

Using Advertisements for ELT in schools in Rural India

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Abstract

Today, one of the most essential elements of our society - is Education; the society we live in is comprised of many cultures and languages. One of the major parts of society is made up of the rural population, which is growing and making an attempt to merge into the global arena. From this point of view, having the knowledge of and being well versed in the language English has become quite mandatory for our existence in this era of globalization. This globalization has made the language English to be looked upon as 'Global English'. Taking the context of India, in metropolitan cities and towns, this may not be considered as a problem, but people and students in rural areas lack the skills to converse in English. There is still a major portion of population devoid of the developments in terms of language and technology. The young learners of the rural areas, with effective and supportive methods of learning, can be taught and made part of this globalization. The basic methodology of teaching included - a teacher explaining the topic to the students by means of a drawing on the blackboard or showing a picture or relating the topic to a story or make students repeat what teacher said in the class, etc. But with time, these means have changed and are enhancing day-by-day. This paper aims at discussing how advertisements can be used in English Language Teaching (ELT) for their use of sentences, tenses, phrases, code-mixing, etc., especially for learners in secondary schools in rural India who have been taught little about the background and basic grammar of English language.

Keywords: Education, Advertisements, ELT, English Learning, Rural Development, Rural India.

1. Introduction

The language English, as a well-known fact, is the most widely used language and the main vehicle of international communication in the world today. In a country like India, where the language has many colors, English enjoys the status of 'Second

Language' after the official 'Hindi' and regional languages. However, it was and has often been considered as the language of the elite circle. The term 'Global English' is a product of the process called globalization. David Crystal in his book; 'English as a Global language' (1997) says: —A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. So, the life in general and in today's corporate global world cannot be imagined without the Global language, i.e., English. While the above statement presents an unalterable truth, yet the real picture of English teaching and learning is still depressing in rural India. In actuality, the reasons for this uninspiring atmosphere are galore and at times beyond control. The rural areas firstly lack good schools and the existing schools lack a proper environment and affordability which cater to the changing needs and expectations of the young student of this global world. Moreover, the financial status of people in rural areas also adds to the difficulty of learners as they are forced to resort to traditional schools, where teachers lack familiarity with effective language teaching strategies. Undeniably, many English teachers in rural areas are themselves not effective and fluent in using English. In many Indian states, English language teaching is confined to the verbal rendering of lessons in regional languages helping learners to understand the content and not the structural tones and shades of languages.

So the English language teachers must take into consideration the use of modern techniques for helping their students. There are many ways but advertising can be quite effective as it includes both audio and visual quality. For that, we first need to see what exactly one means by advertising or advertisements.

2. An overview of Advertising

Advertisements, sometimes called ads, can be defined as a non-personal communication of a sales

message. It is also known as mass selling. It is not as effective as personal selling but it does facilitate communication with a large number of potential buyers at a time. According to the American Marketing Association Advertising is “Any paid form of non- personal presentation of idea goods or service by an identified sponsor.” Another definition in the words of Philip Kotler, “Advertising consists of all the activities involved in presenting to a group a non-personal, oral a visual, openly sponsor identified message regarding a product service or idea. This message, called an advertisement, is disseminated through one or more media and is paid for by the identified sponsor.”

An Advertisement is an ideal tool for conveying information. Initially, most advertisements were related to commercial products. Basically, there are two major types of advertisements (Stead, 1984): product advertising which is designed to sell one or more definite, identified product, and highlights their good qualities, satisfaction-giving features, or prices, and institutional advertising which is created for the purpose of getting some messages across to the public. There is the next level of advertisements, like they are done in form of written, oral, visual, pictures, slogans, jingles, etc. Hence, how advertisements can be used in ELT is a major concern to discuss further. When speaking of ‘English Language Teaching or ELT’, writing advertisements gives an opportunity to improve one’s business writing. As it is formal, must have style and be able to convey the message clearly to the consumer. However, in the era of modern technology, the need for advertisement grow more rapidly, and they cover any kind of information for public not only in the form of objects but also in the form of service including individual’s needs such as advertisements for home help wanted, gardening, buying/selling of a product, even political ads or cartoons, etc.

3. Language of Advertisements

The language of advertisements has to be convincing and persuasive. Like all communicative endeavors, in advertising, getting the message across is of prime importance. However, the use of language in advertising is targeted towards a particular audience and so the advertiser has to be very attentive and critical. As Weir (1960, p. 26) says, “The heart and soul of advertising are, and, in many opinions, will remain the creation of effective communication between producer and customer.” Now-a-days use of the English language has increased in the making of advertisements. This may be for the reason that major metro cities are quite familiar with the language. But the same can be used by an English language teacher for the teaching of English and

making their students more fluent in written and spoken English.

Advertisers may use English because they think it makes a product look more modern, international or marketable. What makes an advertisement seem more interesting, creative or humorous is using English – and more-so mixing it with other languages. In the case of ELT, an English language teacher can make use of advertisements in the classroom as a prompt for basic speaking and writing activities in English. The major purpose of teaching English is to enable young learners, how to use the language to communicate with each other. The most commonly used form of communication is speaking, followed by writing skill, in addition to the indirect use of body language. Apart from the said indirect use of signs and symbols, the next form through which people express their ideas is mostly speaking or writing skills. It might happen that communication fails or misunderstanding occurs because of poor performance in either of both speakers in both skills. Leech (1966) has talked about different aspects of advertising, viz, grammar, vocabulary, discourse, rhyme, and rhetoric of advertising. He has also shown the relation of these aspects of advertising with the functional factors such as attention value, listening ability/readability, memorability, and marketing power. Simply put, it means, that different types of advertisements can be used effectively in helping teachers to develop the vocabulary of learners. Apart from the mentioned literary terms, advertisements also help in enriching the vocabulary of students and in learning the basic nuances of English language, as in, simple translations, word association, using pictures (look and say), synonyms-antonyms and homophones, conversation, lead questions, daily puzzle (meaning versus word), rhymes, superlatives, sentence structure, different type of clauses, etc. Because when students see and hear the English language on an almost daily basis, they tend to gain interest and curiosity to learn more; thus leading to use of the English language in spoken form by the students. The teacher can discuss the language used in the advertisement, how it is used, why it is used, and so on. Analyzing the language used in advertisements not only helps in developing English language skills but it can also help to develop the students’ critical thinking skills.

English Language Teaching – Need of the Hour

In India, English is used for different purposes and in different ways in each part of the country. Many people in big cities use English every day. In a remote village the language, English may not be found everywhere, but it is often present. It will hardly take few minutes to observe and you may find more than you expect; for example, transport vehicles (buses, autos, etc.), tickets and labels on the clothes you buy, on food packets and in Hindi film

music. The mixing of both Hindi and English is quite common today, which is locally termed as 'Hinglish' or in specific terms as 'Code-mixing or Code-switching'. In simple words, even in rural areas, people do tend to make use of some words of English with the knowledge of their meaning and sometimes using English words without knowing the meaning of the words or terms.

Shedding more light on the topic of ELT specifically, it may not be surprising to find that English as a subject at school level in Indian rural areas gains serious attention when learners reach their secondary or higher secondary levels. Poor grounding of students as regards vocabulary and structure disinterest them in paying attention to their English course. While teachers in their primary and secondary levels fail to complete the exercises or worksheets, students too shy away from these cumbersome tasks - resulting in their aversion to English. As an English teacher, one can vow for the fact that many teaching aids have been discussed, used, experimented upon and even rejected in ELT books or journals. English teachers mainly use methods such as using pictures, real media, games, puzzles, etc. But it all leads to having a teacher to put all these methods in use. The global language – English can be taught with the help of a thorough qualified and willing English language teacher.

Teaching is a continuous process and teachers have to find time for self-evaluation, which perhaps could lead to ways of enhancing their teaching abilities. In rural areas, Schools and colleges are often in their natural surroundings unlike those of urban schools. This also becomes a hurdle for many teachers to prefer teaching in rural areas. Lack of basic amenities, inadequate transport, and medical facilities and natural disasters such as flood and draught can make even trained teachers reluctant to take an appointment in remote areas. Also, the slow pace of life and tardy speed of government policies and resources most often deter both teachers and students from garnering the benefits of advanced aids. In such a scenario an English teacher is bound to take resort to his old tools—namely books.

The next hurdle comprises of the financial positions of the rural population, which depends on agriculture and has limited income; and this limitation proves very vital as parents in rural areas are forced to send their children to government schools where English is not taught as a skill but as a subject. Both parents and students emphasize simply on passing examinations just to climb the ladder of a higher class. As a result, students continue to carry the lapses of English throughout their lives. But this should not be taken as a student's lack of intellectual progress rather than the lack of resources.

But one has to remember, that today, the world is governed by technology; this has led both students and teachers in rural areas to have high expectations.

The spreading wings of technology in their everyday lives have enabled them to compete with others despite some irreversible truths. The arrival of computers, i-pads, cell phones, and innumerable gadgets has made them more enthusiastic. The task of an English teacher in rural areas becomes more challenging and intimidating because of the mentioned shortcomings. The syllabus makers do not take into consideration the predicament of the person/teacher; on top of this, the various limitations like course completion, successful implementation of government's schemes, lack of autonomy and lack of exposure add to his agony. Furthermore, even with all these obstacles, an English Language teacher must face them to the best of her/his capacity. Efficiency in language cannot be guaranteed unless it is practiced regularly.

4. Advertisements for ELT

The teaching of English must be considered as a skill and not only as a subject. Today, a candidate is expected to have good communication skills to succeed and sustain in this growing global world. English teachers have to remain extra cautious of developing in their students the ability of four language skills namely—Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing.

An English teacher, in rural areas, must keep themselves free and make their students believe that English is not just a language of the elite. One has to remember that the task of a language teacher is not confined to mere completing of the syllabus, explaining of a chapter, prose or a poem. The variation in tone, pitch, and intensity of voice, the proper pronunciation and use of patterns too are important. English teachers must have the patience to hear their students recite a poem and then can correct them on their errors. A teacher can even take extra effort to record and play the recited poem in the correct form and allow students to recite with the same style.

Now, as far as 'Advertisements' are concerned, they do tend to have a lot of qualities the English language teacher can make use of – as it comes in full written form in newspaper, or they come in visual on billboards or they are in audio on radio and even in audio-visual form in televisions. The teacher can choose from a number of ads available. Firstly the teacher can show the students the ads either in print-out form or on the projector and they can be allowed to have their own explanation, if possible. The said activity can be conducted in groups and students can have a small discussion among themselves before answering; this can be stretched to writing skills, with the teacher asking them to write a short report and later present in the class. Such exercises, though may appear time-taking, yet are rewarding. These exercises help students develop

and enhance their four skills – LSRW – of language learning.

2. Methodology

English teachers making the use of modern technology like smart classrooms or online teaching either through YouTube, PowerPoint Presentations, Social networking, and other websites, in classrooms is a very common practice in schools in urban areas; but the same feel like a romantic illusion in rural areas. Nevertheless, advertisements can provide a simpler, more resourceful yet effective mean through which English can be taught. Since advertisements are audio-video, students tend to get more attracted to them. Most of the advertisements because of their slogans, punch lines/taglines often can be easily remembered by students in rural areas. The same can be assigned to students as pattern practice through which students can develop grammatically correct sentence formations. Some of these advertisements can also be a mix of code-switching and code-mixing. As part of a very small scale experiment, 20 students from a local rural school in Jabalpur city were shown different advertisements. The students were from Hindi medium background and within the age range of 13-16 years. This was done to make them aware of the various vocabulary parts and literary terms, like –

1.] Translations – students were shown a few advertisements and assigned to practice pattern through which students could be able to develop grammatically correct sentence formations. The first set of these advertisements were a mix of Hindi-English, i.e. code-switching and code-mixing.

For instance –

Hungry Kya (Domino's Pizza) – Are you Hungry?



Yeh Dil maange more (Pepsi) – My/Our hearts want more

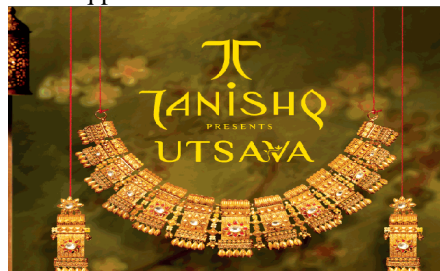


Pal banaye magical (Lays) – Make every moment magical



2.] Tense Among all the tenses, it is the present tense and specifically present indefinite tense that is frequently used in advertisements.

Tanishq presents Utsava



[Advertisement of jewelry – Accessed from www.advertgallery.com]

3.] Noun Phrase where a word or group of words containing a noun and functioning in a sentence as subject, object, or prepositional object.

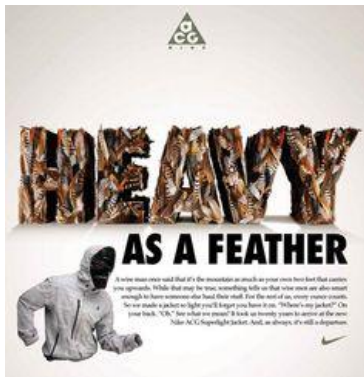
BMW: The ultimate driving machine



[Accessed from <https://howbritseesit.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/bmw-2.jpg>]

4.] Simile - is a figure of speech in which two things or objects are compared with each other. This is done with the help of words such as like, as, and the expressions such as and as though to draw attention. For instance,

Nike Sports Shoes: Heavy as a feather



[Accessed from - <https://i.pinimg.com/236x/48/a9/d0/48a9d0910b8761ee05fde0301a154c67--nike-acg-th-birthday.jpg>]

5.] Homophones – is where each of two or more words having the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins, or spelling.



[Accessed from - <https://amul.com/m/amul-hits?s=2011&l=5>]

In the above advertisements, the students were able to observe that the word 'Bread' is used instead of 'Bred' and has been used in relation to the product. Even the word 'Foren' is there as a homophone for the actual word 'Foreign'. In addition, it proved quite funny and easy to remember for the participants.

Result and Conclusion

With the help of the little experiment done, it was observed that the use of advertisements in English Language teaching is good to be implemented for secondary school (senior high school) learners in the rural areas/ schools of India where English is taught as a second language after Hindi or the regional language. It was also found that the students were quite interested in the way of learning through advertisements, as it involved the use of visual pictures. The English teacher can find many sources of ads within the local area, like advertisements on near-by walls, messages or ads by local vendors, songs and jingles on the TV. These same local resources can be used for ELT in the classroom. By bringing students' attention to English as used in the local area, can help them to learn authentic English the way it is used in the real world outside the classroom. When students are asked to find ads around them, this will increase their curiosity and their motivation to learn English, as they will see the

advantages of being able to use and understand English for purposes, in present for their own and later for their workplace.

Finally, the discussion made in this paper does not intend to eradicate the use of textbooks in the classrooms. All technical gadgets or tools are mere substitutes to an educator and books. It is quite significant to note that ultimately it is the teacher (the man) who with his careful planning can control technology (the machine) since technical glitches may have well-defined remedies and reduce drop-out rates in rural schools. The most important benefit of embracing advertisements in teaching English is to train students to improve their integrated skills especially speaking and writing simultaneously. As a result of these activities, the learners will be able to enhance their critical thinking, be able to apply more than basic vocabulary words of English with accuracy and fluency and along with this, they will certainly mark a major improvement in their English language skills.

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