

Exploiting Tagline Slogans as Authentic Materials in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Tagline slogans are aggressively used in the marketing field to promote specific products or services to consumers. However, they are least used as authentic materials in the teaching and learning of English as a Second Language (ESL) class. The too-brief structure embodying tagline slogans makes them difficult to be exploited to be used as materials for teaching and learning processes. Studies on the use of tagline slogans in ESL speaking lessons are still scarce, making it inconclusive to fully comprehend why they are underutilized as opposed to the other authentic materials. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the reasons for such ill preference towards the employment of tagline slogans as authentic materials in speaking lessons from the view of English for occupational purposes (EOP) students. The qualitative data of this study was obtained from seven participants who had utilized tagline slogans in their class presentations. The findings show that tagline slogans are less preferable due to inappropriate words or sentence structures used,

presenters' inefficient explanation resulting in the audience' misunderstanding and suitability issues with context. Even though there lie limitations in using tagline slogans as authentic materials, with the right selection, they could act as a platform to improve learners' shared world knowledge in particular and their productive skills of the target language in the long run. This study has unearthed the case against the use of tagline slogans in speaking lessons from the lenses of EOP learners and at the same time has provided lessons learned on how tagline slogans could positively nurture learners' speaking skills.

Keywords: Tagline slogans, authentic materials, classroom presentation

INTRODUCTION

Tagline slogan is a short, yet powerful phrase usually used by a company to commercialize its products (Adhikari, 2018). The choice of language used in a tagline slogan is pivotal as it is meant to convey specific messages to influence consumers to first identify a product, second, to remember about the product and finally to make the decision to buy that product. From these steps, we can see the importance of language used in tagline slogan as it will have a tremendous effect on consumers' decision to buy a particular product.

In the realm of teaching English as a second language (ESL), the use of tagline slogan could be classified under realia which is an authentic material that can be utilized in language teaching and learning. Smith (1997) defines realia as an object or item from the target culture which is used in the classroom as an aid or example to stimulate speaking or writing skills. And now with the rapid changes of linguistics boundaries, the concept of realia has been extended to ideas, words, phrases, and expressions that are heard and read in real life (Ciornei & Dina, 2015).

Tagline slogan is not only valuable for its well-known value in advertisement genre (Musté et al., 2015) but it also offers authentic language evidence of a broad vocabulary spectrum and sentence structures that could benefit second language learners. This is also supported in a study conducted by Hadi et al. (2021) where the researchers measure significance difference between teaching vocabulary using advertisement and without advertisement. From the finding of their study, it is found that teaching vocabulary through the language used in an advertisement helps to enrich students' vocabulary mastery.

The benefits of using tagline slogans in ESL class do not just cover vocabulary and grammar mastery but they will also help in the teaching of communications in English and students too will indirectly learn about other cultures. According to Goodwin (2017), people who design tagline slogans try their best to write in a way that is close to natural speech. This means when students study the advertising language, we are exposing them more to the natural language rather than the language that they read in essays or even in most fictional works.

However, unlike the other authentic materials, tagline slogans are seen as less preferred to be used in ESL classroom. In the same study conducted by Hadi et al. (2021), it is discovered that

language teachers and content writers underutilize advertisements in developing materials to teach English. This could be partly due to the way they are written which is a bit different from the academic writing style. Consequently, making it difficult and time-consuming to be integrated in teaching English (Albiladi, 2019).

This study is carried out as an attempt to investigate learners' lived experiences of using tagline slogan in English for occupational purposes (EOP) classroom presentations and it is hoped that the findings will contribute to the understanding of how tagline slogans could be exploited as authentic materials. The followings are the research questions designed for this study:

- i) Research Question (RQ) : How do EOP learners' perceive the use of tagline slogans in learning English as a second language?
- ii) Research Question (RQ) : What are the limitations in using tagline slogans in EOP class?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tagline slogan is not a newfangled tool in the advertising world as it is considered as an integral part for brand building. Being able to create an attention grabbing tagline slogan can be a very good investment for a company as it can be the best and least expensive form of advertising (Freeman, 2005). For this reason, we could observe that almost all brands now employ tagline slogans with the intention to uplift the brand's image, increase its recognition and recall, and to differentiate it from other brands in consumers' minds (Kohli et al., 2007).

Even though it is documented that the employment of tagline is widely used in the advertising world, its utilization in English language teaching is still limited (Reece et al., 1994). Many still view it as a tool mainly for publicizing a product or service (Musté et al., 2015) and not for classroom use. Nevertheless, reflecting on the meticulous and time-consuming process to compose impactful taglines in advertising industry (Reece et al., 1994) such as the use of poetical language to make the tagline slogan rhythmic and help people to memorize it easily, the repetition of echo to make the sound of language melodious and inciting language to influence people's minds (Gogoi, 2020), it is creating a possibility for us to exploit tagline slogan as an instructional aid in improving the proficiency of English language learners. Connotation, pronunciation (Bao, Shao, & Rivers, 2008), morphology (Stvan, 2006), lexical, syntax (Miller & Toman, 2015) and semantic (Noble, Bing, & Bogoviyeva, 2013), to name a few, are the other linguistics aspects which tagline slogan could offer if carefully exploited in the teaching and learning English as a second language processes.

Tagline slogan for advertisement purpose is brief yet, laden with metaphorical language and its aim is to create the bonding power in the eyes of the consumers (Musté et al., 2015). Utilizing tagline slogan in teaching is seen as a huge prospect for more effective English language teaching and learning processes. The utilization of authentic materials in English language classrooms has started since 1970s with the spread of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach with the philosophy to make learners learn the target language via meaningful and contextually driven interaction (Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014). Realia enables active teaching-

learning environment (Smith, 1997) and this makes learners feel motivated to learn as they feel like they are learning the 'real' language (Guariento & Morely, 2001). In short, the employment of authentic materials helps to bridge the gap between the language taught and the real language used in the outside world.

While there has been a grand celebration about the use of tagline slogans (Stamatelou, 2015), there is also discontentment about it. Some scholars are against its use, claiming that it increases teachers' workload as thoughtful consideration should be made in selecting the most appropriate authentic materials (Mihwa, 1994; Kilickaya, 2004 & Miller, 2005) before they could be utilized in the classroom. On top of that, there is also a concern about the culturally specific elements which have been part and parcel of tagline slogans. The comprehension process with the presence of such figuratively localized input becomes challenging, particularly for the low proficient learners, thus making the tagline slogans less popular option to be used in teaching and learning (Martinez, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative study in nature as it is an attempt to understand human perspectives especially in the context of using tagline slogans in EOP class. According to Bexter and Jack (2008), qualitative case study is an approach using a variety of data sources to facilitate the exploration of a phenomenon. It enables the exploration to be conducted via a variety of lenses. By understanding the situation from various lenses, it gives room for multiple surfaces to be revealed and understood. In this study, qualitative approach allows us to understand learners' views in regards to the employment of tagline slogans in their EOP class presentations.

For the data collection of this study, seven participants who were semester 4 students of Diploma in Public Administration programme in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Kelantan were selected. The selection was made based on purposive sampling because these students took English for Workplace Communication (ELC270) subject and this is relevant to the context of this study where the focus is primarily given to EOP students. To further elaborate on the assessments of this subject, in one of the assessments, students were required to do an individual presentation task. This assessment requires them to present about any company of their interest and before they start their presentation, they were taught to begin with attention getter. The options given for attention getters are rhetorical questions, anecdotes, statistics or tagline slogans. After a thorough explanation made by the instructor, seven students chose tagline slogan for their attention getter. Hence, they were selected as participants for this study as we want to study their perspectives of using tagline slogans in EOP class presentations.

Meanwhile, the instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview with the questions addressing their perspectives of using tagline slogans. The interview session was conducted right after their presentations to ensure that they could still clearly recall the experience of using tagline slogans in their presentations. From the interview session, it was discovered that all of them had never used tagline slogan as a learning source in EOP class before. Therefore, all

the information given is genuinely based on their first experience of using tagline slogans in their presentations.

The data validation process was carried out soon after all the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were then passed to the participants for member checking process. This is a very important process for the research participants to validate the accuracy of the documentation (Fraenkel et al., 2019) and if there was any correction to be made, the researchers would do the corrections as suggested. Only after the research participants were satisfied with the transcriptions then the process of data analysis began.

For the data analysis procedure, the researchers employed thematic analysis. Familiarisation of the data was done by reading and rereading the transcriptions to find recurring “themes” related to the research questions and substantiate them with relevant “codes” to make the themes stand (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

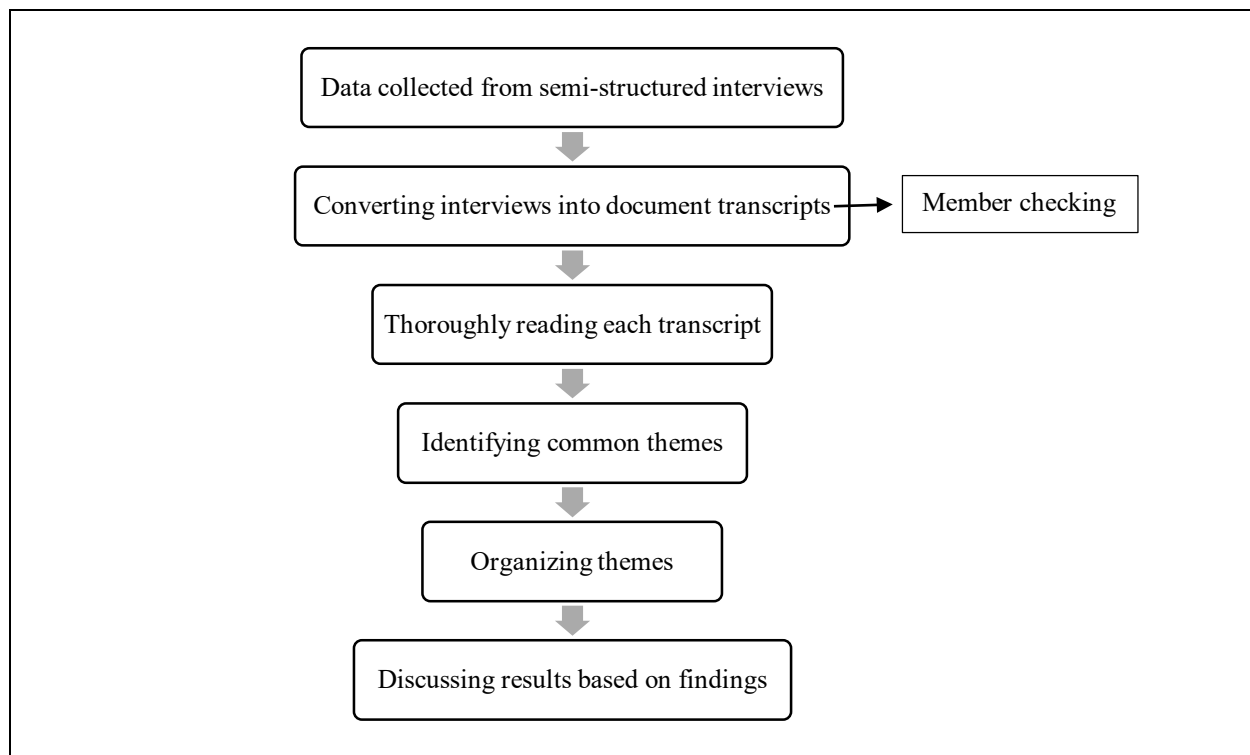


Figure 1. Data analysis framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ i: How do EOP learners' perceive the use of tagline slogans in learning English as a second language?

The first finding revolves around answering the first research question in which in the interview session, the researchers asked for participants' opinions on the contributions of tagline slogans in learning English as a second language. There were two recurring themes related to this research question:

Theme 1: Improve vocabulary mastery and speaking skills.

One research informant claims that using tagline slogan could help to improve ESL acquisition for instance they would do further research when they find unfamiliar words in the tagline slogan:

From tagline, we will research what it means behind the tagline (Atiq, Part 1).

This effort of conducting extended research will eventually lead them to vocabulary enrichment (Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014). The work done in understanding the contextual meanings of the tagline slogans chosen concurrently helps them improve their communicative competence:

If we use tagline..we can explain to the audience if they don't understand it. So, they will get the same input. (Sya, Part 3).

The finding is parallel with the finding made by Ciornei and Dina (2015). They found out that using authentic texts like advertisements, brochures, menus, schedules, recipes and songs had improved the learners' communicative competence particularly related to ESL discourse – the ability to produce and comprehend oral and written texts for successful communication.

Delin (2000) posits that tagline slogan contains advertising discourse that could contribute to language learning. When learners learn the whole advertising text that appears in tagline slogan, it provokes them to pursue relevant social and cultural contexts through language (Goddard, 2006). This is considered as a significant step for every language learner in learning the target language. Additionally, learners too will become autonomous as they take their own initiatives in finding out more information with regard to tagline slogans (Resminingsih, 2009).

Theme 2: Expand general knowledge.

The second theme found in the qualitative data is that the use of tagline slogan helps to expand general knowledge. An informant claims that using tagline slogan does not only improve her formal learning in second language acquisition, but it also helps to improve her general knowledge:

We will find out why Kellog is using the tagline. Um..I think this will not just help in learning but we will get to know about other things..like mine, 'See You at Breakfast', I'll get to know that it is important for us to take breakfast and why it is important (Nab, Part 2).

Informant 2 recalled on the tagline slogan used by Kellogg company, “See You at Breakfast”. Upon understanding what the underlying meaning of the tagline slogan, she reveals that she did not only learn English language, but she was made aware of the importance of having breakfast. The latter is regarded as general knowledge enrichment or also known as shared world knowledge as termed by Bax’ (2011).

In sum, the present study has demonstrated that, apart from giving autonomy towards learning, the use of tagline slogans in classroom presentations could lead ESL learners to improved vocabulary mastery, speaking skills and general knowledge expansion.

RQ ii: What are the limitations in using tagline slogans in EOP class?

The second research question explores the limitations of using tagline slogans in EOP class presentations. There were three recurring themes related to the research question:

Theme 1: Inappropriate words or sentence structures.

Some taglines use inappropriate words so we cannot use that tagline (Sya, Part 3).

I don’t think tagline is for learning because sometimes the company’s tagline doesn’t use grammar perfectly like.. ‘Umm...’ sometimes..right? So, yes not really...we can learn from other things, right? From book maybe..doesn’t mean depends on the tagline because sometimes tagline..like Apple, only two.. ‘Think Different’, so what do you want to learn from ‘Think Different’? (Fiq, Part 4).

The two excerpts above are taken from the interview sessions with the research informants who said that tagline slogan is not meant for ESL learning. Both informants claimed so as they believed that tagline slogans contain inappropriate words or sentence structures and using them will not contribute to learning.

This situation could happen to learners when they unfortunately make a wrong selection of the tagline slogan. The tagline slogan that they have selected could be too abstract or contain too many low-frequency words and according to Moglen (2014), this kind of material does not benefit much for the lessons.

Nonetheless, Resminingsih (2009) offers a contrasting argument for this kind of situation where it is reported that tagline slogan is usually written in a phrase or ungrammatical pattern. Thus, for the readers to understand the tagline, they should interpret its overall context and this requires a very good understanding of the English language especially in pragmatic and English structure (Thornbury, 2002).

Although the key finding here suggests the first limitation of using tagline slogan in class presentation, it is believed that, with clear guidance from instructor, its usage could still benefit ESL learners in the areas of pragmatics and English syntax.

Theme 2: Inefficient explanation leads to misunderstanding.

The next limitation is in terms of providing clear and sufficient explanation about the underlying meaning of the tagline slogan. As many as four informants in this study express their awareness on the need of the presenters to be able to explain the meanings of the chosen tagline slogans in the contexts of their presentation topics. The informants perceive it as a huge obstacle because when the presenters fail to do so, it might make the audience misunderstand and thus significantly affect their presentation performance as a whole:

Okay..for me it depends on that person. If the person is good in explanation about the tagline than it's gonna be very useful for him or her but some students or some presenters..he or she do not have..you know..the ability to talk or speak well or explain well (Sya, Part 3).

So, maybe for some people umm..to start with the tagline maybe they cannot use it properly because they don't know what is the meaning of the tagline (Sab, Part 5).

Yes. When we interpret it..maybe some others will understand the meaning of the tagline different with us (Fara, Part 6).

Yes umm..because if the audience misunderstand the tagline..they umm..maybe they think something negative for the tagline or something (Leen, Part 7).

Kilickaya (2004) highlights the same concern in which using authentic materials requires more explanation in order to make them appropriate to the learners. Presenters play a crucial role in sharing and transferring their understanding to the audience because audience' understanding of the tagline slogan and its relevance to the whole presentation greatly depends on their explanation.

Theme 3: Context suitability.

Thirdly, two research informants echo on the difficulty of searching for tagline slogans which contextually fit well their presentation topics:

Quite difficult to match with the presentation that we want to present (Sab, Part 5).

It's quite difficult to match the tagline (Leen, Part 7).

Having the most suitable tagline slogan which is parallel to the presenter's presentation is crucial. Such congruency is required to hook the presenters' interests in terms of expectation and engagement (McGrath, 2002). Thus, in the context of this study, when participants had selected unsuitable tagline slogans, they would double their effort to find the suitable one with the encouragement and guidance from the instructor. When learners successfully do this, it gives them a sense of achievement and later leads to better consequences in learning (Mariani, 1997).

Based on all the three themes above, the informants have shared their perspectives on the possible constraints experienced by learners in using tagline slogans in EOP class presentations. All in all, the findings suggest that using any authentic materials like advertisements, brochures, menus, schedules, recipes, songs or even tagline slogans still requires a great deal of alteration or

modification. This is in tandem with the operational definition of the language available in authentic materials as stated by Morrow (1977) (as cited in Gilmore 2007) in which it is a real language produced by real speaker or writer for a real audience where the focus is to convey a real message. Martinez (2002) further adds that authentic materials are not originally designed for teaching purposes, so some modifications are definitely expected. Hence, to use tagline slogans for presentation purpose, learners need to find relevant tagline slogans that match well their presentation topics and work out on the most effective ways to deliver them to the audience.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the limitations being highlighted, the study has shown that the integration of tagline slogans in EOP class in general sense could clearly tap the learners' interest (Stamatelou, 2015). This is due to the fact that many tagline slogans are well known by all for example, *I'm lovin it*, *The Power of Dreams*, *Think Different*, *Impossible is Nothing* and etcetera. By bringing these well-known tagline slogans to EOP class, it could attract learners' interest to learn. Tagline slogans have the ability to promote second language acquisition and expand general knowledge. When learners are equipped with better general knowledge, such improved knowledge enhances cognitive awareness and lowers affective filters (Bacon & Finneman, 1990). Mariani (1997) asserts that with lower affective filter, valuable learning opportunities will take place especially in second language acquisition. To conclude, the use of tagline slogan is not to replace the other existing language learning materials that language instructors are currently using but this is just to shed some lights on the often neglected authentic material type that is worth to be infused in any suitable teaching and learning activities.

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