



The V4 Humanities Education for the Climate. Diagnoses – Best Practices – Recommendations [HEC]

dr Maria Waclawek

Interdyscyplinarne Centrum Badań nad Edukacją Humanistyczną, Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach

Smooth talk about water? Advertising and/or environment (case study)

Recipient, subject: elementary school, grade VII–VIII, polish language lesson

Duration: 2 lesson units (90 minutes)

It is worth to conduct the lesson on the 22th of march (alternatively close to that date) – we celebrate Worlds Water day than¹, you can also refer, by the way, to the Earth Day that we celebrate exactly one month later (22th of April).

1. Subject: *Smooth talk about water? Advertising and/or environment (case study)*

The lesson combines the content related to linguistic teaching (mechanism of persuasion and manipulation; rhetorical and psychological tricks in advertising) with building in students the attitude of a critical recipient of (pop)culture texts and a socially engaged attitude (environmental protection, respect for nature and its resources, showing human as being responsible for nature, but also as a being part of the ecosystem). Classes are conducted in the spirit of engaged humanities, the lesson is correlated with natural sciences and ethics.

2. A place in a course cycle

The students have already had a lesson devoted to the ethics of speech, they knew the definition of *persuasion* and *linguistic manipulation*², they've got familiar with the 6 rules of manipulation

¹ See: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%9Awiatowy_Dzie%C5%84_Wody;
<https://www.pgi.gov.pl/aktualnosci/display/12856-dzien-wody-2021-ile-wody-podziemnej-mamy-w-polsce.html>

² A site on language manipulation worth recommending to students: https://polszczyzna.pl/manipulacja-jezykowa/?fbclid=IwAR2B37G1XeA5rcBI-LZLA01CVdbT-OcHTnEk_yXyUXFJuRQXbRoDK9D3P4I
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The V4 Humanities Education for the Climate. Diagnoses – Best Practices – Recommendations [HEC]

by Robert Cialdini³; they have also had a lesson on how to describe a painting and how to express their opinion about it.

3. Objectives

a) In terms of knowledge the student:

- is aware of the fact that pop culture texts are the main stimulus for contemporary man,
- learns about eco-consumption through the contact with the advertisement,
- knows the means of linguistic and non-linguistic persuasion and manipulation, reads them correctly in the advertisement

b) In terms of skills the student knows how to:

- interpret an advertisement in terms of theoretical information and the mechanisms of persuasion and manipulation,
- justify his opinion,
- create coherent and grammatically and stylistically correct statements,
- use the information from the advertisement in the environmental context.

c) In terms of the attitude, the student is:

- active and interested in lesson topics,
- sensitive to environmental issues,
- aware of the value of water and other natural resources in human life and other living creatures.
- a critical recipient of advertising messages.

4. Methods: heuristic talk, discussion, brainstorming, lecture, elements of drama, creative writing.

5. Forms of work: individual, collective, teamwork.

³ See: <https://synchronisci.wordpress.com/2019/12/11/jak-rozpoznać-manipulację-językową/?fbclid=IwAR3AHvWmD9NYZF0vKA7WorhbTousawoboDD4Uy5ICkGLB0PqAxxgSdk92Efw>
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The V4 Humanities Education for the Climate. Diagnoses – Best Practices – Recommendations [HEC]

6. Materials, resources and teaching aids: electronic devices (laptop, PC, interactive board, speakers), worksheet; in case of teamwork the students are allowed to use their devices (phones, tablets) or school devices (laptop, tablet).

7. Subject matter references: commercial *Vanish – Wear your clothes longer*

Source:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yg0nIjEQoM&ab_channel=VanishPolska

8. Learning procedure:

I. Introduction (15 minutes)

1. Discussion with the students (using heuristic talk, brainstorming, discussion etc.) about nature, water and its shrinking resources, climate changes, including drying rivers and desertification of Poland⁴ - duration: 10 minutes.

Sample stimulating questions:

a) *How do you perceive nature? What do you associate it with? What kind of feelings does it inspire in you? How often do you have conscious contact with nature and how often would you like to have it?*

b) *What do you know about climate changes? How does climate change influence the weather? Can you remember any situation from your life or from mass media, which proves climate changes that happen all over the world and in Poland?*

c) *What are the four elements? What is essential for life? What do you associate water with? What kind of feelings does it inspire in you? Do you know what are the resources of drinking water in Poland? What are the ways of saving water?*

⁴ See: <http://klimada.mos.gov.pl/zmiany-klimatu-w-polsce/konsekwencje-zmian-klimatu/>

The nature is a fundamental source of inspiration. The art reflects the current condition of a human being and the world around him. The 2020 Earth Day campaign organized by the National Museum in Warsaw is worth drawing students' attention to. The aim of the event was to show how climate change could affect landscapes presented in famous Polish landscapes - on the example of graphic changes in Julian Fałat's painting "Landscape from Bystry" drying rivers and desertification were portrayed.

See: <https://www.whitemad.pl/muzeum-narodowe-uczilo-dzien-ziemi/> (date of the access: 12.09.2021).

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The V4 Humanities Education for the Climate. Diagnoses – Best Practices – Recommendations [HEC]

During the conversation you can create a mind map for each or selected part of the conversation, you can also draw the associations on the poster (posters - for example in groups of few people) in a mind map form. It can also be created virtually (appropriate application – for example Mind Map (<https://www.mindmup.com/>)⁵).

2. The teacher refers to the phrase: “Smooth talk (about water?)” (asks for explanation) and he moves smoothly to the subject of the lesson: the phenomenon of advertising and ecology – duration: 5 minutes.

Suggested questions: *What do you associate ecology with? What do you associate the advertisement with? Do the advertisement and environment have something in common. What do you think?*

The purpose of advertising messages is to encourage people to buy a product or to use a given service. The simplest definition of advertising can be included in the expression “information (about product/service) and persuasion (see attachment – students worksheet)⁶, whereby persuasive elements usually prevail over providing accurate knowledge about the offer – in that sense advertisement is understood as “smooth talk”.

The teacher introduces the topic of the lesson: Smooth talk about water. Advertising and/or environment (case study)

II. Lesson proper – 65 minutes

1. A short talk before watching a commercial – 10 minutes

A talk (lecture elements, heuristic talk) concerning the connection between advertising messages and environmental actions.

⁵ If the teacher is eager to devote more time for this part of the lesson, it is a good idea to focus on word formation in form of short and quick repetition (create a word bank derived from the noun *water*, make a word analysis of the chosen derivative), as well as on the proverbs with the “water” in their content (analysis of the content of polish language dictionaries including dictionaries of proverbs, writing exercises using proverbs).

⁶ This definition was suggested by Bogusław Kwarciak (B. Kwarciak, *What one should know about advertising, [Co trzeba wiedzieć o reklamie]*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Profesjonalnej Szkoły Biznesu, 1997, p.. 12).



The V4 Humanities Education for the Climate. Diagnoses – Best Practices – Recommendations [HEC]

Due to increasing environmental awareness of the society and its growing sensitivity to environmental issues (balanced development provides balanced consumption and its ecologization) advertising campaigns more and more often use various ecological tricks to increase their efficiency – companies present themselves and their products as eco friendly, they use different solutions to emphasize their care about the environment and thus public good. The main intention of this kind of actions is to build a positive attitude towards the offer and thus encourage people to purchase the goods⁷.

Sample questions:

- *Do you know/Have you ever seen any commercials that used environmental themes?*
- *Which colors are recognized as eco and are often used in commercials. What do you think?*
- *What signs, motives, pictures and sounds do you associate or which are generally associated with nature?*
- *Does the information about the composition of the product (natural ingredients), the way they are produced (smaller water consumption or less energy or lower emission), rules observance and the possession of ecological certificates, encourage the customer to buy the product?*
- *Why does the name of the product associated with the nature (BIO, ECO, Nature) make the product more attractive.*
- *It is very common that specialists, scientist or celebrities perform in commercials. Why might it work persuasively?*

2. Analysis of the commercial – duration: 55 minutes

a) Completing task no. 1 from the worksheet – 10 minutes.

⁷The usage of pro-ecological strategies in commercial is profoundly described by Robert Nowacki (R. Nowacki, *Ecological themes in advertising and the idea of sustainable consumption*, [Ekologiczne motywy w reklamie a idea zrównoważonej konsumpcji] in: “Consumption and development” [„Konsumpcja i Rozwój”, 2014;4(9), pp. 24–39; online: <https://vdocuments.mx/reader/full/ekologiczne-motywy-w-reklamie-a-idea-zrownowazonej-konsumpcji>; date of the acces: 12.09.2021).



The V4 Humanities Education for the Climate. Diagnoses – Best Practices – Recommendations [HEC]

The teacher informs the students, that they are going to watch a tv commercial of the stain remover, and he asks the students if they know a name of any of them (he gives them a hint, that it's about the "pink power"). Before playing the commercial the teacher hands out the worksheet (see attachment). He asks the students to read the instruction no.1 – when he made sure that the students understand the instruction (while watching the film, the students are asked to think about: what colors dominate in a visual layer of the commercial⁸, who performs the role of an authority, what is the slogan and when did it appear, why this kind of idea for commercial was created, did any written information appear on the screen), the teacher plays the *Vanish* commercial (45 seconds)⁹:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yg0nIjEQkoM&ab_channel=VanishPolska

The teacher asks what impressions did the students have of the commercial, asks them to justify their opinions, and to answer questions according to the video.

b) Role – played reading of the text transcription (see attachment) – 3 minutes.

The teacher appoints 3 people (preferably from among the volunteers) to read the role-played text (one person reads the text which is taken into the square brackets, the other the role of a girl and the last one - dad's part).

c) Completing exercise no. 2 from the worksheet (see attachment) – 27 minutes.

The teacher divides the class into six groups of few people. He appoints them some tasks, making sure first, that they know what to do. He gives the student some time to prepare – to process the task in their groups. The teacher asks to present the answers in front of the whole class. The task focuses on the visual and sound layer of the commercial¹⁰. The division into

⁸ In addition to previously indicated colors considered 'eco' (green, blue, brown and white) *Vanish* commercial features many elements of stage design, costumes etc. in various shades of pink (fuchsia is the product's recognizable color) - "**Trust Pink, Forget Stains**".

⁹ The choice of this particular spot was determined by the fact that the main character of the video is a girl and it is her "advertising" father who explains that by taking care of the clothes we already have, we care about the environment (clothes production is connected with water consumption, it is worth to respect the clothes we already have instead of buying new ones). The adopted convention is therefore close to the young viewer.

¹⁰ The visual layer includes links to websites to which the message refers (the materials contained therein, due to their multimedia character and the usage of ordinary person realities, are very suggestive, e.g. the water "calculator").



The V4 Humanities Education for the Climate. Diagnoses – Best Practices – Recommendations [HEC]

groups makes all the students active. The exercise develops the ability to focus on selected elements of the message, which in the end, thanks to joint presentation – create the global view.

d) Completing exercise no. 3 from the worksheet (see attachment) – 15 minutes.

The main goal of the task is the analysis of the linguistic layer of the commercial¹¹. The students learn (“discover”) linguistic mechanism of the persuasion that were used in the analysed commercial. First of all, the teacher makes sure that the students understand the instruction – he asks them to think about the answers to the particular points and than he encourages the students to talk, to build the joint answer.

The usage of future tense with the **perfective verbs** (*Vanish will have removed stains efficiently, will have protected, will have fought unpleasant smells*) emphasizes the desired effects of the product and its efficiency (for sure the effects will be the same as those that were presented in the commercial). The additional usage of the adverb ‘efficiently’ makes the message stronger, guarantees the efficiency of the product.

The usage of imperative (*take the Vanish challenge, wear clothes, leave the water*) it’s an encouragement to be active. The use of imperatives 2 person singular has a strong persuasive function that is used, among others, to shorten the distance between the sender and the recipient (the point is to imitate the natural form of the dialogue in unofficial contact – this is the way we talk with a person we know well, with the members of our family – and this is the convention that Vanish wants to fit in; besides we as the recipients appreciate the messages addressed directly to us, not to anonymous mass of the customers – its about to encourage a particular individual to take an action, you/ me, because the action including the one for Earth good depends on us).

¹¹ Contemporary commercial from the linguist point of view (incl. lexical and grammar characteristic ect.) has been described by a.o. Jerzy Bralczyk (J. Bralczyk, *Language for sale* [Język na sprzedaż], Warszawa – Bydgoszcz 2000) and Iwona Loewe (I. Loewe, *Style of a commercial* [Styl reklamy komercyjnej] in: *Styles of contemporary polish language. A guide to Polish stylistic* [Style współczesnej polszczyzny. Przewodnik po stylistyce polskiej] red. E. Malinowska, J. Nocoń, U. Żydek-Bednarczuk, Kraków 2013, pp. 381–405).

The V4 Humanities Education for the Climate. Diagnoses – Best Practices – Recommendations [HEC]

III. Generalization – 10 minutes

The conclusion that an uncritical recipient of the analyzed advertising message may reach is that the advertised product turns out to be a salvation for drying lakes and rivers, water shortage, indisputably contributes to environmental protection, including Polish waters, so thanks to the purchase the customer may feel better and change the world. It is crucial to make the young person aware that the main goal of the commercial is to encourage people to buy a product, thus consumption – it is important to be ecoconsumption, which is rational, responsible and balanced. It is also important to make the students sensitive to the fact that the usage of ecological slogans in the commercials is a common practice and it doesn't have to have a lot of common with the real action for the good of environment¹². It is also important to be aware of the mechanisms that rules in advertising, to be able to recognize them and defend against them.

The teacher informs the students about two exercises for the homework (ex. 4, a-b from the work sheet) and the time they are expected to give the homework back. The first task is to write the lesson summary on their own (including the answers for auxiliary questions from the work sheet); the second one – is to create a commercial on the one selected topic in cooperation with few members of the class.

Additional notice:

The suggested lesson focuses on commercial. It is worth to make the students aware that except those kind of messages they can also encounter social advertising. Often, some of them involves environment and climatic changes issues. The lesson concerning commercials may become the starting point for reflection on advertising messages that make people aware of various social problems and phenomena – for example concerning water protection against its pollution¹³.

¹² Subject experts describe the phenomenon of *greenwashing* (ecological brain wash) in advertising messages; it's about "creating a green image unjustifiably, misleading consumers and claiming that a product or service is eco when it is not" (<https://ulicaekologiczna.pl/ekologiczne-pranie-mozgu-czyli-greenwashing-w-reklamach-cz-1/>; date of the access: 12.09.2021).

¹³ See: <https://tvrepublika.pl/Wody-to-nie-smietnik-Wody-Polskie-rozpozczely-kampanie,117722.html> (access: 12.09.2021).