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CULTURE AND GERMAN ADVERTISING

Teaching culture is an ever-increasing element in the foreign language classroom. However, many instructors may ask themselves which aspects of culture should be taught and how. The purpose of this article is to assist in answering this question by using advertising to teach German culture. The following section presents information about culture and the need for its incorporation into standard classroom instruction. The second section discusses different aspects of intercultural advertising while the third deals with the use of the media in language instruction. The final section provides possible techniques for teaching culture through the use of advertising.

In their study, Hayward and Siaya (2001) found that a majority of the American public believes a person needs to be aware of cultures and their implications in order to be successful in the global market. In addition, the surveyed public thought that being proficient in a foreign language was essential for acquiring culture awareness. Advertising is an engaging cultural medium useful for acquiring both cultural awareness and language proficiency. The material provided in section four was developed and tested in a fourth year advanced German class, which primarily dealt with the teaching of German advertising. The purpose of this material was to make students aware of culture and cultural differences; language instruction per se is not included in this material. The main focus of this course was primarily print media; however, the concepts and techniques presented here can easily be applied to radio and television sources.

WHAT IS CULTURE AND HOW CAN ADVERTISING AID IN CULTURE LEARNING?

Vicki Galloway (1999) perceives language as a part of the system of communication called culture. Language exists through shared cultural elements such as meaning, perceptions, and values. In the *National Stan-*

dards for Foreign Language Learning, culture learning is the development of an understanding of the practices and products of a culture, achieved through perspectives of the culture's practices and products. The aim is to emphasize a meaningful interdependence among these elements. According to Harold Garfinkel (1972), "the basis of culture is not shared language, but shared rules of interpretation" (p. 304), provided by the relationships between practices, products, and cultural perspectives.

The standard for intercultural competence suggests that it is not enough for the learner to be able to recognize and apply cultural differences appropriately. It is just as important for the student to be able to recognize such differences and apply them to practices, products, and perspectives of his/her own culture. Fantini (1999) maintains that this enables the student to look back on his/her own culture from a new vantage point while exploring the new language-culture.

Culture instruction and its importance for language teaching are an accepted concept within the field (Kramsch, 1988, 1995, 1998; Galloway, 1999; Hager 1997, 2001). Hager (2001) maintains one major advantage of teaching culture to our students is the chance for them to become culturally competent. Competence in turn provides students a leading edge in their future professions in the global economy.

Advertising can serve as a limitless source for authentic material. According to Abrate (1999), "authentic documents provide an excellent vehicle for incorporating the national foreign language standards into the curriculum" (p.75). Research has demonstrated that students who have exposure to authentic materials show increased improvement in their listening and reading skills (Bacon, 1992a; Heron and Seay, 1991). Authentic materials open doors to cultural information that students may otherwise never have the chance of experiencing. Advertising can be a key element in providing this up-to-date experience. Advertising materials can be used in realistic communicative scenarios and settings for students to complete real-world tasks and other related activities (see Hager 2002 and Inter-nationes video on advertising and the accompanying exercise booklet). Implementation of such material at the appropriate level demonstrates to students that they can navigate within and understand "real" language (Abrate, 1999; Di Bella, 1997; Finger, 2001).

Advertisements do not always include pictures or illustrations. They can consist solely of printed texts in newspapers and magazines (see Figure 1) or audio in radio. No matter what type of advertisement, the learn-

er should be exposed to such authentic materials. The topics of such materials should appeal to the learner's interests and the tasks used with these materials should be appropriate to the learner's level (Abrate, 1999; Di Bella, 1997; Finger, 2001).

Documents composed for native speakers, by native speakers, consist of structures and usages that are often beyond the learner's level, a standard problem when using advertising. The detailed analysis of these structures and usages proves to be discouraging and frustrating to students. In such cases, learners should analyze advertisements for their intent or in order to comprehend the gist of the message. Students can glean information for specific facts, for the advertisement's objective, or examine it for cultural implications. Students should not expect to understand every word or detail.

Advertisements in the print media are not the only source for students to achieve necessary language and culture skills in order to be competent for the global economy. Advertisements from radio or TV can help develop a learner's listening skills in order for him or for her to be able to master real-life situations (Bacon, 1992a and 1992b). If implemented appropriately, such materials can assure students the ability to listen selectively to information and glean specific information. Abrate (1999) maintains that "rather than frustrating students, working with authentic audio documents in an appropriate way gives students confidence to handle real-life situations they might encounter later. Video provides added visual support to an audio message and combines elements of cinematic construction through a director's guidance, editing camera angles, background music, and sound effects in support of the linguistic and cultural content" (p. 80). It was once necessary to import such materials from abroad; however, today we have these items at our fingertips by using the Internet (see <www.wierdweb.de>, for example).

INTERCULTURAL ADVERTISING

Within the realm of intercultural advertising there are two basic principles that are used when selling products internationally: standardized and adapted advertisements. A standardized advertisement has as few culturally dependent elements as possible; whereas adapted advertisements substitute foreign cultural elements with local ones. Hewlett-Packard is a good example of adapted advertising. HP is a well known company, providing internationally the same basic range of products.

However, when advertising internationally HP has adapted its style to the culture of the target market, a point made clear by comparing HP's American Web site to its German one. For instance, on the German Web site HP emphasizes ecology and how HP's products are ecologically friendly, presumably a far less compelling argument for an American audience, given that ecology finds little mention on the US Web page.

According to Müller (1997), there are two aspects of intercultural advertising to consider: the emotional content and the iconic code of pictures. Using association tests, Müller (1997) ascertained that there is a considerable amount of culture exchange in our globalized world; however, there is little homogeneity in the culture specific interpretation of emotions in standardized advertisements. In addition, the iconic code of pictures is seldom transferable from one culture to another, since the historical background and events are different for each individual culture.

The language of international advertising continues to be influenced by English, when English does not replace the local language all together. Wesolowski and Angelini (2001) maintain that in French advertising, English often has the dominant role, relegating a French translation in small print to the bottom of the advertisement. English has dramatically influenced French and German vocabulary and grammatical structures in advertising (Wesolowski and Angelini, 2001; Glück and Sauer, 1997).

IMPLEMENTATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Various experts (Hager, 2002; Wesolowski and Angelini, 2001; Janich, 1999; Glabbeek et al.,1995) have suggested numerous ways of implementing advertisements in foreign language instruction. Because each culture has its own unique style of advertising, culture specific advertisements (adapted advertisements) provide the needed cultural information for any of the following examples.

The book by Glabbeek et al. (1995) deals with every aspect of advertising through the use of a case study. The scenario in this book is the development of an advertising campaign for the Dutch soup company Dingemanse BV. This campaign is the students' task and responsibility. The book presents and discusses every aspect of advertising necessary for the campaign. Grammar and vocabulary exercises for native speakers of Dutch are only minimally useful for American students. Nonetheless, the case study illustrates extremely well how advertising can benefit learning about the German system of advertising. The case study can be used as

the primary material for a course or only as a reference resource for setting up one's own case study. However, the drawback of this book is that it does not deal with intercultural differences.

Wesolowski and Angelini (2001), and Janich (1999) believe that advertising mirrors culture and thus should be used in American classrooms for teaching it. They suggest using advertisements that stimulate discussion and creative presentations in the target language. Students analyze advertisements from both the target culture and American entities, then compare and discuss these advertisements in class. Consequently, instructors can find out how students perceive their own culture in relation to the target culture.

Hager (2002) approaches the question of advertising from the target culture's point of view. Aspects of advertising are a standard practice in American culture but illegal in Germany, including product placement or comparisons.[1] Such material provides students a great opportunity to talk about the advantages and disadvantages of these differences in advertising practices. The approach also gives students the chance to learn about various aspects of advertising in the foreign culture.

The use of audio cassettes has been standard for several decades in most language classrooms. More recently, the use of film and video has been a great supplement to teaching, and certainly the Internet continues to grow in popularity as a source for teaching. Many experts (Lee, 1997; Warschauer, 1996; Kuttenberg & Zeller, 1997; Kern, 1995) have come to the conclusion that the Internet provides a constantly up-to-date source for general culture information for foreign language teaching. Of course, how these sources/technologies are implemented in language teaching will influence their effectiveness (Salaberry, 200). Hedderich (1993) and Ciccone (1995) point out that video is a good source for linguistic and cultural authenticity which the Internet and TV can do just as well with relatively easy access for many students.

Online newspapers can also be effective tools in language culture learning. Lee (1999) found that using newspapers in foreign language instruction not only advanced students' knowledge of current lexical items and idiomatic expressions, but also increased their ability to interp-

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[1]Product place is the placement of a product in a film that functions as a normal element of the props/scene. A bottle of Becks beer on the table where several men are playing poker is an example of product placement. Product comparison involves two products, for example, MacDonalds comparing its quarter pounder to Burger King's Whopper.

ret, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate cultural texts beyond the comprehension of simple facts. According to Lee (1999), different sections of the newspaper such as "Sports," "Economics," "Arts," and "Entertainment," provide challenging opportunities to compare and contrast the native and target cultures (131). The use of advertising materials in any medium can affect the same outcome.

As with newspapers, videos provide linguistic and cultural authenticity but on another scale. Ciccone (1995) maintains that the most valuable videos are chosen for their visual and conceptual value (206). Pictures and audio supply elements of instruction which can be used to intensify students' learning of culture and picque their curiosity. (See the video that accompanies *DEUTSCH NA KLAR!* for very good examples of the use of video and advertisements*)*. Hedderich (1993) and Ciccone suggest a three-step process for working with videos: previewing, viewing, and post-viewing activities. Willis (1996) calls them pre-task, task, and post-task within the task-based approach. These steps also provide a good framework for working with advertisements. Students should receive various activities (oral, writing, and/or reading) before working with the video to prepare their mindset for the advertisement. Students need to be aware that it is not necessary to understand every word (Ciccone, 1995; Abrate, 1999) in the authentic material. However, at an advanced level of learning German, most students are already aware of this fact. Consequently, students can listen and watch for more facts and read between the lines. While the print media and radio provide excellent opportunities for comparing and contrasting the students' culture with the target one, videos in general (Ciccone, 1995) and videos of advertisements in particular are even better because of the audio and visual elements involved (see *Fünfzig Jahre deutsche Werbung*).

The information in advertisements provides students with the opportunity to generate cultural hypotheses. Seelye (1993) maintains that the mass media are a good source for current data that can provide the necessary impetus so students can generate cultural hypotheses. Implementing guesswork in this manner can be referred to as hypothesis refinement (Seelye, 1993). Generalizations can be extracted from the smallest bits of authentic cultural information found in advertisements, and they function as building blocks to develop skills in drawing out meaning from fragments. Seelye (1993) likens this approach to the same method an archeologist uses when examining artifacts. While he cautions against the ac-

quisition of arbitrary and pointless information, he believes students need to be able to gather information from an array of sources and then do something with it. The first step is to sensitize students to the potential of such documents in developing cultural insights. The following teaching units demonstrate how to achieve progress in culture learning through German advertising with special emphasis on German business culture.

USING ADVERTISING FOR INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

ADVERTISEMENT ONE

The purpose of this unit is 1) to make students aware of different forms of advertising, 2) to provide students a chance to compare American and German business styles, and 3) to apply the acquired knowledge to business situations. The unit is divided into Pre-ad, Advertisement, and Post-ad sections.

Pre-ad: This section consists of two parts, 1) background information about different types of advertisements and 2) general information about intercultural information. The first hour of this teaching unit introduces students to the different types of advertisements found in the print media (see Nalepka, 2002, pp. 50-53). Students become aware of all types of advertisements—from splashy full-color magazine ads featuring sophisticated combinations of pictures, other visual graphics, and text—to text-only pitches gleaned from the classified advertising section of German newspapers. The second part of this section consists of a general overview of the nature of intercultural communication. Good secondary sources for introductory materials are Hall and Hall (1990), Lewis (1996), and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997). Kiesel and Ulsamer (2000) are especially appropriate for business majors. This overview prepares students for the subsequent task of dealing with intercultural differences in advertising in general and German business in particular.

Advertisement: This section consists of two steps. First, students study several different German advertisements and group them according to the classification found in Nalepka (2002, pp. 50-53)[2] (see Figure 1 for an example). The class discussion of the selected advertisements should include any variations or discrepancies found between the compared ads.

[2]It is very important that the instructor has already found several different advertisements for students to use during the exercise, picking several of the different types of ads as examples.

After completing step one, the teacher should ask students to point out any differences they perceive between German and American ads. Possible reasons for the differences should be discussed.

Figure 1: Bosch advertisement.

Post-ad: The aim of this section is to make students aware of the cultural difference between American and German business. The primary difference is German's greater use of information and details. From the American perspective, the German's need for abundant information and an extreme amount of details appears to be overdone. In short, for Americans the German ad can seem cluttered. Of course, Germans would have just the opposite impression of American ads, where the perceived lack of details might seem trivial, simple-minded, or deceptively reticent. Hall and Hall (1990) point out that "each nation and each culture have their own ways of describing their products and the company behind the products…. German ads are loaded with detailed information; products are described and analyzed" (p.71). Details/information play an important role in the German business world (Lewis, 1996), much more so than in the United States (Schmidt, 2002). A lack of understanding the role of information and details has proven to be a stumbling block in business

deals between Americans and Germans (Hager 2001). Reading about this cultural difference in either Hall and Hall (1990, pp.71-75) and/or Schmidt (2002, pp.45-47) helps prepare students for later encounters in the globalized business world. Analyzing German advertisements that include an abundance of details/information is one way of accomplishing this goal.

ADVERTISEMENT TWO

The purpose of this unit is 1) to familiarize students with yet another type of advertisement and its use, 2) to provide students with another critical cultural difference between Germans and Americans, 3) to apply this cultural difference to doing business and 4) to discuss how this affects the German workplace and attitude.

Pre-ad: This section provides students an introduction to headline use in advertisements and an overview of human relationship to nature. Nalepka (2002) supplies a good introduction to headline use in German advertisements. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) provide a very good summary of this aspect of cultural communication in general and in particular to business. Reading and discussing information found in Tropenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) about "Controlling nature, or letting it take its course" (p. 141) and "How important is a culture's orientation to nature?" (p. 142) function as excellent introductions to this topic, after which the class can discuss American attitudes towards nature and how, if at all, these attitudes are reflected in American advertisements.

Advertisement: Students are now ready to search for their own German advertisements, which portray nature. Using any print medium will provide the necessary ads. We used *Spiegel Magazine*, and Figure 2 is a sample ad for this exercise. After each student has presented her/his advertisement and talked about its use of nature, a discussion about how the headline influences the effect of the picture(s) proves to be very fruitful. Students are then encouraged to speculate about what the connection between nature and headlines indicates about German culture in general.

Figure 2: Viessmann advertisement.

Post-ad: This section presents background information on the German love for nature. Zeidenitz and Barkow (1993) present a good discussion of German ecological awareness in "Being Green" (p.17-18). Students discuss how this issue influences and affects the German workplace in general and German companies in particular. Huth (1997) provides good information about how ecology influences the German office, for example, "das umweltfreundliche Büro", which students should read as additional background material. In addition, the instructor should point out what role ecology can have in the process of setting up a German company. Hofmeister (1999) reminds any German businessperson wanting to set up her/his own company to remember that ecological trends are an important part of any company and its marketing concept.

At the end of the course, comprised of five culture units, students had the opportunity to pick an advertisement and analyze it using the cultural information covered throughout the course. Students responded to this final exercise with a high degree of participatory enthusiasm, generating insights and conclusions about German culture that were very astute and thought provoking. The selection of advertisements and their interpretation showed that students understood the role of intercultural communication and how it affects the use of advertising.

CONCLUSION

The two examples of German advertising are good starting points for teaching culture using print media. They also provide the instructor with the opportunity to teach about German business and its values. However, they achieve more than this. Hars (1999) maintains that advertising is one item about which everyone is able to talk. He also believes that advertisements belong to the everyday knowledge of the general public (cultural group), provide language with catchy phrases, and furnish insights into ways of thinking by the cultural group concerned.

Advertising can serve as an introduction and a device for teaching German culture, in particular German business culture. These teaching units provide techniques for stimulating students' awareness and thinking about German beliefs and their background. The exercises accomplish more than just conveying facts, information for its own sake, or tidbits of trivia to whet the learner's interest. As Webber (1990) has recommended, these exercises help produce understanding of German culture in general and German business culture in particular in order for students to be able to solve problems they may later encounter in the foreign culture (133). Advertising can function as a key element in teaching German culture.

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