



# Radboud Universiteit

Resit Bachelor Thesis

The effect of translatability on the perceived difficulty and the attitude  
towards slogans

Renée Christophe – s1007890

Research group: 4

International Business Communication

Faculty of Arts, Radboud University

dr. J. Baranova

[26/10/2020]

## Abstract

This study measures the influence of translatability on the perceived difficulty and the attitude towards advertising slogans. Four translatable and four non-translatable slogans were used in the research. We made use of slogans containing translatable (easy) English phrases and non-translatable (difficult) English phrases. Moreover, these slogans were made up and were not in connection to any specific product of brand. There have not been done many studies yet measuring these specific variables, which is why this current study is an interesting addition to previous research. Our first hypothesis shows that translatable slogans were expected to be perceived as easier than the non-translatable slogans. Moreover, the second hypothesis shows that the non-translatable (difficult) slogans were expected to elicit a more negative attitude towards that slogan than the translatable (easier) ones. Approximately 100 Dutch participants rated the slogans based on translatability in a questionnaire. Moreover, their attitude towards these slogans was measured, as well as their proficiency in the English language. The first hypothesis was supported by the results of the questionnaire; however, the second hypothesis was rejected. The study shows that there was no difference in attitude towards both types of slogans.

## Introduction

Nowadays, organizations are expanding internationally, which requires them to adapt their communication strategies to their international stakeholders and consumers. According to Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer (2010), one important communication strategy used by these organizations to stay in contact with their consumers is advertising. Advertising today is one of the most powerful means of communication. Through advertising, marketers can effectively transmit the desired message to the public (Skorupa & Duboviciené, 2015). With regard to advertising in different countries with different cultures, companies should always consider if they want to adapt their advertisements to each country they expand to (*adaptation*) or whether they can use the same advertisements in each country (*standardization*). Standardization often comes with a number of benefits, such as more control for the companies, the creation of a “global corporate brand image” and lower costs. The reason why standardization comes with lower costs, is because there is only one standard advertisement used in multiple countries. Having to create a separate advertisement for each country costs more money and is thus less beneficial.

Slogans are a key component of advertising. The literal definition of a slogan, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is “a short, easily remembered phrase, especially one used to advertise an idea or a product”. Slogans help to differentiate brands from each other, and they help state a company’s position in the market. According to Kohli, Suri & Thakor (2002), a slogan is one of the three key elements of brand identity, together with brand name and logo. Furthermore, slogans help with brand recognition (Dowling & Kabanoff, 1996). They provide more information than just a brand name and a logo, as those cannot transmit a message as powerful as a slogan (Abdi & Irandoust, 2013). Moreover, Abdi & Irandoust state that a shorter slogan is often more effective, as it is memorized better than longer, more complex ones.

Playing with words in slogans, by for example using puns or rhymes, can also add up to the positive evaluations of a slogan (Dahlén, 2004). Slogans using wordplays are often remembered better and are perceived as ‘funnier’ and ‘more effective’ than slogans that do not use wordplays. The language used in slogans can be described as a “special language that helps to grab attention and makes a person remember the slogan and the brand it advertises” (Skorupa & Duboviciené, 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, Skorupa & Duboviciené (2015) argue that slogans draw the public’s attention to aspects of a product, and that the audio and visual materials in an advertisement help with remembrance and recognition of the slogan; which in turn adds to brand recognition. The role of slogans is to increase brand awareness and brand

image. These two factors then in turn influence brand knowledge and brand recognition for the consumers (Kohli, Leuthesser & Suri, 2007).

*Brand knowledge* is built up out of *brand awareness* and *brand image*, which in turn are influenced by a brand's name, logo and the slogan. As defined by Kohli, Leuthesser & Suri (2007), *brand knowledge* is a customer's general understanding and recall of a specific brand. *Brand awareness* is the general understanding of a brand, whereas *brand image* is defined as the reputation of a brand. This indicates that a brand's slogan influences brand knowledge and thus plays an important role in the attitude towards a brand and its reputation. Dahlén and Rosengren (2005) proved that *strong* brands with strong slogans are better evaluated than *weak* brands. According to this previous research, a strong brand is one that holds positive associations and evaluations, whereas a weak brand is one that holds negative associations and evaluations. In other words, the evaluation of brand slogans is dependent on the brand equity.

Foreign language use is a frequently returning element in advertising slogans. The goal of using foreign languages is to make the slogans stand out and attract attention from the consumers. Foreign slogans attract attention of the reader as they are not written in their first language, and thus take more time to read and to understand. The ads containing foreign language often enhance recognition and recall of the message communicated in the advertisement; which is often the slogan (Ahn & La Ferle, 2008; Piller, 2003). When communicating with and to international consumers and stakeholders, English is the most obvious language to use, which is explained by the fact English is a lingua franca and an international language (Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer, 2010). English is the most frequently used language in international advertising (Bhatia, 1992; Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer, 2010; Piller, 2003). Moreover, one-third of the ads on television in the Netherlands contain English words (Gerritsen, Korzilius, Van Meurs & Gijbers, 2000). These statements show the significant role the English language plays in advertising.

A study by Hendriks, Van Meurs & Poos (2017) showed that the use of foreign languages in advertising is mainly used to arouse feelings and stereotypes. Even though the meaning of the message might not be understood correctly, the consumers will recognize the language used in an ad and associate it with the stereotypes linked to the country of origin (Piller, 2001). For instance, French is associated with elegance, sophistication, and fashion, whereas English is associated with confidence, high quality and international appreciation (Haarmann, 1986). As a result of this idea, advertisements for luxury products often have French in their slogans, whereas ads for high quality, technological products are in English

(Piller, 2003). Moreover, a study by Leclerc, Schmitt and Dubé (1994) adds up to this idea. American students were shown an ad in either French or English. Ads containing hedonic products (e.g. perfume) were evaluated better when they were in French, whereas functional products (e.g. kitchen utensils) were evaluated better in English. These examples clearly show that foreign languages in advertising evoke stereotypes linked to the country of origin of the product advertised.

According to Gerritsen et al. (2010), understanding of the message conveyed in advertisements using foreign languages is a requirement for the desired communicative effect to be achieved. However, it appears that these messages in foreign language advertisements may not always be comprehended and can even be misinterpreted. Even in non-English speaking countries where the population is considered to be highly proficient in English (such as the Netherlands), Gerritsen et al. (2010) found that advertisements in English were translated incorrectly by the participants, resulting in them not knowing the accurate meaning of the English text. Moreover, understanding of the communicated message also has an influence on a consumers' decision to buy a product or not. As shown in a study by Dan (2015), the deciding moment for consumers to either buy or reject an advertised product depends on the decoding phase of the communication process of advertising. An important part of the decoding phase is comprehension of the message. The receiver has to understand the literal meaning of the message, or the meaning behind the words used. Furthermore, it is argued is that the transmitted message may be more important than the product being advertised. The message communicated in slogans is essential for companies in the advertising process. This shows us that comprehension is of great worth to marketers, as it is a deciding element in the buying process.

In close connection to comprehension of the advertisement and the slogan, is translation. A good slogan translation can enhance the comprehension of the ad. However, translations of slogans can sometimes be problematic, as they often communicate culture bound information, use puns or other wordplays, all of which are also elements that influence the effectiveness of a slogan. In order to make the slogan translation process less problematic, the puns or other elements that define the wordplay, can be removed from the slogans in the translation. However, as a result, the slogan is then often considered as less fun or less interesting to read (Dan, 2015). According to Lim & Loi (2015, p. 2), an effective slogan translation needs to be "at once succinct, idiomatic, appealing and memorable". These demands prove the process of translating slogans to be challenging. Furthermore, a concept introduced by Bell (2011) for slogan translation across several cultures is "*transcreation*".

This concept describes the amount of creativity that is needed for the problematic task that is slogan translation. Advertising slogans and their translations are interpreted differently by consumers from different cultural backgrounds. This means that the translated slogans can be considered as less effective and appreciated less by members of some cultures, whereas consumers from another culture evaluate the translations more positively (Quillard, 2010).

With regards to slogan translation, there is also a distinction between easy and difficult slogans. Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer (2010) used six English slogans in their study: three of which were considered “easy” and three of which were considered “difficult”. The Dutch participants considered the three slogans that were translated correctly as “easy” and the three slogans that were incorrectly translated as “difficult”. Consequently, the participants preferred the advertisements containing easy English slogans over the advertisements containing difficult English slogans. Furthermore, research showed that the attitude towards easy foreign language advertisements and slogans was higher than the attitude towards difficult foreign language advertisements and slogans. The slogans that were harder to translate and thus translated incorrectly were more often appreciated less (Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer, 2010).

The Dutch population is rather proficient in English as it is a language that is taught from a young age and plays an important role in the Netherlands (Gerritsen et al., 2010; Nejjari et al., 2012). Many advertisements displayed in the Netherlands nowadays are already partially or completely in English. There is, however, some evidence that in this context English commercials are not fully understood. This is due to the fact that estimated English proficiency is often higher than actual English proficiency (Gerritsen, Korzilius, Van Meurs & Gijbers, 2000). Another reason behind consumers not understanding the message conveyed in English commercials is the difficulty of the translation of the slogan to the consumers’ first language (L1), which is Dutch. This can be explained by the Revised Hierarchical Model (RHM; see Appendix A).

This model, originally suggested by Kroll and Sholl (1992), proves that learning a second language (L2) relies on one’s understanding of their first language. It is assumed that a speaker has a higher vocabulary range in their native language than in their second language. Therefore, when learning L2, words acquired in that second language are automatically connected and translated into words in a speakers’ L1. This connection is shown in the model as the solid line connecting ‘L2’ to ‘L1’. The dotted line connecting ‘L1’ to ‘L2’ is due to the fact that naturally, L1 words are not translated into L2 words in order for a speaker to understand them. The line between ‘concepts’ and ‘L1’ is solid as well, as these are

understood. The dotted line between ‘concepts’ and ‘L2’ is weaker as well, as concepts in L2 are often less understood than concepts in L1. So, in order to understand a message conveyed in a speakers’ L2, it is often first translated to L1. Understanding of the message comes after the translation step (Basnight-Brown, 2014; Dufour & Kroll, 1995). The RHM is in connection to the comprehension of a message, as it depends on the difficulty of the message. If a message is easy translatable to a first language, it is understood better than when it is difficult to translate. As proved by Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer (2010), difficult messages are assessed differently than easy messages.

The present study wants to focus on several aspects of slogan translation, one of which is perceived difficulty. Based on the studies by Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer (2010) and Hendriks, Van Meurs & Poos (2017), this current study aims to find out what determines an advertising slogan to be perceived as difficult. In these previous studies, Dutch participants were used to investigate the effect of easy and difficult English slogans in advertising. Results showed that the easy slogans were evaluated better than the difficult slogans. Moreover, in the literature review on this particular topic discussed earlier, there are hardly any studies that focused specifically on the relation between the translatability of slogans and the attitude of the consumer towards these slogans. Hence why in the current study, we also decided to focus on this connection.

The social relevance of the present study is the fact this adds up to previous studies about effective advertisement slogans. This present study can contribute to companies trying to create effective slogans, and thus trying to increase their brand knowledge. Moreover, this study will provide more information about how advertising messages are perceived that are not in a consumer’s first language. The purpose of the study is to help inform companies and organizations in creating an advertising slogan that is as effective as possible and that is evaluated positively by their consumers.

The aim of the current study is to focus on the translatability of an English slogan as rated by Dutch participants. This study includes a total of eight fictional slogans that are in English and have to be translated to Dutch. More specifically, four slogans contain common English words and are easy to translate (*translatable slogans*) and the other four slogans contain English words that are not common and do not have a literal Dutch translation (*non-translatable slogans*). So, the focus will be on translatable and non-translatable slogans and the evaluation of these different slogans.

Moreover, in a study by Ahn & La Ferle (2008) – in which they researched whether language choice in advertising can influence the effectiveness of advertisements, in

relationship to recall and recognition – a suggestion for future research is made. They suggested taking into account the second language proficiency (in this case in the English language) in the processing of the advertisements. By doing so in our study, we aim to take away the limitations that can occur when not taking into account second language proficiency. In our study, second language proficiency will be measured at the end of the experiment through a *LexTALE* test. In this way, we aim to be able to explain the reasons behind perceived difficulty.

Moreover, a suggestion for further research made by Hornikx, Van Meurs & Hof (2013) was to take comprehension into account when studying ads that use foreign language display. Ads that were easily understood were found to be more effective than ads that were more difficult to understand or not understood at all. This is an important aspect that will be researched in the current study. Similarly, a limitation of the study by Hendriks, Van Meurs & Poos (2017) was that they did not use a direct measure of comprehension; perceived difficulty is an indirect measure of comprehension.

In terms of the limitations of previous research, this study wants to dig deeper into the underlying reasons behind perceived difficulty of foreign language slogans. Moreover, this study, as well as others (e.g. Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer, 2010; Raedts & Dupré, 2015), focused on advertisements for one specific product only; which in this case was chocolate. Using a specific product can already evoke an attitude from the consumer towards the product. In our study, the slogans that were created are not connected to specific products and thus get rid of the limitation of focusing on one specific group of products.

Lastly, the relationship between perceived difficulty of a (non-)translatable English slogan and the attitude towards that has not been researched before. Therefore, our research questions read:

RQ 1: To what extent does translatability of a slogan influence perceived difficulty of a slogan by Dutch participants?

RQ 2: To what extent does translatability of a slogan influence Dutch consumers' attitude towards the slogan?

Based on our research questions and the results of the study by Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer (2010), which presented that the slogans that were translated correctly were perceived as easier and, moreover, evaluated more positively, the following hypothesis was formed:

H1. Translatable slogans will be perceived as easier than non-translatable slogans.

Furthermore, the second hypothesis of this study was formulated on the basis of the findings by Hendriks et al. in 2017. They found that ads with easy slogans were evaluated more positively than ads with difficult slogans. Hence why the second hypothesis is the following:

H2. Non-translatable (difficult) slogans will elicit a more negative attitude towards the slogan than translatable (easier) ones.

## Method

In an experiment, participants were exposed to translatable and non-translatable slogans, which were selected on the base of the results of a pre-test. They were then asked to fill in a questionnaire in which they had to rate the slogans based on difficulty, as well as on their attitude towards the slogans.

## **Materials**

The independent variable operationalized in this study was the *translatability of slogans*. This variable was divided into two levels: translatable and non-translatable. On the basis of a pretest, four translatable and four non-translatable slogans were selected to use in the main experiment. This pretest was in the form of a questionnaire, consisting of 10 questions. The pretest contained 16 fictional slogans (see Table 1), which were created using an online slogan generator “Free Slogan Maker – Business Slogan Generator, 2020”. When inserting a certain word, the slogan generator offered the user a number of slogans using that word. In addition to using the slogan generator, we have thought of various slogans ourselves.

The slogans came in pairs, of which one was translatable and the other was not. We decided to use pairs of slogans because we did not want to expose the participants to both the translatable and non-translatable slogans. This would make the questionnaire rather long and as a consequence, the participants could lose their attention. Therefore, in order to prevent this from happening, we created pairs. Moreover, using nearly identical slogan pairs simplified manipulating translatability, as one specific word, which was the only thing that distinguished the translatable and non-translatable slogans, then determined the translatability of the slogan.

The non-translatable slogans included infrequently used English words that do not have a literal Dutch translation. This means that there was no Dutch equivalent for the English word. The Dutch translations of the words used in both the translatable and non-translatable slogans were provided by two native Dutch speakers who were part of the research group. The specific English words we found for the slogans were a mix between adjectives and nouns. The slogans created were not connected to specific products or brands. Although, in order to use realistic stimuli and prevent false brand recognition from occurring, we created a logo to present next to each brand. These logos were randomly designed using an online tool (<https://hatchful.shopify.com/>, 2020).

**Table 1. English slogans used in the pre-test**

<b>Non-translatable</b>	<b>Translatable</b>
“Less gobbledeygook, more action!”	“Less chatter, more action!”
“Get giddy and get ready”	“Get crazy and get ready”
“There is nothing like serendipity”	“There is nothing like good luck”
“For an irenic mind”	“For a peaceful mind”
“For prodigious people”	“For phenomenal people”
“Everything but direful”	“Everything but horrible”
“Majestic nights”	“Mind-blowing nights”
“It’s just marvelous”	“It’s just phenomenal”

In the pretest, a total of 32 participants took part, of which 31 were valid. The one participant that took part who was not valid, did not have the right nationality to participate in this questionnaire (Dutch). All participants were Dutch and ranged in age from 18 to 36 years old ( $M = 22.48$ ). Participants were approached through social media as well as personally. All participants conducted the questionnaire voluntarily and they did not receive any form of compensation. It took participants approximately 15 minutes to finish the pre-test.

The participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions. Each group received eight slogans, about which they had to answer several questions, which were based on a study by Luna, Ringberg & Perrachio (2008). These questions can be found in Appendix C. Moreover, they were asked to provide a translation of the slogans. Thereafter, in order to determine the difficulty of the slogans, the participants were asked to rate the difficulty of the slogans on a 7-point Likert scale, of which 1 = difficult, 7 = easy (according to the methodology in the study by Hendriks, Van Meurs & Poos, 2017). The pre-test concluded with several demographic questions.

Based on the results of the pre-test, which showed which of the 16 slogans were translatable and which of the slogans were non-translatable, a total of eight final slogans were selected to use in the actual experiment, which will measure the independent variable (see Table 2). The four slogans for which the least correct translations were provided, and thus scored highest on difficulty, were used for our main experiment. In addition, the four slogans that were translated correctly the most often, and thus scored lowest on difficulty, were also used. These scores on difficulty and the percentages of correct translations can be found in table 3, which is included in Appendix B. Following the pattern of the pre-test, the eight slogans used in the main experiment were four nearly identical pairs of English slogans,

which only differed from each other with one word. Similarly, the slogans were all again presented next to a fictional logo.

**Table 2. English slogans used in the experiment**

<b>Non-translatable</b>	<b>Translatable</b>
“Less gobbledygook, more action!”	“Less chatter, more action!”
“Get giddy and get ready”	“Get crazy and get ready”
“For an irenic mind”	“For a peaceful mind”
“For prodigious people”	“For phenomenal people”

### **Subjects**

A total of 109 participants took part in the experiment, of which 105 were valid. The four participants that are not considered valid did not have the right nationality to participate in the experiment (Dutch). All valid participants were Dutch and ranged in age from 21 to 75 years old ( $M = 25.08$ ) with a total of 70 females and 35 males. The age was distributed equally among the different respondent groups ( $F(1,102) = .08, p = .785$ ). Looking at the gender of the participants, there were no differences between the groups ( $\chi^2(1) = .08, p = .782$ ). The participants were asked to select their highest completed education level ( $\chi^2(4) = 5.24, p = .264$ ), which ranged from high school to a master’s degree. The majority of the participants had completed a bachelor’s degree (46.7%), followed by a high school degree (35.2%). For both gender and educational level, no significant difference was found with translatability of the slogan.

Participants were approached through social media and personally. Furthermore, the questionnaire was distributed in a Dutch Facebook-group that focuses specifically on finding respondents for questionnaires. The questionnaire was conducted voluntarily, and the participants did not receive any form of compensation.

### **Design**

The independent variable of the study was *translatability of slogans*. Furthermore, the dependent variables of the study were *attitude towards the slogan* and *difficulty of the slogan*. For the study, a between-subjects design was used in which two separate groups were exposed to the materials. The respondents were randomly assigned to one of the two

conditions: translatable or non-translatable slogans. Consequently, the respondents' attitude towards the slogans was measured.

### **Instruments**

The main experiment operationalized the dependent variables, which are *attitude towards the slogan* and *perceived difficulty of the slogan*. These variables were measured in connection to the independent variable, which is *translatability of slogans*. In order to operationalize the dependent variables, a questionnaire consisting of 10 questions was created (see Appendix D), which included a LexTALE test. The LexTALE test measured the participants' English proficiency (*Lextale.com*). This test was included in the questionnaire to measure the relationship between the English proficiency of the participants, and their perceived difficulty of the slogans. The dependent variable was measured for five different aspects, in five 7-point semantic differentials (Engaging – Boring, Not interesting – Interesting, Not original – Original, Attractive – Not attractive, Nice – Not Nice), which were based on the study by Hendriks, Van Meurs & Poos (2017). The scales varied between 1 = positive, 7 = negative and 1 = negative, 7 = positive. This was done in order to prevent the participants from answering all questions in a similar manner.

In order to determine the internal reliability of *translatability* and the scales used for *attitude towards the slogan*, Cronbach's Alpha was computed. The reliability of translatability was good:  $\alpha=.81$ . Furthermore, the reliability of the scales used for attitude was good  $\alpha=.92$ .

### **Procedure**

The main experiment was a questionnaire, which treated eight slogans (four translatable, four non-translatable). The experiment consisted of 10 questions and the LexTALE test. The LexTALE test consisted of 60 yes/no questions, testing whether the participants were familiar with the words presented to them, or not. The test took approximately 3.5 minutes to complete (according to *Lextale.com*). The 10 questions for the questionnaire were aimed to measure the *translatability* of a slogan, as well as the *attitude* towards a slogan.

The participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions (translatable or non-translatable). On the first page of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to read a small explanation of what will follow, after which they were asked to validate the fact they wanted to participate in the questionnaire. Furthermore, the participants read that their participation was voluntary and anonymous. Besides, in the text on the first page, the goal of

the experiment was not explicitly stated. When starting the questionnaire, the participants were shown a slogan and were then asked to answer several questions about the slogan. These questions are based on a study by Luna, Ringberg & Peracchio (2008) and can be found in Appendix D. For the first three questions, the participants were asked to rate the difficulty of the slogan. Thereafter, a translation of the slogan was asked, as well as a rating of the difficulty of the translation. Moreover, the final five questions were asked to measure the participants' attitude towards the slogans. After answering these questions about each of the four slogans, the participants continued to the LexTALE test.

The questionnaire was completely voluntary and none of the participants received a compensation. Generally, it took the participants approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### **Statistical treatment**

In order to process the results of the experiment accordingly, two independent samples t-tests were run. The first was run to test the influence of slogan type (translatable or non-translatable) on the perceived attitude of the slogans. Furthermore, the second test was run to test the influence of slogan type (translatable or non-translatable) on the perceived difficulty of the slogans. On the basis of these two statistical tests, an answer to the research question can be formulated and the hypotheses can be tested.

## Results

### **Attitude and translatability**

An independent samples t-test showed no influence of translatability on the attitude towards the slogan ( $t(88.09) = .39, p = .053$ ). The attitude from the participants towards the translatable slogans condition ( $M= 3.94, SD= 0.72$ ) was statistically equal to the participants' attitude towards the non-translatable slogans condition ( $M= 3.87, SD= 0.97$ ). The results can be found in table 4.

Table 4. Means and standard deviations (between brackets) for attitude towards non-translatable and translatable slogans (1 = positive, 7 = negative)

	Type of slogan	n	<i>M (SD)</i>
<b>Attitude</b>	Translatable	56	3.94 (0.72)
	Non-translatable	49	3.87 (0.97)

### **Perceived difficulty and translatability**

Furthermore, another independent samples t-test showed an influence of translatability on the perceived difficulty of the slogan ( $t(83.55)= 13.70, p = .001$ ). The participants from non-translatable slogans condition perceived the slogans as more difficult ( $M= 4.78, SD= 1.09$ ) than the participants from the translatable slogans condition ( $M= 2.23, SD= 0.76$ ), which can be seen in table 5.

Table 5. Means and standard deviations (between brackets) for evaluated difficulty of non-translatable and translatable slogans (1 = positive, 7 = negative)

	Type of slogan	n	<i>M (SD)</i>
<b>Difficulty</b>	Translatable	56	2.23 (0.76)
	Non-translatable	49	4.78 (1.09)

## Conclusion and discussion

The English language currently predominates the international advertising market. Questions about whether the use of the English language is the most effective choice, and whether it is used in the most effective way in advertising, are frequently raised. A point of discussion we were specifically interested in for this study, was whether translatability and perceived difficulty of the slogan are determining factors of the attitude towards the slogan. Therefore, the aim of this study was to find out whether there was an influence of the translatability of a slogan on its perceived difficulty. Furthermore, we studied whether the attitude towards a slogan was influenced by the translatability of the slogan. In order to analyze this, a questionnaire was conducted, with as target group Dutch consumers. The participants were asked to translate the slogans, after which they were asked to rate the difficulty of the slogan, as well as to provide their attitude towards the slogan.

Based on the answers provided by the participants, the following conclusions were drawn. Firstly, the results showed that non-translatable slogans were perceived as more difficult than slogans that were translatable. This is in accordance with what we expected, so the first hypothesis is supported. However, the findings also showed that there was no difference in the attitude towards non-translatable or towards translatable slogans. This indicates that slogans do not have to be literally understood to be appreciated, which rejects our second hypothesis.

These findings are somewhat inconsistent with previous research. Based on results of previous literature on this topic, we expected the attitude towards translatable slogans to be higher than towards non-translatable slogans. This was based on the results of the following studies. Firstly, the study by Hendriks, Van Meurs & Poos (2017) showed that easy English slogans were better understood and thus appreciated more. This is in contrary to our results, which showed that easier slogans which are better understood are not necessarily evaluated more positively. Moreover, the study by Gerritsen et al. (2000) proved that comprehension of English phrases resulted in more positive evaluations than when the messages were not understood correctly. This is also supported by the results of the study by Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer (2010), which told us that perceived comprehension has a greater effect on appreciation of a slogan than perceived difficulty.

However, a suggested explanation for our contradictory results would be the fact our study is carried out with slogans that are not matched with an actual product. This takes away the need for comprehension, as the participants did not know what product or brand the slogan actually was for. All abovementioned studies matched the slogans to specific products.

For example, the study by Hornikx, Van Meurs & Hof (2013) showed that foreign language display is more effective for slogans that are congruent with a specific product. Moreover, their study showed that effective foreign language display leads to better product evaluation. This showed that the use of slogans that are congruent will result in a higher attitude. Besides that, our study only used slogans with a non-existing logo and the participants were not shown an entire advertisement. This is another reason why comprehension is less important.

Moreover, the results of the study by Gerritsen et al (2010) indicated that consumers can often be unaware of the fact that they have not fully comprehended the message conveyed in an advertisement. As a result, consumers would not have a more negative attitude towards slogans that are not understood correctly. This is in agreement with our results which rejected our hypothesis regarding attitude towards the slogan. However, it is argued that messages that are understood generally achieve the desired effect more, than when the messages are not understood (Pieters and Van Raaij, 1992).

The present study has several limitations. Firstly, our participants in the study were from a country with high English proficiency, namely the Netherlands (Gerritsen et al. 2010). This indicates that the participants might not experience English as difficult as participants with lower English proficiency would. Hence why some slogans we pre-assessed as difficult, were not rated as difficult by the participants. Moreover, the difficulty of the slogan was determined by one word that was found not to have a literal Dutch translation. During the study, it turned out that some of these words actually did have a Dutch equivalent, of which the definition was very similar. For future research, a suggestion would be to find a more distinct way to determine the difficulty of the slogans.

Furthermore, the research was conducted within one specific target group, namely mainly younger, Dutch speaking consumers. The results of the study may have been different when conducting the same questionnaire with a more diverse target group, such as within a target group with different nationalities. This difference in results could have been noticeable as not all nationalities have the same proficiency in English. This means some participants of other nationalities may have perceived certain slogans as more difficult or easier than the Dutch participants did in our case. Moreover, this difference could also occur between groups with a wide variety of ages or between groups that are from a different culture.

Besides, there was hardly any focus on the designs of the slogans, in terms of use of wordplay or other linguistic techniques to make the slogans appeal more. This may have affected the evaluations towards the slogans. Including types of wordplay may influence the attitude towards the slogans positively (Dahlén, 2004). However, wordplays are generally not

appropriate to translate, as it will often not make sense in the other language. Nevertheless, this would be a really interesting phenomenon to study.

Generally, the current study could be improved by adding other variables to research the attitudes towards advertising slogans. Examples of which are product congruence, age or other variables that describe the linguistic characteristics of the slogan such as length, rhyme or alliteration. In the present study, all slogans differed from each other in terms of length and content. Establishing some consistency with regards to length might have influenced our results regarding the attitude towards the slogan. Moreover, adding such (a) variable(s) might add some depth to the current study.

The current study was based on the expectation that easy slogans are evaluated more positively than difficult slogans, based on the results by Hornikx, Van Meurs & De Boer (2010) and Hendriks, Van Meurs & Poos (2017). Results showed that translatable slogans were perceived as easier than non-translatable slogans. However, the expectation was not met; there was no difference in attitude towards the translatable (easy) slogans and the non-translatable (difficult) slogans. The fact this hypothesis was rejected in this study can have several reasons. The first one is that the rejection may have been due to incongruent slogans that were not connected to any brand. The study by Hornikx, Van Meurs & Hof (2013) proved that foreign language display was more effective for advertisements using congruent products than for advertisements using incongruent products. This effective foreign language display also led to higher attitudes towards the ads. This indicates that using congruent slogans for this current study would probably have shown different results. Moreover, the possibility that a slogan which is not recognized or that does not sound familiar will be evaluated more negatively, is plausible. According to Gerber, Terblanche-Smit & Crommelin (2014), brand recognition has a positive influence on brand awareness and one's attitude towards a specific brand. Moreover, another argument could be that the target group was not perfectly suited for the aim of the study. By conducting research about easy or difficult slogans in a culture that has a high proficiency in English, the results may not be the desired. Lastly, it would be interesting to add more variables to the current study, in order to study the topic in a broad way. Although the current study did not prove the desired results, it can be regarded as a contribution to further research. The message that can be taken away from this study is that translatability does not affect attitude but does affect perceived difficulty.

## References

- Aaker, D. A. (1991). Managing Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 30(2), 256. doi: 10.2307/3172832
- Abdi, S., & Irandoust, A. (2013). The Importance Of Advertising Slogans And Their Proper Designing In Brand Equity. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 2(2), 62–69. doi: 10.33844/ijol.2013.60321
- Ahn, J., & Ferle, C. L. (2008). Enhancing Recall and Recognition for Brand Names and Body Copy: A Mixed-Language Approach. *Journal of Advertising*, 37(3), 107–117. doi: 10.2753/joa0091-3367370308
- Bell, Terena. 2011. “Translating slogans.” *MultiLingual* 22 (1): 50–52
- Bhatia, T. K. (1992). Discourse functions and pragmatics of mixing: advertising across cultures. *World Englishes*, 11(2-3), 195–215. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-971x.1992.tb00064.x
- Boush, D. M. (1993). How advertising slogans can prime evaluations of brand extensions. *Psychology and Marketing*, 10(1), 67–78. doi: 10.1002/mar.4220100106
- Cambridge Dictionary: Find Definitions, Meanings & Translations. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/>
- Dahlén, M., & Rosengren, S. (2005). Brands affect slogans affect brands? Competitive interference, brand equity and the brand-slogan link. *Journal of Brand Management*, 12(3), 151–164. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.bm.2540212
- Dan, L. (2015). Techniques for the translation of advertising slogans. *Discourse as a Form of Multiculturalism in Literature and Communication, Tîrgu-mures*, 13-24. ISBN: 978 606-8624-21-1

- Dowling, G. R., & Kabanoff, B. (1996). Computer-aided content analysis: What do 240 advertising slogans have in common? *Marketing Letters*, 7(1), 63–75. doi: 10.1007/bf00557312
- Dufour, R., & Kroll, J. F. (1995). Matching words to concepts in two languages: A test of the concept mediation model of bilingual representation. *Memory & Cognition*, 23(2), 166–180. doi:10.3758/bf03197219
- Gerber, C., Terblanche-Smit, M., & Crommelin, T. (2014). Brand recognition in television advertising: The influence of brand presence and brand introduction. *Acta Commercii*, 14(1). doi:10.4102/ac.v14i1.182
- Gerritsen, M., Korzilius, H., Meurs, F. V., & Gijssbers, I. (2000). English in Dutch Commercials: Not Understood and Not Appreciated. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 40(4), 17–31. doi: 10.2501/jar-40-4-17-31
- Gerritsen, M., Nickerson, C., Hooft, A. V., Meurs, F. V., Korzilius, H., Nederstigt, U., Starren, M., Crijns, R. (2010). English in Product Advertisements in Non-English Speaking Countries in Western Europe: Product Image and Comprehension of the Text. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 23(4), 349–365. doi: 10.1080/08911762.2010.504523
- Haarmann, H. (1986). Verbal strategies in Japanese fashion magazines – a study in impersonal bilingualism and ethnosymbolism. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 1986(58). doi: 10.1515/ijsl.1986.58.107
- Hendriks, B., Meurs, F. V., & Poos, C. (2017). Effects of Difficult and Easy English Slogans in Advertising for Dutch Consumers. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 38(2), 184–196. doi: 10.1080/10641734.2017.1291384
- Hornikx, J. (2015). Non-nativeness in communication: Use and effects of foreign languages in advertising. *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 1–5. doi: 10.1075/dujal.4.1.01hor

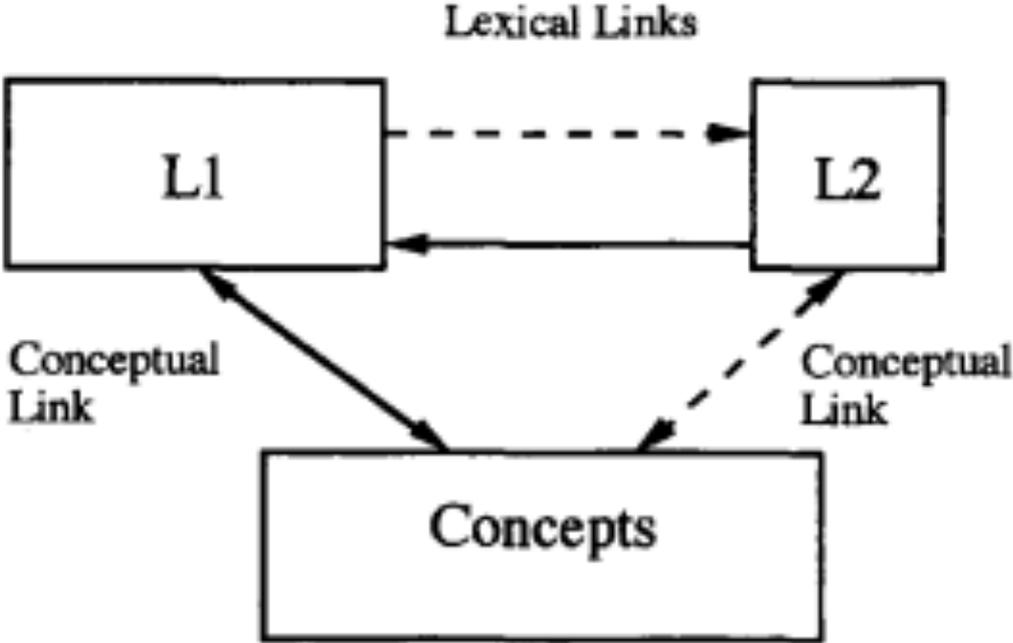
- Hornikx, J., Meurs, F. V., & Boer, A. D. (2010). English or a Local Language in Advertising?: The Appreciation of Easy and Difficult English Slogans in the Netherlands. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(2), 169–188. doi: 10.1177/0021943610364524
- Hornikx, J., Meurs, F. V., & Hof, R. (2013). The Effectiveness of Foreign-Language Display in Advertising for Congruent versus Incongruent Products. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 25(3), 152-165. doi:10.1080/08961530.2013.780451
- Hornikx, J., & Mulder, E. (2015). The curiosity-evoking capacity of foreign languages in advertising. *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 59–66. doi: 10.1075/dujal.4.1.05hor
- Kohli, C., & Suri, R. (2002). Creating effective logos: Insights from theory and practice. *Business Horizons*, 45(3), 58–64. doi: 10.1016/s0007-6813(02)00203-3
- Kohli, C., Leuthesser, L., & Suri, R. (2007). Got slogan? Guidelines for creating effective slogans. *Business Horizons*, 50(5), 415–422. doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2007.05.002
- Kroll, J. F., & Sholl, A. (1992). Lexical and Conceptual Memory in Fluent and Nonfluent Bilinguals. *Cognitive Processing in Bilinguals Advances in Psychology*, 191-204. doi:10.1016/s0166-4115(08)61495-8
- Leclerc, F., Schmitt, B. H., & Dube, L. (1994). Foreign Branding and Its Effects on Product Perceptions and Attitudes. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31(2), 263. doi: 10.2307/3152198
- Lim, L., & Loi, K. Y. (2015). Evaluating slogan translation from the readers' perspective: A case study of Macao. *Babel Revue Internationale De La Traduction / International Journal of Translation Babel*, 61(2), 283–303. doi: 10.1075/babel.61.2.07lim
- Luna, D., & Peracchio, L. A. (2001). Moderators of Language Effects in Advertising to Bilinguals: A Psycholinguistic Approach. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(2), 284–295. doi: 10.1086/322903

- Luna, D., Ringberg, T., & Peracchio, L. A. (2008). One Individual, Two Identities: Frame Switching among Biculturals. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(2), 279–293. doi: 10.1086/586914
- Nejjari, W., Gerritsen, M., Haagen, M. V., & Korzilius, H. (2012). Responses to Dutch-accented English. *World Englishes*, 31(2), 248-267. doi:10.1111/j.1467-971x.2012.01754.x
- Pieters, R. G., & Raaij, W. V. (1992). *Reclamewerking*. Leiden: Stenfert Kroese.
- Piller, I. (2001). Identity constructions in multilingual advertising. *Language in Society*, 30(2), 153–186. doi: 10.1017/s0047404501002019
- Piller, I. (2003). Advertising As A Site Of Language Contact. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 23, 170–183. doi: 10.1017/s0267190503000254
- Quillard, G. (2010). Feelings, language and referential preferences in advertising (North America, French Canada and France). *Babel Revue Internationale De La Traduction / International Journal of Translation Babel*, 56(3), 237–258. doi: 10.1075/babel.56.3.03gen
- Raedts, M., & Dupré, N. (2015). De doeltreffendheid van een Italiaanse versus Nederlandse slagzin in een Italiaanse wijnreclame. *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 39–57. doi: 10.1075/dujal.4.1.04rae
- Raedts, M., Dupré, N., Hendrickx, J., & Debrauwere, S. (2015). English in television commercials in Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. *World Englishes*, 34(4), 576–599. doi: 10.1111/weng.12161
- Skorupa, P., & Dubovičienė, T. (2015). Linguistic Characteristics of Commercial and Social Advertising Slogans. *Coactivity: Philology, Educology*, 23(2), 108–118. doi: 10.3846/cpe.2015.275
- What is LexTALE? (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.lextale.com/>

Zweers, JS. (2018). The Effect of Slogan Language (English/Dutch), Slogan Difficulty, Language Proficiency, and Slogan Familiarity on Perceived Slogan Difficulty, Slogan Appreciation, Product Attitude and Purchase Intention of Dutch Consumers (*Master's Thesis*)

Appendix

*Appendix A* – Reversed Hierarchical Model



*Appendix B* – Overview of slogans selected for main experiment

Table 3. An overview of the slogans that were selected for the main experiment based on the percentage of correct translations and their scores on difficulty (*1 = easy, 7 = difficult*)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Percentage of correct translations
Easy slogans			
Get crazy and get ready	1.79	2.08	100
There is nothing like luck	1.96	1.15	100
It's just fantastic	1.26	.47	100
An impressive experience	1.92	1.06	92.3
Difficult slogans			
Less gobbledygook, more action!	4.03	2.20	38.5
For an irenic mind	5.41	1.51	5.6
Get giddy and get ready	5.28	1.24	0
For prodigious people	5.52	1.56	0

*Appendix C – Questions pre-test*

Pay attention to the following slogan

**Do you recognize the logo/brand?**

Yes/No

**Rate how easy or difficult you think this slogan is**

7-point scale (1 = difficult, 7 = easy)

**Can you translate the slogan?**

Yes/No

**Yes: Translate the slogan to Dutch:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**No: Which word(s) are unclear?**

List of words in slogan

**Nationality**

Dropdown menu

**Age**

Dropdown menu

**Select your highest completed education**

Dropdown menu

**Do you understand English?**

7-point scale (1 = bad, 7 = good)

**Do you speak English?**

7-point scale (1 = bad, 7 = good)

**Do you read English?**

7-point scale (1 = bad, 7 = good)

**Do you write English?**

7-point scale (1 = bad, 7 = good)

Based on Luna, Ringberg & Peracchio (2008).

*Appendix D – Questions Main Experiment*

Pay attention to the following slogan

-----

I think the slogan is...

- Easy (1)
- Moderately easy (2)
- Slightly easy (3)
- Neither easy nor difficult (4)
- Slightly difficult (5)
- Moderately difficult (6)
- Difficult (7)

-----

I think the slogan is...

- Complicated (7)
  - Moderately complicated (6)
  - Slightly complicated (5)
  - Neither complicated nor simple (4)
  - Slightly simple (3)
  - Moderately simple (2)
  - Simple (1)
- 

I think the slogan is...

- Comprehensible (1)
  - Moderately comprehensible (2)
  - Slightly comprehensible (3)
  - Neither comprehensible nor incomprehensible (4)
  - Slightly incomprehensible (5)
  - Moderately incomprehensible (6)
  - Incomprehensible (7)
-

This slogan has the word "... " in it.

Write your Dutch translation of this word. If you cannot, just write "2".

---

---

I think the translation of this slogan into Dutch is...

- Difficult (7)
- Moderately difficult (6)
- Slightly difficult (5)
- Neither easy nor difficult (4)
- Slightly easy (3)
- Moderately easy (2)
- Easy (1)

---

I think this slogan is...

- Engaging (1)
  - Moderately engaging (2)
  - Slightly engaging (3)
  - Neither engaging nor boring (4)
  - Slightly boring (5)
  - Moderately boring (6)
  - Boring (7)
- 

I think this slogan is...

- Not interesting (7)
  - Moderately not interesting (6)
  - Slightly not interesting (5)
  - Neither not interesting nor interesting (4)
  - Slightly interesting (3)
  - Moderately interesting (2)
  - Interesting (1)
-

I think this slogan is...

- Not original (7)
  - Moderately not original (6)
  - Slightly not original (5)
  - Neither not original nor original (4)
  - Slightly original (3)
  - Moderately original (2)
  - Original (1)
- 

I think this slogan is...

- Attractive (1)
  - Moderately attractive (2)
  - Slightly attractive (3)
  - Neither attractive nor not attractive (4)
  - Slightly not attractive (5)
  - Moderately not attractive (6)
  - Not attractive (7)
-

I think this slogan is...

- Nice (1)
- Moderately nice (2)
- Slightly nice (3)
- Neither nice nor not nice (4)
- Slightly not nice (5)
- Moderately not nice (6)
- Not nice (7)

## Statement of Own Work

Student name: Renée Christophe  
Student number: s1007890  
Course code and name: Bachelor Thesis SCRSEM2 V  
Lecturer: dr. J. Baranova  
Number course group : Group 4

PLAGIARISM is the presentation by a student of an assignment or piece of work which has in fact been copied in whole or in part from another student's work, or from any other source (e.g. published books or periodicals or material from Internet sites), without due acknowledgement in the text.

### DECLARATION:

- a. I hereby declare that I am familiar with the faculty manual (<http://www.ru.nl/stip/english/rules-regulations/fraud-plagiarism/>) and with Article 16 "Fraud and plagiarism" in the Education and Examination Regulations for the Bachelor's programme of Communication and Information Studies.
- b. I also declare that I have only submitted text written in my own words
- c. I certify that this thesis is my own work and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation, whether they be books, articles, reports, lecture notes, and any other kind of document, electronic or personal communication.

Signed:



Date: 26/10/2020