher can show the video without the audio/subtitle and asks the students to watch the commercial carefully. Students guess the storyline. Later teacher plays it with audio/subtitle and ask them to differentiate the former and the latter.
2. Students are given a list of the commercial’s key words or structures (e.g. adjectives/imperative forms/ figurative language/idioms). Students view the commercial and circle the items in the list when they hear them. Students report their answers and say or write sentences of their own.
3. The teacher freezes the video in between and students guess the TV commercial’s ending or through frames students are asked to frame statements or verbal forms of the situation displayed. Students provide their answers.

Exemplifying the concept

In this study, the commercials are selected after the textual analysis of the first unit in the IXth Standard English textbook. The first unit is titled as “Aspire to win”. The structure, content, expectation and language of the chapters were fragmented and analyzed specifically for selecting appropriate commercials, based on the expected learning outcomes. The three chapters of the unit includes, a story “The Race” by Nisha Punjabi, an autobiographical note “Learning the

Game” by Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar and a poem “Twice a week the winter thorough” by An E Houseman. The unit highlights the importance of hard work, encouragement and motivation. The chapter focuses on the positive attitude towards the trumps and defeats in life with a sportsman spirit.

Commercials were selected and finalized after the content review based on the specific objectives of the expected learning outcomes. Positive attitude, inspiration generating, sport promoting, were the key elements in finalizing the short commercials. The researcher selected two advts. Of surf excel and advt. on Times of India, by providing a variety of activities connected to the commercial, the investigator can enhance the English language skills of the learners.

Pedagogical application

A few pedagogical applications of the selected short commercials are enlisted below.

Commercial	Activity	Learning outcome	
		Specific outcome	General outcome
Indian commercial of surf Excel	<p>After playing the video the teacher asks the students, which game is shown in the commercial? Students will give the appropriate reply, i.e. Football. Teacher interacts with students about their favorite sport game. Later as an activity teacher asks the learners to write a paragraph on their favourite sport game, including</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Which is your Favourite sport?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> When do you play?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Where do you play?</p> <p>2- Teacher deliberately pause the video in certain places and probes the children to explain the activity they see on the screen.</p> <p>A women/mother.....the garden.</p>	<p>Learners speak about their favorite game</p> <p>Learners write about their favourite game, with the given clues and new words with the help of teacher.</p> <p>By adding -ing forms to the verbs, they fill the gap, with the help of the teacher</p>	<p>Promote Reflection on individual interest</p> <p>Motivation</p> <p>Stimulating imagination</p>

	A Boy a football. Most of the children were.....		
Times of India Advt. Lead India	Teacher asks the learners to prepare a commentary based on the video, by providing essential phrases and vocabulary for the same and to practice it in the classroom	Each Learner prepares short sentences in groups and later combines together and finally they enact in class. A running commentary is the live description of an event or situation Using appropriate vocabulary intonation, stress and pauses which recreate the real feeling of participating in the event.	Group dynamics Inspiration
Indian advt. of Surf Excel	The teacher plays the ad and probe the learners about some of the incidents in the advertisement.	The learner's practices to create the sentences containing 'if' clause which are called conditional Sentences. The learners use these simple sentences to communicate with each.	Probing Practice by doing

After preparing a number of activities along with the expected outcomes from the learners based on the advertisements, the prepared worksheet and the advertisements was sent to the English language teachers for validation, after their report a few were selected activities were modified according to their suggestions.

Conclusion

Proper exploitation of commercials in the classroom will boost participation in speaking tasks, even when it comes to quieter and less outgoing students. Even in cases where they are just above the learners' level, the 'scaffolding' provided by the visual input and the repetition of many phrases assists comprehension of the message portrayed.

The most tiresome task for teachers will be initially to discover the resources. It may take some time to find the best websites, selecting appropriate commercials, downloading them, and developing activities and materials to go along with them or incorporating it with the academic lessons. Thus, carefully utilized TV/Internet commercials can provide a treasure trove of language learning experience. Visual learning styles has always resulted in positive augmentation of learning process, and so teachers and experts must contribute their potential for creating or adopting these types of innovative, short and appropriate supplementary tools will motivate the learners.

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