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Visual advertisements:
a tool for English language teaching?

Mária Babocká, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia
mbabocka@ukf.sk

Abstract

Advertising as one of the phenomena of modern times is often an inseparable, though undesirable part of our everyday lives. Current trends indicate that there are still more and more anglicisms, internationalisms, and particles of different cultures penetrating billboard advertisements in many towns and cities around the world, and Slovakia is no exception. The crucial question of this article is: How is it possible to use advertisements in English language teaching and learning? To answer this question, the examination is focused on: (1) defining the role and characteristic traits of advertisements; (2) searching for the linkage between the psychological principles of advertising and psychology of learning foreign languages; (3) the frequency of anglicisms and internationalisms in billboard advertisements in particular areas of selected Slovak cities; (4) concrete suggestions for teaching practice based on the previous findings.

Keywords: advertisements, English language teaching, anglicisms, culture

Introduction

Advertisement is a noun derived from French *avertir-avertissement* meaning "public notice" or a "written statement calling attention to" (Harper, 2001-2015). In the past, advertisements were used to reflect some important event of a particular era, today, they mirror "the society and the business environment that produced them" (Pope, 2003).

There are several types of advertising. The first type comprises *traditional advertising* represented by advertising on television, radio, newspapers, magazines, or billboards. The next type of advertising, connected with the achievements of modrn technology, is *online advertisng* using Internet as the world's most powerful media (Tavor, 2011). Another categorization classifies billboards and posters on city buildings, along the streets, shopping centres, or pedestrian zones to *outdoor advertising*. The second category, *transport advertising*, comprises billboards located on various means of transport- busses, taxi, cars, trains, in train or bus stations, next to train lines, and motorways. The

last category is *ambient advertising*. It includes posters and signs on telephone kiosks, public toilets, or just on the shop floors (Cronin, 2006). Advertising like this can be really irritating, because it is aggressive, excessive, gaudy and tasteless; it often juxtaposes incompatible elements and overloads the observer with too many visual impulses. Moreover, it obscures the real character of a city or landscape (Heřmánková, Jarolímek, Kozarová, Pešek 2012, 2013; Bankole, 2013).

Billboard pollution, as it is often called, is aptly characterized by Bankole (2013, p. 7) as an "indiscriminate and proliferous erection of low quality sign-systems that inform, warn, identify corporate goods and services". From the above mentioned, it is clear that advertisements are an important means of communication between advertisers, usually traders or producers, and potential consumers.

According to Jakštiene, Susniene and Narbutas (2008, p. 50), it serves as a "channel of information dissemination and the presumption for the market feedback". It communicates through visual and text figures which are aimed to attract the attention of the observer. Abdulaziz and Abdullah (2012) recognize six key communicative figures of billboard advertisements: visual images, slogan, logo, text, colour and space. According to Balkafl, Akbulut and Kartopu (2005), these figures comprise: legibility and readability of the advertising text, text language, letter types and letter size, colour of the letters, spaces between letters and sentences, colours of the other visual elements and pictures evoking emotional and mental effects, focal point of the elements, their design, shape, and measure. Recent research indicates that man and woman sexualities are used as attracting elements in many billboards and advertisements (ibid).

Intercultural elements and anglicisms in billboard advertisements

The communicative figures of billboards and posters often comprise many intercultural elements, anglicisms, and internationalisms which are directly or indirectly linked with the advertising products. *Anglicisms* are words and phrases which are loaned from the English language. As Fischer and Pulaczewska (2008) state, they need not be loaned only from standard British English, but from all varieties of English language. Since English is the international language, many anglicisms can acquire status of *internationalisms,* because they are "shared by a number of different languages", but within one language family (Witalisz, 2011, p. 2). The same author (ibid.) accentuates a new phenomenon coming to the forefront- phenomenon of *globalisms* indicating terms and expressions used globally, by people belonging to different language families. (Despite several

terminological possibilities, this article will operate mainly with the term *anglicisms,* since it fits the best to our further investigation.).

In this way, billboard advertising serves as a permeable membrane transmitting these elements and loans into cultural awareness and languages of the observers in different countries and cultural backgrounds. (The technical term "observer" is understood as a man who is in contact with bill, whether he or she is a potential customer or not). It stands at the beginning of the process of *institutionalization,* which means that an anglicism becomes a part of the domestic language and it is not recognized as anglicism anymore (Fischer & Pulaczewska, 2008).

In mass media, Slovakia is known as the "kingdom of billboards" (compare Krekovič, 2012) where the billboard boom burst just after the Velvet revolution in 1989. Since that time, infiltration of western intercultural elements into the indigenous culture and English vocabulary into Slovak language occurs on a daily basis. However, some of the used anglicisms have been already institutionalized and some have not; or they have been institutionalized only by certain social or age groups. Picture1 and Picture 2 can serve as examples.

Picture 1: Billboard advertising Aquaterm Company, (photographed 09.07.2015 in Nitra)

Picture 2: Billboard advertising Coca-Cola, (photographed 09.07. 2015 in Nitra)

In Picture 1 (billboard 1), a visual image of the American king of rock 'n' roll, Elvis Presley, is used to advertise bathrooms. Obviously, bathrooms and Elvis Presley have nothing in common. However, the authors of this advertisement connected these two incompatible elements through the slogan "Be like a/the KING in your new BATHROOM" (author's translation). Since Elvis is not only a symbol of rock 'n' roll music, but also of so called "rock 'n' roll youth culture", the values of "freedom and individuality, romance and love, erotic gratification and

acceptance and belonging" (Kellner, 2015, p. 4), which arose in the USA in 1960s, are instantly radiating through the poster to Slovak culture.

Picture 2 (billboard 2) advertising Coca-Cola is directly connected to the promotion of this well known drink, but, on the other hand, Coca-Cola represents American consumer and mass culture. It is a symbol of Americanization, also well known as Coca-colonization (Wagnleitner, 2009). Moreover, this concrete advertisement aimed mainly at young consumers employs an English acronym BFF institutionalized mainly among teenagers. Its meaning is "best friend/s forever" (urbandictionary.com, 2012).

Implementation of field research

Looking at advertising from a utilitarian viewpoint, it does not need to be useful only in terms of marketing. Its intercultural elements together with anglicisms can be an interesting variant applied into English language teaching. However, before proceeding to methodical and didactical aspects explaining *how* advertisements can be used in English lessons, it is inevitable to find out whether there really are language elements which could be used in English language teaching. The fulfilment of this objective is accompanied by answering these questions:

- What is the frequency of anglicisms in advertisements in particular areas in chosen Slovak cities?
- What are the most frequent words used on billboards and posters in these city areas?
- Which proficiency levels do the detected words correspond with?

Answering these questions required implementation of field research mapping and analysing advertisements in particular areas. Practical reasons led us to map advertisements in Nitra thoroughfares (Chrenovská, Zlatomoravecká, Mostná, Napervillská, Tr. A. Hlinku, Štúrová) and corresponding side roads (Piaristická, Farská, B. Slančíkovej, Nécseyho, Dražovská). The reasons are listed below:

- The great Nitra thoroughfares pass directly through the city; they allow mapping billboards and posters on city buildings and block of flats.
- There are big shopping centres located just on the great Nitra thoroughfares (OC Max, Baumax, Centro Nitra, Galéria Mlyny, and Tesco). They are the arteries of outdoor advertising and potential customers of all age categories are cumulated in these places.
- At the same time, they provide a big space for transport advertising; we were interested in billboards next to motorways and posters on city bus stations.

The field research was realized on 9 – 11 July 2015. According to Googlemaps.com, the monitored area was approximately 8.5 kilometres long. All posters, billboards, advertisements, banners and signs situated in the monitored area was photographed. After the data collection, all billboards and posters were analyzed. The first phase of the analysis was aimed at recording all anglicisms present in advertisements. Whenever a new anglicism occurred, it was recorded in an MS Excel chart with a serial number. When the same anglicism occurred again, either in the same billboard or in another one, the frequency of occurrence was recorded too. This enabled us to monitor both quality and quantity of anglicisms in the collected data. The next phase of the analysis was oriented to determination of the most frequently used anglicisms in billboard advertisements.

Afterwards, we tried to detect proficiency categories of the monitored anglicisms. The norm for the classification was based on the wordlists in the textbook collection English Vocabulary in Use (Elementary, Pre-Intermediate & Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate and Advanced) written by McCarthy and O'Dell (1999). Each anglicism was classified in one of the 5 categories: (Elementary [E], Pre-Intermediate & Intermediate [P/I], Upper-Intermediate [UI], Advanced [A], and Uncategorized [?]) according to the textbook wordlist where it occurred for the first time. For example, the word "apple" occurred both in the elementary word list and pre-intermediate and intermediate wordlist. However, it was placed only in elementary vocabulary since we took into consideration the lowest proficiency level. If the word did not occur in any of the abovementioned textbook lists, it was marked as "uncategorized".

Results

In the monitored area, there were identified 271 particles of advertisements (containing posters, billboards, banners and promotion signs). If we take into account the length of the monitored area (8.5 km), on average, there was one advertising element approximately every thirty meters.

In qualitative terms, there were indicated 192 different anglicisms, English words and phrases in those 271 advertisements. They are listed in alphabetical order in Table 1.

In quantitative terms, altogether, the anglicisms occurred 357 times. Some of the monitored anglicisms occurred only once, but some of them even 9 times. It means that as a mathematical average, there was more than one anglicism (1.3) in each advertisement. The most frequently used anglicisms are listed in Table 2.

Table 1. Anglicisms detected in 271 advertisements

1	Air conditioned	49	Drive [E]	97	Magic [?]	145	Seven [E]
2	[UI]	50	Duty [P/I]	98	Man [E]	146	Shell [UI]
3	Ant [P/I]	51	Earl [A]	99	Market [P/I]	147	Shoes [E]
4	Anywhere [P/I]	52	Edge [UI]	100	Mobile phone	148	Shop [E]
5	Apple [E]	53	Edition [P/I]	101	[E]	149	Shopping [E]
6	Art [E]	54	Energy [P/I]	102	Mad [P/I]	150	Shopping
7	Baby [E]	55	Energy drink	103	Mode	151	centre [P/I]
8	Bags [E]	56	[P/I]	104	collection [A]	152	Silver [P/I]
9	Banana [E]	57	Espresso [?]	105	Monkeys [E]	153	Simply clever
10	Band [P/I]	58	Europe [E]	106	Motive [UI]	154	[P/I]
11	Bank [E]	59	Express [UI]	107	Nails [E]	155	Since [P/I]
12	Beer [E]	60	Farm [E]	108	Nature [E]	156	Ski [E]
13	Best for [E]	61	Fence [P/I]	109	No frost [?]	157	Sky [?]
14	Bet [?]	62	Fiber [?]	110	Nonstop [?]	158	Slovakia [?]
15	Bicycles [E]	63	Fitness [A]	111	Norm [?]	159	Smart [UI]
16	Bite [P/I]	64	Food [E]	112	Oldies [A]	160	Space [UI]
17	Block [P/I]	65	Fox [?]	113	Orange [E]	161	Sport [E]
18	Bluff [?]	66	Free [E]	114	Outdoor [?]	162	Star [UI]
19	Body [E]	67	Full [P/I]	115	Part of life	163	Steak [E]
20	Bonus [?]	68	Fun [E]	116	[P/I]	164	Store [P/I]
21	Boss [UI]	69	Future [E]	117	Pension [UI]	165	Strong [P/I]
22	Bottle [P/I]	70	Galaxy [?]	118	Phase [UI]	166	Style [UI]
23	Bow [UI]	71	Game [E]	119	Plant [E]	167	Surprise [E]
24	Brand [P/I]	72	Garden [E]	120	Play [E]	168	Television [E]
25	Bunny [?]	73	Generation	121	Point [P/I]	169	Terrestrial [?]
26	Cappuccino [?]	74	[UI]	122	Poker [?]	170	The best [E]
27	Car [E]	75	Go [E]	123	Port [UI]	171	The biggest
28	Cargo [A]	76	Golden [P/I]	124	Portal [UI]	172	[E]
29	Carp [?]	77	Grand [P/I]	125	Power [P/I]	173	The great [E]
30	Carrier [E]	78	Gym [A]	126	Production	174	Three [E]
31	Casinos [UI]	79	Halloween [?]	127	[P/I]	175	Thru [P/I]
32	Celtic [?]	80	Happy [E]	128	Professional	176	Ticket [E]
33	Century [E]	81	Heavy [P/I]	129	[P/I]	177	Time [E]
34	Cinema [E]	82	Home [E]	130	Professor [UI]	178	Top [E]
35	City [E]	83	Hotline [?]	131	Pub [E]	179	Tour [P/I]
36	Club [P/I]	84	House [E]	132	Quilt [A]	180	Towers [P/I]
37	Cocktail [?]	85	Human [P/I]	133	Raw [P/I]	181	Toys [E]
38	Colours [E]	86	Image [P/I]	134	Real estate	182	Trends [UI]
39	Comfort [P/I]	87	In [E]	135	[UI]	183	United [UI]
40	Company [UI]	88	In time [P/I]	136	Reality [P/I]	184	Uprising [A]

41	Cranberry [?]	89	Indoor [?]	137	Red [E]	185	Video tours
42	Cross fit [UI]	90	Industry [P/I]	138	Refugee [UI]	186	[UI]
43	Delivery [P/I]	91	Invest [P/I]	139	Register [P/I]	187	Village [E]
44	Denim [UI]	92	It's play time	140	Reserved [E]	188	Vision [UI]
45	Design [P/I]	93	[?]	141	Restaurant [E]	189	Visit [P/I]
46	Devil [?]	94	Jewellery [UI]	142	Rethink [P/I]	190	Wail [?]
47	Direct [P/I]	95	Line [P/I]	143	River [E]	191	Watches [P/I]
48	Download on	96	Link [UI]	144	Rock [UI]	192	Welcome to
	[UI]		Lion [E]		Royal [UI]		[P/I]
	Drinks [E]		Liquor [?]		Sale [E]		Well [E]
			Lounge bar		Scan [UI]		Wood [E]
			[P/I]		Sclerosis [?]		Wool [E]
					See more at		World [P/I]
					[P/I]		
					Select [UI]		

Table 2: The most frequently used anglicisms

	Anglicism	Frequency of use		Anglicism	Frequency of use
1	Club [P/I]	9 x	10	City [E]	4 x
2	Orange [E]	9 x	11	Express [UI]	4 x
3	Power [P/I]	7 x	12	House [E]	4 x
4	Shop [E]	6 x	13	Market [P/I]	4 x
5	Shopping centre [P/I]	6 x	14	Mode collection [?]	4 x
6	Sport [E]	6 x	15	Nonstop [?]	4 x
7	Fitness [?]	5 x	16	Outdoor [?]	4 x
8	Fox [?]	5x	17	Slovakia [?]	4 x
9	Cinema [E]	4 x			

In Figure 1, it is possible to see the percentage of anglicisms belonging to particular proficiency categories. Most of the detected words (35%) belonged to elementary category. It was followed by pre-intermediate and intermediate category with 27%. Also the upper-intermediate category contained quite a rich list of words (18%), although it was almost half as long as the elementary one. A significant decrease of words was indicated in advanced category- only 4%. Uncategorized words represented 16% of the whole. In this category, there were mainly words creating a border between basic and specific vocabulary (for example, sclerosis, liquor, fitness, terrestrial, poker, bluff) or words which are internationally recognized (cappuccino, espresso, nonstop). It is important to

mention that if we used another norm and model for word classification, the results could be different. However, our main focus was not to do a deep linguistic and lexical analysis, but to find out whether there really are language elements that could be possibly used in English language teaching.
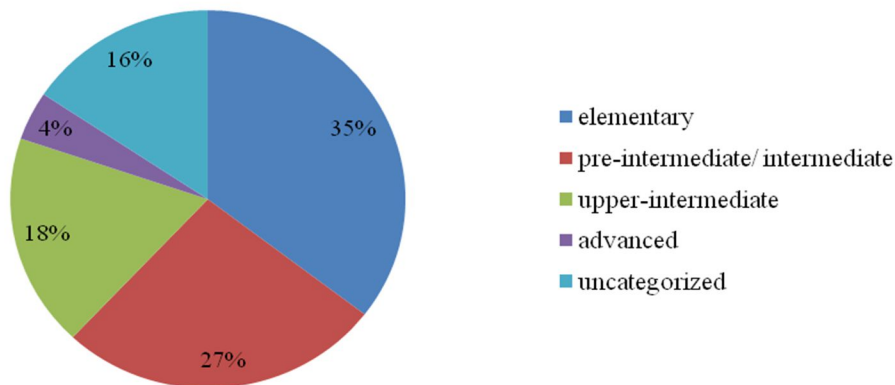

Figure 1: Proficiency categories of anglicisms detected in advertisements

From the abovementioned, it is clear that advertisements contain anglicisms falling within the target vocabulary of all English proficiency levels, though in various percentages of representation. This means that it could be used in English lessons, mainly for teaching vocabulary. But what aspects of learning does it comprise?

Ellis (1995) states that if somebody wants to learn a word, he or she must at least recognize the word as a word and insert it into his or her mental lexicon. In addition to these two processes, the word must be categorized and acquired in various subsections of one's mental lexicon. These subsections relate to several modes that a word can have and which are necessary for its recognition and production: (1) recognition of the sound of the word in speech; (2) recognition of the ortographic mode of the word- its written form; (3) correct spelling of the word; (4) correct pronunciation of the word, both separately and in combination with other words; (5) recognition of its syntactic, semantic, and lexical properties; (5) to know the words's meaning; (7) to know its connotations and idiomaticity (Ellis, 1995; Pokrivčáková, 2010).

Advertisements cannot be used for acquisition of all of the above listed modes of a word. They can be a helpful aid for learning the written form of the word,

correct spelling of the word and its meaning. It is based on the interface between the psychology of vocabulary learning and psychology of advertising.

A) Billboards, context and incidental vocabulary learning

The overall design of billboards and posters, as a product of modern marketing endeavours, is built on certain psychological factors influencing behaviour of potential customers. In general, it draws from the psychology of Gestalt based on holistic, parallel and analogue principles and operations of brain and mind. It means that as human brain grasps a message holistically, also the whole billboard or poster is aimed to communicate one coherent message rather than its individual parts (Abdulaziz, Abdullah, 2012).

Ellis (1995, p. 3) claims that "much of incidental vocabulary learning comes from context during reading." Also, the other authors and researchers (Laufer, Hulstijn, 2001, Yoshi, Flaitz, 2002, Rieder, 2002) stress the relevance of incidental vocabulary learning as a by-product of other message-focused activities.

While looking at a billboard or poster, the observer perceives its complex message created by all its visual and text figures. However, an anglicism, which could be the target English word, is present in this collage too. This means that all visual images, pictures, colours, slogans, and texts create a context for the target word. However, billboards and posters can be of different quality. It follows that some billboards can provide poor context for the target words and they can deceive the observers. Example: If the target word in Picture 3 (billboard 3 advertising ironmongery and hardware products) is "village", the context of the billboard does not correspond with the denotative meaning of the word at all. Rather, it is a pastiche of incompatible elements that can distract attention of the observer and obscure the meaning of this word.

Some other billboards or posters require the observer to have some previous knowledge on which the context is built. Example: In Picture 4 (billboard 4 advertising the shoe store CCC), the target words "shoes & bags" are not supported by any explicit visual or text elements. There are no shoes or bags portrayed on the billboard but a woman in a car. The context for the target words is created by the previous experience or knowledge of the observer- if he or she knows that CCC is a shoe store, then, naturally, he or she assumes that the meaning of "shoes & bags" has something to do with the goods sold in that store.

Picture 3: Billboard advertising Rawtech ironmongery, (photographed 09.07.2015 in Nitra)

Picture 4: Billboard advertising CCC Shoe store, (photographed 10.07.2015 in Nitra)

B) Billboards and implicit learning of vocabulary

The team of authors, Jakštiene, Susniene and Narbutas (2008), made a concise synopsis of relevant psychological processes influenced by advertising. They are portrayed in Table 3.

Table 3 indicates that attention and perception are the gateways to the mind of the observer. Moreover, the authors (ibid.) claim that there should be at least one figure on any billboard affecting the observer subconsciously. These subconscious figures can evoke feelings- affective processes (how the observer is going to feel after buying the product), which can retain the advertisement in the observer's mind and recollect it even after longer time. This retention is reinforced by multiplication of the same advertisement in a small area.

Attention, perception together with affective figures in billboard advertisements relate to implicit learning of new vocabulary. Implicit learning is a subconscious and automatic process; the learning subject does not even know that learning takes place. It is characterized by a necessity of frequency impulses which are absorbed through our senses - a new word is recognised as a result of frequency of exposure (DeKeyser, 2010). Ellis (1999, p.6.) points out that simple attention and perception of the target word is sufficient, because it starts up all regularities and psychological processes responsible for implicit learning: "Our lexical systems become tuned to regularities in orthography (letter units and sequential letter probabilities), to regularities in phonology, to regular patterns of grapheme-phoneme and phoneme-grapheme correspondences, to high frequency words over low frequency ones" (shortened).

Table 3: The aspects of psychological impact of advertising (Jakštiene, Susniene & Narbutas, 2008, p. 52)

AIDA Model	DAGMAR Model	Four key psychological processes (Kotler, 2007)	Cognitive aspects (Jokubauskas, 2007)
Attention	Awareness	Motivation	Attention
Interest	Comprehension	Perception	Perception
Desire	Conviction	Learning	Emotions, senses, reasoning, thoughts, language
Action	Action	Memory	Assimilation, recognition

In terms of billboard advertisements, the more often the target word occurs on billboards and posters, the more it is perceived by the sight of the observer and the natural frequency impulses are higher. Moreover, the affective figures operating in the subconscious of the observer can evoke the recollection of the mental image of an advertisement and it can indirectly contribute to the frequency cues necessary for implicit learning. However, what is implicitly learned is just the orthographic *form* of the word; acquisition of *meaning* is the domain of explicit processes.

C) Billboards and explicit learning of vocabulary

Information processing, which includes vocabulary learning, "moves from a sensory level of analysis, through pattern recognition to semantic enrichment" (Ellis, 1999. p. 6). In foreign-language vocabulary development, the stages of pattern recognition and semantic enrichment are to a large extent results of explicit learning. Explicit learning is a conscious and deliberate intention to finding regularities and rules, to concept formation and concept linking (Dörney, 2009, Hulstijn 2002). This means that unlike the orthographic form of the target word, its meaning is not the result of a mere frequency of exposure, but the result of conscious processes called *explicit learning focus* (Rieder, 2002). The observer does not want to understand the entire meaning of the text, in our case billboard, poster or advertisement, but he or she is interested in the concrete word and its meaning. He or she uses different means to grasp the meaning of the unknown word, for example consultation with dictionaries, textbooks, peers, or guessing from context.

However, billboards and posters are very often just a blurred mixture of slogans, colours and images. As Cronin (2006) argues, they cease to be read and their messages cease to be noticed, because they have become a part of everyday

city scenery. Therefore, it is even less probable that the observers will look at the billboards with the intention to learn some unknown English words. According to Kotler (2002), one means that could bridge over this barrier of indifference is *motivation*. He (ibid.) exalts motivation above all other processes since he believes that just biogenic and psychogenic needs are the driving force of customer (observer) - advertisement (billboard) communication. They drive the selective attention and selective retention of the observer. This means that people notice, try to understand, and remember mainly information supporting their needs, wants, attitudes, interests, and beliefs. If the informative value of the target English word is directly connected with the motivation of the observer, then it is probable that the *explicit learning focus* will be on that word too.

Billboard advertisements in English language teaching- outline of practical activities

In this section, we present two methodically processed activities describing how to use billboard advertisements in teaching English vocabulary. It is based on the previous findings and theoretical background and it also employs basic principles of teaching vocabulary. The issue of using advertisements in English language education has been already discussed by several Slovak authors and researchers, for example, Homolová 2003, Kaizerová 2010, but the advertisements were construed as authentic materials or integrants of journalistic texts. From this perspective, the following activities can serve as an inspiration for teachers who would like to use some alternative ways for teaching English vocabulary.

ACTIVITY 1: "Mr. English's Treasure"
Focus: explicit leaning of vocabulary
Proficiency level: pre-intermediate and up
Age level: 10 and up
Organization: group work
*Approximate time:* 45 minutes
Preparation: short story about Mr. English's treasure, maps of an area with high density of billboards, for example, parking lot, shopping centre yard, pedestrian zone etc. (example in Picture 5) – one map goes to one group of learners; explanatory notes (can be a part of the map), preparation of task lists; treasure-stickers, books or sweets- it depends on the age level.

Procedure:
1. In the classroom, the teacher tells the learners a story about Mr. English who visited Slovakia (or another country) some time ago. Since he liked this

country very much, he decided to hide a treasure there. Only those who resolve three tasks can find the way to the treasure, because he enciphered it to billboards and posters in a particular area.

Picture 5: Map of an area with many billboards
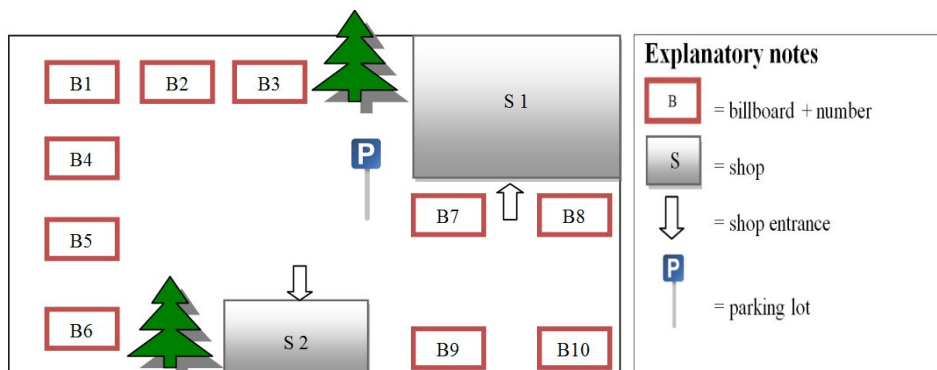
2. The teacher divides the learners into groups of 3-4 members. The mixed ability groups are recommended; learners can use their individual potentials in the process of task solving. The groups can choose their leaders and a nickname.
3. The next part of the lesson is set outside- in the area with many billboards. The teacher distributes the maps of the area, explanatory notes and the first worksheet and he or she explains the task.

"*Read the descriptions of 5 unknown English words below. Next to each description, there are numbers of billboards in which the words are enciphered. Find out the words and write them in the blank boxes*".

Table 4: Example of worksheet 1 for pre-intermediate and intermediate learners

To cause someone to feel less worried, upset or frightened.	B2	Comfort
The strength that allows you to do things.	B9	Energy
Typical of people.	B5	Human
A small, dark red berry or the plant that produces it.	B7	Cranberry
To think carefully about something again.	B8	Rethink [1]

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[1] All the word descriptions were found at http://www.merriam-webster.com/

4. After completing the first task, the teacher checks whether the words are correct and presents the pronunciation of the words. Then he or she assigns the next task. The learners have to put together the prescribed letters of each word to get a new one (word 1- the fourth letter; word 2- the first letter; word 3- the last letter; word 4- the first letter; word 5- the second letter; the newly created word = F-E-N-C-E). Then, the teacher instructs the learners to the billboard where this word occurs, for example billboard 3 (B3). They have to guess the meaning of the word "fence" from the billboard context (pictures, figures, text).

5. The last task is oriented to the use of the words. The learners have to prepare and present a short story explaining why Mr. English left Slovakia. All the new words should be used in it.

6. Finally, the teacher gives the students a map or a description of the place where the treasure is hidden. It can be somewhere outdoors or in the school building or classroom. The very last task is to find the treasure and enjoy it.

Remarks to Activity 1

This activity draws from explicit learning of the English vocabulary (explicit learning focus) since it employs extrinsic motivation of learners based on their need to know the word meaning, to solve the task and to reach the treasure. Lower the age level, stronger the extrinsic motivation. However, the teacher must bear in mind that understanding of the dictionary explanations can be problematic mainly for younger learners. Therefore, it is recommended to use pictures instead of verbal descriptions. This activity also employs some aspects of task-based learning, because while learners elaborate the tasks, they use the target language in a meaningful way (Willis, 2005). The necessity of group work during the task solving can be positively evaluated since it gives an opportunity for cooperation, team building, and scaffolding learning.

A drawback of this activity is its time consumption. The teacher has to check the terrain with billboards, hide the treasure and prepare all the maps and worksheets beforehand. It is not situated in the safe classroom environment, but in the real outdoors. It is based on teacher's creativity and his or her will to offer an alternative learning environment to his or her learners, what will be certainly appreciated. It can also happen that there will not be any suitable anglicisms (corresponding to age and proficiency level of the learners and the curriculum) in billboards at a given time and a given location. Instead of anglicisms, teachers can utilize intercultural elements. This activity can be modified in various ways corresponding to the needs and wants of the individual classes. At least, activity 1

can help learners to notice and observe the omnipresent phenomena of anglicisms in billboard advertisements in their own town or city.

ACTIVITY 2: "Designers"
Focus: implicit → explicit leaning of vocabulary
Proficiency level: elementary and up
Age level: 10 and up
Organization: individual work, pair work
Approximate time: 45 minutes
Preparation: Simulation of billboard advertisements in the classroom- teacher has to make pictures of billboards and posters from the outdoors, print them out, and stick them on the classroom walls. These billboards should contain already known vocabulary and also some new words (4-8) which are the target of the lesson. Preparation of "identification lists" containing the words from the billboards (already known ones and the target ones), plus some other words creating a background to the known and target ones (example in Picture 6). Old newspapers, pictures, color papers, pairs of scissors, glue sticks, markers, crayons.

Picture 6: Example of "identification list"

food	*surprise*	*toys*	*image*
body	*style*	*well*	*drinks*
car	*top*	*link*	*world*
oldies	*art*	*direct*	*village*
store	*river*	*company*	*bite*
watches	*select*	*city*	*baby*

Procedure:
1. If the activity is situated in the classroom, then the teacher has to stick the pictures of billboards on the walls before the lesson. If it is possible to go outdoors, this step can be skipped and real advertisements can be utilized.
2. At the very beginning, the teacher tells the learners that their classroom simulates the reality outside- they are not in the classroom, but in a street, motorway or a pedestrian zone. Learners are asked to walk around the classroom for 3-4 minutes and look at the billboards. To improve the simulated atmosphere, the teacher can play some street sounds or some outdoor background noises.

3. After this, the learners are seated and the teacher distributes the identification lists in which the learners have to circle as many words that they saw in the billboards as possible. For example, from the identification list in Picture 6, these words were available in billboards: *food, body, watches, top, river, toys, city, drinks, village*, and *baby*. Ideally, all these should be circled.

4. Learners check the words in pairs and decide which of the circled words they already know and which the new ones are. They sort them into two columns. For example:

Already known words	New words
Body	Food
River	Watches
Toys	Top
Drinks	City
Baby	Village

5. Working with the new words: learners go back to the posters and billboards where the new words occur and try to guess their meaning from the billboard context. If this is possible, they note down what figures helped them grasp the meaning of the unknown word. If it is impossible to grasp the meaning, they can consult with their peers or look it up in a dictionary.

6. The pre-last stage of the activity is oriented to redesigning the vague contexts of the posters so that they correspond with the denotative meaning of the words better than the original ones. This is the creative part of the activity; learners act as designers and they can use any technique- drawing, colouring, sticking, modelling, text writing etc., but the target word must be in the centre of the redesigned poster or billboard.

7. Learners present their new billboards in the class.

Remarks to Activity 2

Activity 2 called "Designers" employs the designing techniques just in its final parts, where the learners have to redesign the billboard context and make it more suitable for the denotative meaning of the target words. This part is based on explicit learning of vocabulary, because the learners consciously work with the word meaning and its context. They employ creativity, sensual perception, hands and crafts enabling creation of deeper memory tracks. This is an inseparable follow-up of the previous part of activity 2 oriented to implicit vocabulary learning. Here, the learners were supposed to perceive just the orthographic form of the words with which they later worked in more detail.

The advantage of this activity is that it brings billboard advertisements to the classroom and the teacher can adjust the setting (billboard and poster types) according to the current conditions and needs. However, this activity is also time and material consuming; it requires rich advanced preparation. But as in the previous case, it can be modified in many ways; for example, the teacher can assign it as a project work and check the partial results during the lessons. In this way, the learners can experience responsibility for their own learning.

Conclusion

The area of English language teaching is very wide and it is only natural that there are many approaches to this phenomenon. In this article, we chose a somewhat unusual approach; we tried to find the linkage between English language teaching and advertisements and find out how they can be used in English classes. Already, the question mark in the title (Advertisements: A tool for English language teaching?) indicates the dual character of the article- both investigative and methodical. The investigative part embraces the first three sections- explanation of the main characteristic traits of advertising, investigation of frequency of anglicisms in billboard advertisements in chosen areas, and searching for interconnections between psychology of advertising and psychology of foreign-language learning. The field research showed that there were 192 different anglicisms used in 271 billboards. The frequency of their usage was even higher, they were used 357 times. This finding confirmed our presumption of possible use of billboard advertisements in English vocabulary teaching since they comprised a wide range of English words belonging to all proficiency categories. From the psychological perspective, psychology of advertising and psychology of foreign-language learning intersected at three points: implicit vocabulary learning, explicit vocabulary learning, and incidental vocabulary learning. All these pieces of information helped us elaborate a detailed methodical outline of two activities that can serve as a recipe for teachers who would like to use some alternative ways of teaching vocabulary.

All aspects of our research led us to positive answers to the question in the title: Is billboard advertising a tool for English language teaching? Yes, billboard advertisements can be one way leading to English vocabulary development, and certainly to the development of many other areas, for example, intercultural competence, reading skills, writing skills and creativity. However, these things will be the subjects of further research.

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Contact

Mária Babocká, Mgr., PhD.
Department of Language Pedagogy and Intercultural Studies
Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
Dražovská 4, 949 74 Nitra, Slovakia
mbabocka@ukf.sk