

# **Utilization of Commercials in Turkish Language Teaching**

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## **Abstract**

*Many materials are used in language teaching. Among these, authentic materials are particularly important. Commercials, one of the areas where language is used in the liveliest and most effective manner, is among the authentic materials to be utilized in language teaching. Commercials allow teachers to carry out many various studies with their sentence structures, statement types, word types, and indirect expressions. These materials can be utilized in all areas of listening/watching, speaking, reading, writing and learning. It is essential to provide examples from life itself among the topics of Turkish Language lessons, which is a lesson that prepares students for life. Thus, the idea that Turkish Language lesson is a lesson in life itself will be given to the students indirectly. This study mentions the commercials and the language in commercials, presenting examples of applications for teaching language skills in primary school and middle school Turkish Language lessons by using commercials. The examples were chosen among television, radio and internet commercials. Based on these examples, suggestions have been provided for Turkish Language teachers on which other various types commercials can be utilized in Turkish Language lessons.*

**Keywords:** *language teaching, Turkish language teaching, authentic material, commercials*

## **1. Introduction**

Studies in language education and teaching increase and vary each day. Variety of the studies in this field makes it easier for both teachers and students to achieve defined goals. In such studies, the importance of using original and authentic materials in training-teaching activities is emphasized; it is highlighted that such materials have important roles for integrating the lesson with life. Also, it is stated that distancing or disconnecting basic language skills from natural environment makes it harder to learn these skills (Kingen, 2000:269). Thus, during language teaching, it is important to utilize examples from daily life, where language is used with its most lively form.

Primary Schools Turkish Language Lesson Curriculum uses the statement “The main purpose of language teaching is to have students understand the appearances language takes in different contexts, express themselves through language, reach various information sources and enrich their emotional, intellectual and imaginative worlds.” (MEB, 2006:2). For reaching these goals, it is essential that students face uses of language in various contexts. From this point of view; commercials, one of the areas where language is used in the most live and effective manner, is among the unique materials to be utilized in language teaching. Commercials also present the richness of Turkish Language with their sentence structures, statement types, word types, and various expressions. Commercials can be used to improve the logic of critical thinking in students. Mentioned characteristics of commercials are discussed below in more details.

## **2. The Method**

In this study which is the descriptive research, firstly, the concept of commercial has been discussed in terms of its various aspects. After that, the characteristics of verbal and visual elements in commercials have been focused. The relationship between the content of commercials and Turkish course topics has

been determined. The commercial examples of television, radio and the Internet were included in the study group. The samples in the study group were examined one by one and some activities which can be used in Turkish lessons have been developed for each sample. These aforementioned activities have been associated with the skills of listening, writing, speaking and grammar topics.

### ***Commercials and Usage of Language and Visual Elements in Commercials***

Defined in the glossary as “Any way attempted to introduce, promote, and thus sell something to the public” (TDK, 2005), the Turkish word “reklam” comes from the French *reclame*. The definition “One of the most effective and strategic mass communication types used to influence or change human behavior in a desired way” (Bati, 2010:11) emphasizes the aspect of commercials, which aims to persuade people. Through commercials, manufacturers intentionally aim to develop new attitude in a target group to increase the magnitude of or to change an existing attitude (Yılmaz, 2004). In line with this goal, language is strategically structured and used in commercials.

Reaching people in many different ways, we meet commercials in various media. Some of the major media can be listed as follows: Television, radio, newspaper, magazine, cinema, outdoor and indoor area commercials panels, direct mailing, hand adverts, promotional gifts, internet etc. (Tayfur, 2008). As you see, meeting people in many locations and types in today's society of consumption, commercials, which is one of the indispensable elements of marketing business, both shape and reflect our lives.

Commercials carry out communication with consumers through their language elements and visual contents. In most commercials, messages are sent by utilizing written, verbal and visual techniques. Visual elements are not used in radio commercials. However, sound is much more prominent in radios; words are selected and sentences are built very carefully. Visual and verbal elements cover topics such as design, title, main text, slogan, logo, background, color, drawing etc. Slogan and main text form the basis of the verbal elements in commercials. Slogan is the section which would first draw the attention of a target group. Commercials texts undertake the main function for having the messages understood clearly, and giving a meaning to the visuals in the commercial, if any. Characteristics of the product or service advertised, benefits provided to the target group, economical level, lifestyle, habits of the target group, etc. are the points that define the content and style of the verbal texts to be used in commercials (Bati, 2010:11-32-41). Based on all these features, commercials are prepared by taking into account how language is used by people within the flow of daily incidents (Erden, 1989:179). When we approach said techniques used in commercials in terms of language skills, we see that commercials comprise of elements for reading, listening, and visual reading. MacGregor emphasizes that TV commercials need to be used in language teaching for their suitability for being watched repeatedly, and having short, up-to-date and whole messages (cited Akpınar and Aydın, 2009:102). Due to such characteristics of theirs, commercials are among effective materials in terms of providing students many skills aimed in language teaching.

Commercials are not interested in just conveying information, as in news or weather forecasts. Instead of only providing direct information about a product or service, today's commercial approach rather matches products with several emotions, and promote them with symbols from popular culture products. Commercials are presented to people with a slogan-style language and remarkable designs to be realized among the intense message bombardment in the media (Bati, 2010:12-16). The purpose of all these is to sell us *things* (advertised products). Achieving a defined purpose, requires a process of creating a meaning. Commercials have to convert statements they take from the world of things to something meaningful for people, and this reveals a marvelous power of influencing and persuasion (Williamson, 2000:12). From this point of view, it is revealed that commercials are structures with quite different characteristics. Such different features require that commercials are considered with a critical logic. Critical logic is a skill that needs to be given to language students.

### ***Commercials in Turkish Language Lesson***

General Purposes of Primary School Turkish Language Lesson Curriculum include the following statements:

“It is aimed that students;

- Utilize mass communication tools to reach information/knowledge, gain a critical point of view and be selective towards messages from such tools,
- Reach the joy and awareness of language by enriching their vocabulary based on what they read, listen and watch; improve their emotional, intellectual and imaginative worlds.” (MEB, 2006).

Regarding the listening/watching and reading skills, which are the sub-skills of the comprehension skill, “Critical Listening/ Watching” and “Critical Reading” are given under the title of “Method and Techniques”. Related to these methods, in the section “Purpose”, the statement “is to give students the habit of asking questions about what they listen/watch and read, make them think about the subject, impartially evaluate the subject with its positive and negative sides, and let them find their own truth.” (MEB, 2006:62, 68) is highlighted. Therefore, commercials Turkish Language lessons must be handled to help students in basic language skill education and in realizing their own facts and truths, and contribute to the improvement of critical listening/watching and critical reading skills.

Using commercials in Turkish Language lessons is helpful in many ways. Commercials must be used in Turkish Language lessons because they:

- exemplify the liveliest and most effective uses of a language,
- are original training materials, which teachers can easily gather,
- comprise of elements to draw the attention of a target group visually and/or aurally,
- provide benefits for teachers technically and in terms of time because of usually being short and easily available,
- allow teaching multiple language skills simultaneously, especially with television commercials (cited Picken, 1999:250),
- provide opportunity for students to see the studied commercials in daily life and this would facilitate learning by repeating the lesson subjects,
- will contribute to reveal the creativity of students because of being products where creativity is prominent due to their verbal and visual elements,
- have the written and verbal text styles in language.

It is accepted by many language teachers that during language teaching, utilizing examples from daily life, which are called authentic materials, is effective (Kilickaya, 2004). Researches show that through such materials, the real world is brought to the classroom, and this helps students get a positive attitude towards learning (Kelly, Kell, Offner and Vorland, 2002).

The word “Commercials (Reklam in Turkish)” probably first brings to mind television, radio, newspaper, and magazine commercials. Indicating that different type of commercials, market brochures are used in language teaching as well as these (Yigitoglu, 2007) show what a wide extent commercials can spread to, that they can be easily used in language teaching.

After the information given about commercials, language in commercials and the importance of utilizing commercials in Turkish Language teaching; relevant examples are discussed below.

#### ***Activity Examples***

##### ***a. Television Commercial Example-1***

Following text is taken from a bank commercial broadcast on television. In this commercial, a child talks to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk:

**Child:** Aaa...?!

**M. Kemal Atatürk:** What happened, child?

**Child:** *Can a thorn get in your hand?*

**M. Kemal Atatürk:** *Can it not?*

**Child:** *Can your hand bleed?*

**M. Kemal Atatürk:** *Can it not?*

**Child:** *but aren't you Atatürk?*

**M. Kemal Atatürk:** *I am, child.*

**Child:** *But...*

**M. Kemal Atatürk:** *Now, forget who I am. If you will grow this rose, you are going to hurt. Your hand will bleed; the sun will make you sweat. Some will say "roses cannot grow in this garden". Some will say "roses can't be grown like that; they should be grown like this". You will ask this to yourself: "Do I want to make this place a rose garden? Do I want to grow the most beautiful roses of the world this place?" If you want it so much, you will not care about neither the thorns stuck in your hand nor what people say. Whoever you are, your only wish will be... to smell this scent. Do you understand?*

**Child:** *I understand.*

**M. Kemal Atatürk:** *Well done. Come on now; go on (Küçükler, 2010:138).*

After showing the commercial, these questions can be asked to students:

1. What is the reason for the surprise of the child?
2. What are the difficulties faced while growing a rose?
3. What is the message Mustafa Kemal Atatürk wants to give the child?

#### *b. Television Commercial Example-2*

Following text is taken from a water commercial broadcast on television.

*We went one drop further to find the most natural form of water. We went hundreds of meters high. And what did we do when we found it? Nothing... Nobody ever touched even one drop. For you to enjoy the naturalness, we make one drop more.*

Among the images of the commercial, whose text is given above; "rain, road, car, mountain, snow, water drinking child" are prominent visual elements. Considering these visual and verbal elements of the commercial together, these questions can be asked to students:

1. What are the people in the commercial looking for, and why?
2. What are the people in the commercial do to find what they are looking for?
3. What can be the reason for going high to find the natural form of water?
4. What was done after finding the thing sought in the commercial; why?

#### *c. Radio Commercial*

Radio commercials to be used in Turkish Language lessons can be gathered from the internet or by recording radio broadcasts.

Following text is taken from a bank commercial broadcast on radio. We see that in radio commercials, verbal aspects of a language become prominent.

*We set off to become the locomotive of Turkey.*

*We played our part in the War of Independence.*

*We fully lived the joy of the establishment of our Republic altogether.*

*We were with our people during the years of poverty.*

*We did not leave our emigrants alone.*

*We provided great support for Turkey's opening to the world.*

*Today, we are going faster for the future of Turkey.*

... *Bank, locomotive of Turkey.*

Based on this commercial, which consists of eight sentences, we can list the studies that can be performed in middle school Turkish Language lessons as follows:

1. This commercial is shared with students for teaching listening skills. Then, students can be asked comprehension questions on what kind of works have the advertised bank done from its establishment until today. Also, such a study can be performed under a listening comprehension work: Events in the commercial text are written down in small papers and these papers are folded. Then, these papers are randomly chosen by students in the class and students may be asked to put the events in the papers in order, according to the sequence in the commercial.
2. Meanings of the words and phrases in the commercial text such as “locomotive, poverty, immigrant, opening to the world” can be discussed for vocabulary improvement.
3. After studying the topic of tenses, the tenses used in the commercial text are discussed. An exercise can be performed to reinforce the topic. Also, students can be asked to rewrite the text with a specified tense.
4. There are many noun phrases in the commercial text. This commercial can also be used while studying the topic of noun phrases.
5. Turkish is an additive language. When discussing the topic of word structures, examples in this text can be used (kurtuluş (independence), kuruluş (establishment), kıtlık (poverty), gurbetçi (emigrant) etc.).
6. When teaching where to use capital letters, examples in the text can be used (Turkey, War of Independence, etc.).
7. Purpose-result statements in the commercial text can be the subject of another study.
8. There are also examples in this commercial text for using adverbs. This text can also be used for teaching adverbs.

Obviously, based on a very short commercial text, many studies can be performed for various language skills.

#### ***d. Internet Commercial Example***

Photographs, pictures and caricatures are often used in language lessons. During the studies in lessons, teachers work to achieve defined purposes sometimes by using photographs and pictures related to the text, and sometimes through visuals in the activities.

Whatever the type, there are various visuals in many commercials. Following photograph is taken from a website commercial describing the importance of natural life.



<http://www.frmtr.com/off-topik/4817255-ormanlar-cigerlerimizdir.html>

Above photograph can be used in teaching both speaking and writing skills. This photograph is shown to students and students are asked to examine the photograph for a few minutes. Then, students are asked

what this photograph bears in their minds. Students may be asked to list the thoughts in their minds and to speak about each of them. In addition, these questions can also be asked:

1. What does the shape in the photograph look like? Why is such a similarity used?
2. What must and must not people do to eliminate the adversity in the photograph?

After students express the thoughts in their minds, a writing preparation study can be performed based on the described ideas and on the direction by the teacher. Then, students can be asked to write an essay based on these ideas. This study can also be managed by separating students into groups of two or three.

### 3. Conclusion

Many materials are used in language education-teaching. Variety of these materials and their being materials selected from daily life will ensure that studies are more effective. Especially in language lessons, a school will prepare students for life as much as it can bring real life examples to the classroom. Handling daily situations in lessons will create a ground for students to enjoy lessons and increase lesson efficiency.

For diversifying the materials used in Turkish Language lessons, one of the options is the commercials. In daily life, we face commercials in many different places and various ways on televisions, radios, newspapers, mobile telephones, internet, etc., and they have examples in which the language is used effectively with various visual and aural elements. Due to such characteristics, commercials are materials that are available for many studies in the education and teaching of basic language skills and grammar. Using commercials as both main and auxiliary materials in teaching Turkish Language will make the process of teaching-learning more effective due to the above reasons. As a result, particularly for primary school and middle school lessons, commercials must be utilized in all Turkish Language lessons.

#### Note

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