

# French Television Advertising to Build Intercultural Competence

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**Abstract---**In learning French, intercultural competence has an important role and television advertising having cultural content could be an effective medium. This study aims to analyze student competencies to understand the culture in television advertisements and their intercultural competence with Bennett's model. 9 advertisements used in this study. Questionnaire and field studies method employed in this paper. Informants were 30 students of the French Language Study Program in Universitas Negeri Semarang. The results showed that most learners had a poor understanding of culture even though they were helped by the visual aspect through Edpuzzle. This difficulty is caused by the implicitness of French television advertisements. However, these difficulties can be resolved in group discussions. Their intercultural competencies are on step of acceptance and adaptation. Foreign language research often focuses on mastering or adequacy of language, understanding culture is almost untouched. Therefore, this study will provide benefits for building intercultural competencies.

**Keywords:** *French television advertising, intercultural competence*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The commercials are frequently present in our daily lives. Every day, we are surrounded by radio advertising, television advertising, or digital advertising when we are connected to the internet. Courbet quoted by Cally said that more than 10,000 brands feed our visual space every day, through advertisements. We spend about five hours on average, every day in front of the Internet and television screens and most of these advertisements are proposed, or rather imposed [1]. In Indonesia, there is no official research that mentions in detail the number of advertisements seen by Indonesians. However, Nielsen, quoted by Bernie, stated that there were 2.7 million ad spots from May to October 2017 [2]. Note that this number is only television advertising, and does not include radio, or internet advertisements.

Advertisements are so common and could change our behavior, our lifestyle and our consumption. Behavior change caused by

advertising has been studied for a long time. Psychologists help advertisers through the mobilization of "human instincts" to change individual conceptions and behaviors. Advertising is capable to direct the habits of the consumers, their decisions, without being able to resist it [3]. The brain can record certain aspects accidentally, even though consumers are often not centered on advertising, whether on television, on the internet or on the street [4].

Advertising does not only offering products but it contains cultural codes, customs and social values of targeted customers. In another word, advertising is inseparable from references and socio-cultural identities. As a cultural regulator, advertising could be considered as a mirror and a cultural engine at the same time [5], [6].

Authenticity and culture in ads considered as a reason to use it in language learning, including learning a foreign language. It is used to build critical literacy by generating assumptions, thoughts from various perspectives. The use of advertising in literacy learning develops learners' language competencies through visual analysis. In addition, learners will have an awareness of discourse as a social action on consumerism [7]. Building critical thinking through the use of advertising in learning English as a second language was also studied by Hobbs, He and Robbgrieco. The use of advertisements in second language learning for immigrants aged 14-20, is very effective for speaking, listening, reading and writing skills while developing critical thinking, balancing new academic language learning and knowledge of culture, home culture, and daily experience [8], [9]. Otherwise the commercials a growing interest among young people. In fact, current advertising campaigns are rooted in reality and use appropriate language for the teen audience: current, entertaining and motivating [10].

In teaching French as a foreign language, advertisements are often used as initial documents with the purpose as mentioned above. Learning French language and culture is given from the

beginning, but the culture is so broad. And it could be a reason for the learners' difficulty apart from the language and the implicit message of the advertisement. The commercial is characterized by a double verbal and iconic entity and often associated with a sound message. It constitutes a complex semiotic and linguistic phenomenon, where each part, complementary to each other, plays its role in communication. The combination of these elements has an emotional impact and evocative power. Speech as an explanation of the meaning of the image, give a stronger influence on the audio-visual language, and through exploiting all potential, advertising becomes a real "word image" [11]. It is therefore important to give an initial activity which the learners' can try to understand and look for the cultural context by answering the questions during the vision of the video through Edpuzzle. It is an online platform having free features to achieve certain educational goals. It allows using a video stored online or on a personal computer. Learners can do an interactive video activity by answering questions at specific points in the video. During the vision, learners will automatically stop at the point of the question and they have to answer it, then reading the video will resume. Edpuzzle is part of ICT. Zulaeha said that the use of ICT is effective to broaden the knowledge and experience of the learner in cultural diversity [12].

This article aims to analyze learners' ability to understand French advertising and develop their intercultural competence. This study will provide information on learners' understanding of the culture learned and also an appropriate method for developing their intercultural competence.

## II. METHODS

This is qualitative research with 30 informants from sixth-semester students of French pedagogical program in Universitas Negeri Semarang. To collect the data, we used a questionnaire through Edpuzzle (flipping class as a preparative activity) to get information about learners' understanding and opinions about French advertising. Then the information is used for focus group discussion material in six sessions. In this study, the material used to develop intercultural competence skills consisted of nine French television ads, including three auto ads, three food and beverage ads, and three cellular ads. Nine advertisements were chosen for the French cultural content.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most learners had a poor understanding of culture even though they were helped by the visual aspect through Edpuzzle. The implied message and

breadth of French culture are the main obstacles for Indonesian learners. Only 13 from 30 informants could understand the culture in two advertisements (*Renault Twingo* and *Rustique*). Most learners know the product in the last seconds of advertising because the illustrations and the narration at the beginning and the middle didn't describe the product. For example the advertising of Renault Twingo, the illustrations describe homosexual marriage. And the text "Times change, also Twingo" should be a marker of the relation between the illustrations and the car of Renault Twingo. It means that Renault Twingo anticipates the most extreme changes (changes in sexual orientation of those men because they had normal lives before, and each had a daughter from a previous union). Learners recognize homosexual marriage at the beginning of the sequence and product of Renault Twingo in the last sequence. But they didn't understand the relationship of homosexual marriage and the promoted car.

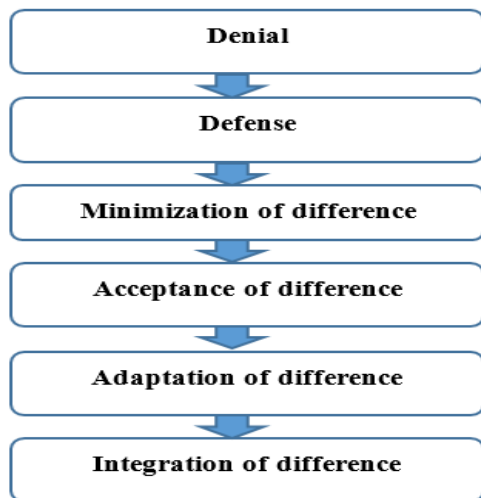
Another example, advertising for the cellular network "Orange" describes a bearded old man who talks to a baby on his lap. He asks the baby to use his fingers for everything, save the whales, overthrow dictatorship, etc. And at the end of the sequence, there is a narration, "The digital revolution is underway". The learners didn't recognize that the old bearded man represented Victor Hugo. This appearance is accentuated by the message said about the finger. This famous writer has a literary work entitled "*Le doigt de la femme*" or "The finger of a woman". Learner didn't recognize that the old man's message referred to the power of using fingers with the internet. It is possible that they had insufficient knowledge about literary works. According to the analysis of the questionnaire response, we could interpret that learners tend to recognize the explicit message. It is possible that they have poor knowledge about the world so that they do not demonstrate their critical thinking or culture learned was very different from their own. The difficulty to accept plurality in culture are numerous: the experience of learners and teachers, sociological contexts, material constraints, the weight of real representations, multiple, complex, intrusive, including diversity and status of their languages and their cultures [13]. According to Guinard, the conceptualizations and constructs of a foreign-language learner about the target culture are fundamentally influenced by his or her worldview, beliefs and cultural presuppositions [14].

Most research related to the teaching of foreign languages often focuses on language skills. Cultural and intercultural knowledge is less exploited, however, both have a big contribution to learners' performance. These skills will give the ability to act in a communication situation. And at a higher level,

they can be a cultural negotiator. To reach this level, the good mastery of language and the intercultural competence are obligatorily acquired.

Intercultural awareness is the result of the interaction of knowledge, awareness, and understanding of relationships (similarities and distinctions) between 'the world of origin' and 'the world of the target community'. Intercultural awareness includes awareness of regional and social diversity in both worlds. It will broaden the learner's insights so that they could understand and place the context in a communication situation.

Developing intercultural competence need requires a good strategy. Navaiteine adapted Bennett's cultural sensitivity model with seven steps, starting from the denial stage and ending with the integration stage. Differences are explored in the denial step: the moment of learners to encounter a new culture, they reflect on their own culture and assume that the foreign culture does not correspond to their culture. At the defense stage, learners begin to recognize other cultures with the "US" perspective in relation to "THEM". Cultural differences are recognized by the learner and are considered a threat of self-awareness. The third step is the minimization of difference, learners are guided to develop cultural self-awareness. Learners are able to see their own culture from the point of view of another culture. They look for similarities because the common value is considered more important than the difference. The step of accepting difference is an appreciation of cultural differences, behavior, and value. It is a refinement of the analysis of cultural contrasts. In this step, learners appreciate the difference without judgment positive or negative. The steps are described in figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Steps of Strategy to Develop Intercultural Competence

This step helps to develop ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. The step of adaptation allows learners to develop communication skills or realization of intercultural communication. And the last step is the integration of the difference. This step allows learners to internalize multicultural points of view [15].

Through focus group discussion, learners are guided to develop intercultural competence using these steps. The realization of this activity brings success. They can communicate their point of view and can accept the new culture. The model is used for immigrant learners to adapt to life in a new country, so the model can't be fully used for foreign language learners in Indonesia. Therefore it is important to reinforce beliefs, cultural values, social norms, local wisdom during discussions that students are not deprived of their own culture. Adaptation of these five stages also refers to the purpose of education, namely: strengthening academic skills with logic and honesty; foster nationalism; fostering culture, tolerance, and respect; foster democratic values; enforce the law [16].

**IV. CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of this study is that learners have the insufficient cultural knowledge to understand French advertising. The possible causes are the wide range of culture and the implicit messages of advertising. The implementation of intercultural skills development strategies with Bennett's model of the learning process allowed learners to better understand their own culture and to avoid prejudices against other cultures. But it is important to guide learners to reinforce their cultural identity.

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