

Authentic Visual Resources for the Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract : Visual resources are all around us, especially in today's media-driven world, which gravitates, more and more, towards the visual. As a result, authentic resources, such as television advertisements, become testaments – authentic cultural materials – that reflect the landscape of certain groups and communities during a specific point in time. Engaging language students with popular advertisements can provide a great opportunity for developing cultural awareness, a component that is sometimes overlooked in the foreign language classroom. This paper will showcase practical examples of using Israeli Television Ads in various Modern Hebrew language courses. Several approaches for combining the study of language and culture, through the use of advertisements, will be included; for example, targeted assignments based on students' proficiency levels, such as: asking to recognize vocabulary words and answer basic information questions, as opposed to commenting on the significance of an ad and analyzing its particular cultural elements. The use of visual resources in the language classroom does not only enable students to learn more about the culture of the target language, but also to combine their language skills. Most often, interacting with an ad requires close listening and some reading (through captions or other data). As students analyze the ad, they employ their writing and speaking skills by answering questions in text or audio form. Hence, these interactions are able to elicit complex language use across the four domains: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. This paper will include examples of practical assignments that were developed for several Modern Hebrew language courses, together with the specific advertisements and questions related to them. Conclusions from the process and recent feedback notes received from students regarding the use of visual resources will be mentioned as well.

Keywords : authentic materials, cultural awareness, second language acquisition, visual resources

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