

Lesson Plan 2 (Reading)
Richard McDorman

Title: Comparing Commercial Advertisements
Language skills emphasized: Reading comprehension, speaking and writing

General Information

Name/type of class: General Purpose Immersion Program (GPIP), a general (non-academic) intensive English program for adult learners in Miami, Florida. This program emphasizes the development of speaking and listening skills and places a secondary emphasis on reading and writing.

Class size: 6-10 students

Proficiency level: Advanced (level 4 in a 5 level program; each level requires one twelve-week academic quarter to complete). The proficiency level of learners in this course typically ranges from 3 to 3+ on the ILR language proficiency scale (this is the official proficiency scale used by the school).

Length of lesson: 3 hours

Overall instructional goals of the lesson:

After completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- a) Read commercial advertisements to locate and understand supporting details.
- b) Compare and contrast the details of two commercial advertisements on a similar topic.
- c) Use details from commercial advertisements to make and explain purchase decisions.

Learning Objectives:

- a) To increase recognition vocabulary by reading commercial advertisements.
- b) To recognize and identify the following details in commercial advertisements: the name of the company/brand, descriptions of the products advertised, main product features and benefits, and product prices.
- c) To identify and discuss similarities and differences among products described in commercial advertisements.
- d) To use the details of written commercial advertisements to make and justify purchase decisions orally and in writing.
- e) To write a short e-mail recommending a product to a friend based on the details of two commercial advertisements.

Justification of Lesson:

Commercial advertisements are one of the textual genres most frequently encountered by English language learners living in the United States. However, because such texts are often written in a style dissimilar to the academic texts to which ELLs are typically exposed in educational settings and contain product-specific vocabulary with which learners may not be familiar, such documents can be difficult for learners to comprehend, despite their frequency and importance. During this lesson, which will adopt an interactive model of intensive reading (requiring learners to rely on both identification and interpretation in order to understand and discuss written texts), learners will be exposed to two authentic texts advertising similar products and will then make and explain purchase decisions based on their understanding of those texts.

This lesson will incorporate the fundamental pedagogical principles of second language reading instruction by using authentic texts to which students can relate (two recent online advertisements for tax preparation software marketed by well-known companies), focusing on a topic that is accessible and relevant to students (having to file an annual tax return and deciding how to do so), utilizing activities that allow students to be motivated by their feelings about the topic (explaining which product they would choose and why, and then writing an e-mail to a recommending one of those products), experiencing the process of discovering meaning by interacting with texts (by reading actively to find important details and then discussing product similarities and differences) and providing students with opportunities to contribute to and make connections with the texts used in the lesson (by expressing their personal opinions about the topics addressed in the reading passages).

Materials needed:

- a) Whiteboard and dry erase marker
- b) Handouts (Sample U.S. tax return and other tax forms, [Reading Text 1](#), [Readings Text 2](#), [Evaluation Activity 1](#), and [Evaluation Activity 2](#))

Lesson Plan

ORIENTATION (10 minutes)

The instructor will start the class by distributing a copy of a U.S. tax return to students and asking them if they recognize the document. After the students have had a chance to read the document and respond to the question, the instructor will initiate a short discussion (warm-up activity) on the general topic of the two texts they will read during today's lesson: products and services for preparing and filing personal tax returns in the United States. The instructor will ask students the following questions:

- 1) Have you ever filed a *tax return* in the United States? (*Make sure students understand that this term refers to a form with personal tax information and that the form may be in either paper or electronic format.*) Have you ever filed a similar document in your home country? If you have done both, what are some of the main similarities and differences?

- 2) Have you ever seen or read any advertisements for tax preparation services? If so, which ones? (Typical examples include *H&R Block*, *Jackson-Hewitt*, *TurboTax* and *Liberty Tax Service*.)
- 3) Which parts of the advertisements did you understand? Were any parts harder to understand than others? If so, which parts were more difficult? Why do you think they were difficult to understand? (*Possible answers are that students are not completely familiar with the procedures relating to filing tax returns in the United States and/or that they do not know the specialized vocabulary used in such advertisements*).
- 4) Have you ever used *tax preparation software* to complete and file a tax return in the United States or in your home country? In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of using tax preparation software compared to completing and filing tax returns *manually*? (*Make sure students understand this term.*)

PRESENTATION (35 minutes)

Presentation Activity 1: Strategies for finding details in commercial advertisements (20 minutes)

The instructor will introduce the topic of finding details in written commercial advertisements by asking students to think of some of the different media used for commercial advertisements in the Internet age, along with examples of each type of advertisement (*the two main categories of written advertisements in the modern world are print-based/hard-copy advertisements and internet/digital advertisements*). Examples of each include:

Typical examples of internet/digital advertisements:

- ✚ Advertisements on search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo! (so-called “pay-per-click” ads)
- ✚ Banner advertisements on websites
- ✚ Pop-up windows from websites advertising products and services
- ✚ Company websites
- ✚ Advertisements on smart phones and other personal digital devices

Typical examples of print (“paper-based” or “hard copy”) advertisements:

- ✚ Newspaper advertisements and inserts
- ✚ Magazine advertisements
- ✚ Billboards and signs in public spaces
- ✚ Direct mailers (print advertisements sent through the mail)

The instructor will then have students work in groups of three to consider the following questions and brainstorm strategies for finding important details in written commercial advertisements. One member of the three-person group will be selected by the students to report their findings to the class after the brainstorming session has ended.

- In your opinion, which type of written advertisement(s) is/are most effective and why?

- In written commercial advertisements, which do you think is more important and why: the *main ideas* or *specific details*?
- How do you find important details in advertisements? (*Some examples might include looking for highlighted or bold text; focusing on text with special colors, shapes or symbols; headings; zeroing in on a certain part of the advertisement, such as the beginning or end.*)
- In your opinion, what are the most important details in a commercial advertisement? (*Some examples are product specifications and features, price, availability, location of the store, etc.*)
- What can you do if you find a detail in an English language advertisement that you don't understand? (*Examples might include looking up a problematic term in the dictionary, trying to use context clues to guess the meaning of difficult words, or using an Internet search engine to find more information about the detail.*)

Presentation Activity 2: Pre-reading vocabulary activity (15 minutes)

*Although this lesson is designed for advanced English language learners, the specialized nature of the topic and the fact that the texts are marketing documents entail inclusion of vocabulary that may be completely new to some students. The instructor will therefore pre-teach the following vocabulary items. More obscure terms and collocations that only appear once in the texts (e.g., *contrary to law, stack up to*) will be dealt with summarily (as recommend by Nation) or will be the focus of an evaluation activity for using context clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar terms.*

1. **step-by-step**
2. **self-employed**
3. **IRS**
4. **mess something up**
5. **import**
6. **settle for less**
7. **tax deductions**
8. **forms 1040, 1040EZ, 1099, W-2, Schedule C**
9. **(tax) audit**

Suggested presentation strategies/dialogues for each term:

1. When you go through a process carefully without omitting any of the stages, we say that you go through the process ... ***step-by-step***. *To check comprehension, ask students if they know any opposites (examples could include "all at once," "haphazardly," or "not very carefully," among others).*
2. If you run your own business and don't work for anyone else, you're considered to be ... ***self-employed***. *Ask if any students are currently or have ever been self-employed. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of being self-employed versus working for someone else?*

3. Does anyone know the acronym (*define if necessary*) for the United States government agency responsible for collecting taxes? ... The full name is the Internal Revenue Service, but it's more commonly known by its initials. So what would that be? (The **IRS**) *Let students know how commonly-known and used this term is in the United States.*
4. An informal way of saying that you ruin something or make a lot of mistakes is that you **mess it up**. What would be some of the consequences of **messing up** your tax return? *Make sure students know that there are no other phrasal verbs with mess (i.e., there is no *mess down, *mess in, *mess out, *mess under, *mess over, etc.)*
5. When you're using a computer program and you need to bring in data from another source (like the Internet or another computer program), we say that you do what with that data? (You **import** it). *Students are likely to be familiar with the more common (literal) use of this term, so have them connect the literal and figurative uses of this term by asking: What are some other things that can be **imported**? (Typical examples include wine, cheese, computers, cars, ideas, etc.)*
6. If you're only willing to accept the best, we say that you're not willing to ... **settle for less**. *Make sure students understand that this is a fixed collocation and that the opposite of "settle for less" is not "settle for more."*
7. Do you know of any common **tax deductions** that are allowed in the U.S. tax system? (*If students cannot answer, provide some examples, such as mortgage and student loan interest, personal deduction, deductions for dependents, etc.*) Does the system of taxation in your home country allow for any **tax deductions**? If so, what are some examples?
8. *First, the instructor will distribute examples of each form mentioned below. The instructor will then explain to students that the IRS has hundreds of different forms that individuals may have to file along with their tax returns, depending on their personal tax situation. The most common are forms **1040** (the main tax form that everyone who owes taxes must complete), **1040EZ** (a short version of form **1040** for those with simple tax situations), **1099** (a form issued by a company to report types of income other than wages, such as dividends, interest and freelance work), **W-2** (the end-of-year wage and tax statement) and **Schedule C** (the form used to report self-employment income).*
9. When the IRS decides to review or examine the information provided in someone's tax return, it conducts a ... **tax audit**. *Make sure that students know that **audit** can be used as both a noun and a verb by asking students: if they or anyone they know have ever been **audited** by a tax authority, either by the IRS in the United States or by the tax authority in their home country. Ask students what other types of audits they are familiar with (e.g., a business audit, auditing a college course, etc.)*

ENGAGEMENT (60 minutes)

Once the presentation activities have been covered, the instructor will initiate the engagement portion of the lesson with the following pre-reading activity.

Engagement Activity 1: Pre-reading information gap activity (15 minutes)

The purpose of this pre-reading information gap activity is to help students relate to the reading texts and increase their level of motivation to engage the texts, two of the fundamental pedagogical principles in second language reading instruction. Students will also learn about the home culture and society of their partner. For this activity, students from different countries will be paired up to discuss the following questions. The instructor will circulate through the classroom to provide assistance when necessary and to supervise the activity.

- How does the tax system work in your home country? Is personal income taxed? If so, at what rate (i.e., percentage of income)? Does your home country impose a value added tax (VAT)? If so, how is this value added tax similar to or different from sales tax in the United States?
- Are you required to submit an income tax return or similar document in your home country? If so, what does the form look like? How similar is it to the U.S. income tax return the instructor distributed at the beginning of the class?
- Can you submit tax forms electronically in your home country or does the taxing authority only accept paper forms? If tax forms can be submitted electronically in your home country, is special tax preparation software required?
- How much do you think you are influenced by commercial advertisements in general? What about advertisements for tax services or software?
- How do written advertisements in your home country/culture and native language differ from English-language advertisements in the United States? In what ways are they similar?

Engagement Activity 2: Intensive reading with information transfer activity (30 minutes)

The instructor will now hand out the two reading passages and give students ten to fifteen minutes read them. Students should read each passage first to understand the main ideas and then again to locate supporting details. During the second read, students will complete a during-reading information transfer activity in which they will have ten to fifteen minutes to complete the chart below. After students have completed the chart, they will work in pairs to compare their answers and correct any mistakes, asking the instructor for help when necessary.

	Advertisement # 1	Advertisement # 2
What is the name of the company that made this advertisement?		
What is the company's slogan or motto? (Note: A <i>slogan</i> or <i>motto</i> is a short phrase expressing the objective, nature or positive characteristics of an organization).		
What type of product and/or service is being advertised?		

What are three claims or promised made in the advertisement?		
How many different versions/editions of the product are available?		
Which product version/edition would be appropriate for someone who needs to import forms W-2 and 1099?		
Which product version/edition is best for someone who made a lot of donations during the tax year?		
Which product version is most appropriate for someone who made money during the year from renting property?		

Engagement Activity 3: Comparing and contrasting the details of commercial advertisements (15 minutes)

Next, the students will be asked to read the two advertisements again, this time side-by-side to compare their details. The students will be asked to focus on the similarities and differences between the two advertisements and among the products advertised. Students will then answer the following questions in a group discussion. *Note: Students will be allowed to “opt out” of any or all of the following questions as they may feel uncomfortable answering due to the personal nature of some of the information elicited.*

- Which advertisement did you find more persuasive? Why?
- If you needed to purchase tax preparation software and had to select from among the two companies, which would you choose? What factor(s) led you to choose the company you selected?
- Which specific product version would you select based on your personal tax situation? Why?
- In your opinion, which product and edition is the best value? What specific features and benefits of that product and edition led you to this opinion?

EVALUATION (60 minutes)

Evaluation Activity 1: [Multiple-choice vocabulary exercise](#) (using context clues to guess the meaning of difficult words and phrases) (15 minutes)

The first evaluation activity for this lesson is a *multiple-choice exercise* in which students will attempt to guess the meaning of (potentially) difficult words and phrases from the reading texts using context clues. This exercise will address possibly unfamiliar terms that were not included

in the presentation stage of the lesson so that students can proceed to more fully discuss the reading texts in evaluation activity 3. (*Justification for this exercise: using context clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar terms is a skill that students should develop in order to support their reading comprehension as well as listening comprehension at all levels. Moreover, this activity will help resolve most of the new vocabulary the students encounter in the reading passages.*)

Students will have ten minutes to complete the activity individually. Afterwards, the instructor will lead a short group discussion in which students compare and discuss their answers. The instructor will evaluate each student's performance on the activity by informing them of correct and incorrect answers while helping to guide them to correct answers for any mistakes.

Evaluation Activity 2: [Sentence completion exercise](#) (focus on supporting details) (15 minutes)

For the second evaluation activity, students will complete a *sentence completion exercise* by filling in blanks to demonstrate that they understand the reading texts and can recognize and identify supporting details. The completion and review procedures for this activity are the same as for *Evaluation Activity 1*.

Evaluation Activity 3: Engaging in a debate to explain, justify and defend purchase decisions based on written commercial advertisements (30 minutes)

After students have completed the first two evaluation activities to ensure comprehension of the texts and resolve any problematic vocabulary, this more authentic and interactive evaluation activity will begin.

The instructor will divide the group into two equal (or if there is an odd number of students, nearly equal) teams: *Team TurboTax* and *Team H&R Block*. The teams will be given ten minutes to prepare their debate strategy and the students' individual speeches. Students will have access to both reading texts during the entire activity.

During the debate, each team member will speak for one minute to explain why her team's products and services are superior to those of the opposing team and why members of the other team should purchase one of the products advertised by the company whose products she is advocating. Teams will alternate speaking until each student has completed his or her turn, at which point the debate will end. Students will be encouraged to be as specific as possible and to reference relevant supporting details from the reading texts. (*Examples: "Unlike H&R Block, TurboTax has customer testimonials to support their products." "H&R Block's Premium Edition is better than TurboTax's Premier Edition because H&R Block's plan includes free live advice. Why doesn't TurboTax offer free live advice?"*)

At the end of the debate, the instructor will qualitatively evaluate each student's performance. The evaluation criteria will be as follows (students will be informed of the criteria before starting the debate):

- ✓ Demonstrated comprehension of the reading texts
- ✓ Effective use of new vocabulary

- ✓ Accurate and frequent reference to supporting details from the reading texts
- ✓ Comprehensibility
- ✓ Completion of the task (i.e., speaking for the entire minute)

The goal of this evaluation scheme is to provide students with useful feedback, improve their speaking confidence, and give them suggestions for further improvement, but not to issue a quantitative score or formally grade their performance (this practice is in line with the institution's policies).

EXPANSION (15 minutes)

The instructor will conclude the class by asking students to reflect on what they have learned during the lesson by considering and answering the following questions:

- ❖ What strategies have they learned for reading and comparing commercial advertisements in English?
- ❖ How confident do they feel recognizing and identifying supporting details in commercial advertisements? If they do not feel confident, what steps can they take to improve their level of confidence?
- ❖ What new vocabulary (words and phrases) have they learned from today's lesson? Do they believe that this vocabulary will be useful for their production and comprehension of English? Why or why not? (*Note: The students' answers to these questions can help the instructor assess the quality and utility of this lesson and be used to guide improvements and revisions.*)
- ❖ What tools have they gained for making and explaining purchase decisions based on their comprehension of written advertisements in English?
- ❖ What else can they do to apply what they have learned in class today to their real-life need to read and understand commercial advertisements in English?

As a take home activity, the instructor will ask students to review the two commercial advertisements from today's class and write a short (two paragraph) e-mail to a friend recommending one of the products advertised. Students will be instructed to include three specific reasons and at least two supporting details from one of the advertisements in their recommendation. During the next class session, students will work in pairs to exchange their e-mails and draft a reply. (*Justification for this activity: using what they have learned from today's class to complete an authentic real-world task should improve students' motivation to read and increase their level of engagement with the texts.*)

Reading Text 1: TurboTax Advertisement

TurboTax

“Choose Easy”

Source: <http://turbotax.intuit.com/>

Personal Tax Products and Services

TurboTax is the #1-rated, best-selling tax software. It offers step-by-step guidance, like a GPS, to make it easy to get your maximum refund — guaranteed. We also guarantee that TurboTax calculations are 100% accurate, or we’ll pay you any IRS penalties plus interest. Choose the TurboTax product that best fits your needs.

TurboTax or the “Tax Store?”

Why choose TurboTax over a “tax store?” It’s simple: with TurboTax, it’s easy, it’s less expensive, we provide all the guidance you need, and your maximum tax refund is guaranteed. Take a look at how TurboTax stacks up to the tax store.

Answers to Your Tax Questions

Got a question? No problem. TurboTax provides answers to commonly asked tax questions on every screen. Plus, with Live Community, live answers from tax experts and fellow TurboTax customers are just a click away.

See what our customers are saying

“This was the first time I’ve filed my taxes on my own. I was scared that I would mess everything up, but that’s pretty much impossible with TurboTax. Thanks for relieving my stress!”

FirstTimer44 – Pittsburgh, PA

“TurboTax is the best tax software out there as far as I’m concerned. It is easy to use and with the quick guide even a beginner can use it.”

Robnrob4 – Sacramento, CA

Federal Free Edition	Basic \$34.95	Deluxe \$49.95	Premier \$74.95
<i>Simple Tax Returns</i>	<i>Step-by-Step Guidance</i>	<i>Maximize Your Tax Deductions</i>	<i>Investments & Rental Property</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps you file 1040EZ and simple federal tax returns • Asks questions in plain English and puts your answers on the right forms • Searches for every tax credit you deserve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfers last year's tax info to help ensure accuracy and save you time • Imports W-2 and 1099 forms from over 400,000 employers and financial institutions • Free technical support by phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything in Basic, plus: • Quickly searches for more than 350 deductions • Gives you accurate values for your donations • Alerts you to audit risks and offers tips to reduce your chance of an audit 	<p>Everything in Deluxe, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculates gains and helps you deduct investment losses • Finds tax-saving rental property deductions • Guides you through reporting sales from employee stock purchase plans (ESPP)

Reading Text 2: H&R Block Advertisement

H&R Block Tax Services

Source: www.hrblock.com

Never Settle for Less

H&R Block At Home. The only tax software made by the tax experts.

Easy To Use

H&R Block At Home is created for people who want hassle-free tax filing. Step-by-step guidance and easy to understand resources make it the best way to file your taxes from home. Compare tax preparation software online.

Accurate Calculations Guarantee

We guarantee accurate calculations or we'll reimburse resulting IRS penalties and interest charges (limits apply).

Worry-free Audit Support

It's unlikely you'll receive an IRS tax audit. But if you do, free audit support and audit representation is part of our guarantee. Our audit support helps you understand why you're being audited and what kind of response to prepare. If you need representation, we can communicate on your behalf through an audit proceeding.

Maximum Refund Guarantee

We promise you the biggest tax refund you're entitled to or your tax preparation is free. If you find another online tax preparation method that results in a larger refund (or smaller liability) than that calculated by the *H&R Block At Home* online tax program, we will refund the fees you paid us to use our online tax program to prepare that return. To qualify, the larger refund or smaller tax liability must not be due to differences in data supplied by you or positions taken on your return that are contrary to law.

FREE EDITION	BASIC \$34.95	DELUXE \$49.95	PREMIUM \$74.95
<i>File For FREE</i>	<i>Simple Tax Situations</i>	<i>Homeowners/Investors</i>	<i>Self-employed</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ FREE to prepare, FREE to print, FREE to e-file ✓ FREE expert advice from our community of tax specialists ✓ FREE audit support and representation from an enrolled agent – Only from H&R Block ✓ 100% Accuracy Guarantee and Maximum Refund Guarantee ✓ 1 federal e-file included 	<p>Everything in Free, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Import last year's return ✓ Step-by-step guidance to maximize your refund ✓ Accuracy Review double checks for errors ✓ 1 federal e-file included 	<p>Everything in Basic, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Import your W-2, 1099 and last year's return ✓ Searches hundreds of deductions ✓ Personalized tax guidance ✓ Mortgage interest and charitable tax deduction maximizers ✓ Sale of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds ✓ 1 federal e-file included 	<p>Everything in Deluxe, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ FREE live tax advice ✓ Schedule C guidance ✓ Tax laws and planning resources ✓ Advanced tax calculators ✓ Rental income assistance ✓ 1 federal e-file included

Evaluation Activity 1: Multiple-choice vocabulary exercise

Directions: Select the answer that is closest in meaning to the underlined word or phrase.

[Note: Correct answers appearing in bold are for teacher's edition only.]

Example:

We also guarantee that TurboTax calculations are 100% accurate.

- (a) explain (b) promise (c) hope (d) trust

The correct answer is (b) **promise** because *promise* and *guarantee* are similar in meaning.

1. This was the first time I've filed my taxes on my own.
 (a) easily (b) for free (c) **without help** (d) before the deadline
2. TurboTax is the best tax software out there as far as I'm concerned.
 (a) **available** (b) easy to use (c) without a doubt (d) sold in stores
3. I was scared that I would mess everything up, but that's pretty much impossible with TurboTax.
 (a) very (b) **almost** (c) frequently (d) never
4. *H&R Block At Home* is created for people who want hassle-free tax filing.
 (a) expense (b) time (c) paper (d) **problem**
5. If you need representation, we can communicate on your behalf through an audit proceeding.
 (a) with you (b) **for you** (c) before you (d) next to you
6. To qualify, the larger refund or smaller tax liability must not be due to differences in data supplied by you or positions taken on your return that are contrary to law.
 (a) **debt** (b) fee (c) receipt (d) difficulty
7. To qualify, the larger refund or smaller tax liability must not be due to differences in data supplied by you or positions taken on your return that are contrary to law.
 (a) unexplained by (b) obvious from (c) **against** (d) in accordance with
8. Mortgage interest and charitable tax deduction maximizers.
 (a) helpers (b) qualifiers (c) **increasers** (d) payers
9. Alerts you to audit risks and offers tips to reduce your chance of an audit.
 (a) eliminates (b) exempts (c) protects (d) **informs**

Evaluation Activity 2: Sentence completion exercise

Directions: Fill in the blank so that the sentence accurately reflects the information from the reading passages. There may be more than one correct answer to each question.

[Note: Possible correct answers underlined in bold are for teacher's edition only.]

Example:

TurboTax guarantees that its calculations are _____ accurate.

One possible answer is **completely**, because according to the advertisement, TurboTax calculations are 100% accurate. Other possible answers are **100%** and **entirely**.

1. TurboTax provides answers to **commonly-asked** tax questions.
2. FirstTimer 44 from Pittsburgh thanked TurboTax for **relieving** his stress.
3. According to Robnrob4 from Sacramento, TurboTax is so easy that even a/an **beginner** can use it.
4. The TurboTax Basic Edition can import W-2 and 1099 forms from hundreds of thousands of **employers**.
5. One of the features of the TurboTax Premier Edition is that it can find rental property deductions that will **reduce the user's taxes**.
6. H&R Block claims that its tax software is the only one made by **the tax experts**.
7. H&R Block guarantees that if its product fails to give you the biggest tax refund you are entitled to, you won't have to **pay for it**.
8. The H&R Block Free Edition provides free audit support from a/an **participating** agent.
9. The H&R Block Deluxe Edition looks for **hundreds** of tax deductions.
10. According to the advertisement, the H&R Block Premium Edition is perfect for people who are **self-employed**.