

Bachelor Thesis



Radboud Universiteit

Accommodation theory in the tourism and hospitality sector:

An experiment of formality in customer service interactions

June 13, 2022

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Course: Bachelor Thesis

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Theoretical framework

The tourism marketing and promotion sector for hotels and residences has changed profoundly over the last two decades, as a result of some major technological revolutions in the field of information, particularly following the advent of telematics (Decelle, 2004). Tourism is in fact one of the sectors with the highest rate of development on the Internet, due to its information-intensive nature, and today the web is characterized by an unprecedented degree of interactivity (O' Relly, 2007). Thanks to the implementation of technology, new ways of using the web emerged, which marked the fundamental shift of the Internet from a place of publication to a place of participation (Cenni & Goethals, 2020). Therefore, the Web went from being a business-to-consumer marketing tool to a peer-to-peer model (O' Relly, 2007). Now companies working in tourism sector have to keep pace with the consequences of the development of technology and meet the needs of an increasingly demanding clientele who can instantly compare various offers. The customers rely on platforms/systems which allow users to share their experiences and therefore forge the reputation of the companies (Hvass & Munar, 2012). For this reason, traditional operators are now faced with a new type of consumer, who can easily access information and share his/her opinions, comment, and make suggestions, influencing the choice of other consumers (Cenni & Goethals, 2020; Hvass & Munar, 2012).

Thus, the role of the customer is now more important than ever, which means a focus should be put on customer service. Customer service refers to the assistance that a company offers its customers before or after they purchase or use products or services and it includes actions such as offering product suggestions, resolving problems and complaints, or answering general questions (Innis & Bernard, 1994). Every interaction with customer service is an opportunity to grow a business, for excellent customer service is a competitive differentiator that promotes loyalty and brand recognition (Innis & Bernard, 1994). The interaction with service providers via customer service has been shown to be a crucial element of customer's satisfaction (de Carlos et al., 2008), also in the tourism industry (Chin, 2011). Additionally, according to Jai, Sethi & Mukherji (2009), the customer's perception of

the company is also widely impacted by the way the service agent communicates with the customer during a service interaction. Finally, the customer's intention to buy (or book) again is also influenced by the communication element (Ickler et al., 2009). Thus, it is important for companies to consider how communication influences the perception of the service agent and therefore of the company he/she is representing, since a negative opinion contributes to a bad reputation of the company, causing negative consequences. Similarly, it is advisable to make sure that communication increases the customer's intention to book with the company, because if the intention decreases among potential customers it will inevitably lead to lower incomes.

For the reasons above, it is essential to offer customers a satisfying experience even before they are physically welcomed into the hotel, in order to establish profitable and lasting relationships (Scullin et al. 2002). A smart way to do this is using a live chat, which is fast and intuitive and, according to research, the best and most profitable solution for satisfying users' need to easily and immediately find the information they are looking for. According to a study by McLean et al. (2020) customers are more likely to return to a website if it provides assistance through live chat. In addition, according to the same study, consumers much prefer live chat to email and telephone. In fact, modern consumers are multi-taskers. They often do not have the time, nor the patience, to call and talk to the hotel operator to get information, nor do they want to send an e-mail and wait hours for a reply (Decelle, 2004). Live chat thus ensures an excellent customer experience for potential guests because it allows connecting directly with them in real-time, when they are most likely to take an action (Johnson, 2001). Live chats also allow customers to have an open dialogue with the company from any device, wherever they are. This means hotel companies can also reduce the number of abandoned bookings by making a chat for customer support available, in order to answer their questions in seconds and clarify any doubts during the sales process (Johnson, 2001). Therefore it can be concluded that using this modern communication tool is the best way to get close to potential customers to offer positive experiences from the very first visit and contact with the website, just as if they had just entered the lobby of a hotel looking for information and availability. But how do companies reply to customers in the best way?

In order to improve customer service, competent agents should be able to determine what communication style is preferred by the recipient and formulate their response accordingly (Crook & Booth, 1997). In fact, the ability to assess the communication environment and adapt to the customer's preferences to develop a common language is likely to lead to more successful business interactions (Jakic, Wagner & Meyer, 2017). This

strategy is one type of application of the so-called Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005; Giles et al., 1972), which explains the adjustments, both in spoken and written language, that an individual can make to create or maintain positive social interactions. Accommodation occurs when a person changes the way he/she speaks in order to bring his/hers style closer to or further away from the style of the other person. If the adjustment is in the direction of the interlocutor's way of speaking, we speak of convergence or convergent accommodation (conversely, of divergence or divergent accommodation), and when there is no convergence or divergence we talk about maintenance. The whole process of accommodation is concretely manifested through what is defined as code-switching. This means that the interlocutors change their *modus loquendi* to some extent.

Early research on the concept of Accommodation (Giles, Taylor & Bourhis, 1973) found evidence for convergence evoking positive reactions in its recipients and for divergence evoking negative reactions. Accommodation can have an impact on, for example, customer satisfaction and brand trust, as observed by Jakic, Wagner & Meyer (2017), and benefit the company. It is to be noted that there are many elements that might have an influence on this impact, like “perceived interaction effort, benevolence, quality of interaction, and perceived language fit between the brand and the product/service category” (Jakic, Taylor & Bourhis, 2017).

In the tourism sector, when we talk about CAT, we mostly focus on language accommodation, which “refers to the selection of one or various linguistic codes in conversations between speakers who do not have the same mother tongue” (Wilson, 2018). This is because of tourism’s multilingual setting, which entails that interactions take place in a foreign language for at least one of the involved parties. In fact, conversations between tourists and tourism professionals can occur in the local language, the language of the tourist or, most of the times, a *lingua franca*, usually English (Wilson, 2018).

Looking at the communicative strategies used by the tourism professionals, one type of accommodation in customer service interaction consists in switching between a formal and an informal register depending on the customer’s communication style. The choice of the degree of formality mainly depends on the customer’s preference but also partly on the brand image. In fact, some brands might want to sound more “cool” or “relaxed”, while others might opt for a formal style, but different customers might find one disrespectful or the other too distant. Consequently, it is very important for companies to focus on formality as an accommodation factor because this factor can have an incredibly powerful impact on the

perception of the conversation. In other words, using the wrong degree of formality could result in the agent being perceived as “rude”, and being rude to a customer leads to terrible consequences. As a matter of fact, customers can be influenced by a single experience, which, if positive, could be the decisive factor in tying them to a brand, while, if negative, could make them opt for a competitor.

When we refer to formal language, we mean a language that uses clear information and is unambiguous, i.e. it does not allow more than one meaning to be attached to a piece of information. Formal language is often associated with conventional or etiquette. It is in accordance with established procedures, forms, conventions or rules and it is considered to conform to certain norms and regulations or to be based on a standard format (Johnson, Donohue, Atkin & Johnson, 1994). Informal language, on the other hand, is a more ambiguous language in which an expression can have several meanings and can therefore be subject to several interpretations. It is a language that is not bound by rules, it is more familiar, simple, and confidential, it indicates a casual manner of speaking/writing characterized by a relaxed and friendly attitude and it does not need to follow any regulations nor to be based on any conventional procedures (Johnson, Donohue, Atkin & Johnson, 1994).

However, according to Reyes (2014), it is complex to associate a lexical form or a linguistic expression to either formal or informal style. First of all, as also confirmed by Bauman (2001) and Rampton (2006), “style is not only a conglomeration of linguistic features in a specific context” (Reyes, 2014, p.541). In fact, style can also be defined as “a set of conventionalized expectations that participants use to construct and ‘make sense’ (Blommaert 2008) of the communicative activity in which they are engaged” (Bonnin, 2011, p.680). Secondly, Reyes (2014) affirms that, regardless of the difficulties of defining or recognizing styles, “style is a feature in discourse that, intentionally or unintentionally, has an effect on the reception of the message” (p.540).

Furthermore, focusing on formality in English can be difficult for a number of reasons. First of all, it should be noted that, unlike most the European languages, “English does not codify formality/informality through a binary pronominal distinction between, but only has the single second-person pronoun you, which has been often described as a pragmatically neutral address pronoun” (Formentelli, 2018, p. 299). Secondly, reporting the words of the same study by Formentelli (2018), “In English, speakers rather express interpersonal stance lexically, by means of either first names, familiarisers (e.g. mate, guys, buddy) and terms of endearment (e.g. love, dear, honey), or honorifics (e.g. sir, madam, ladies), personal titles (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Ms) and professional titles (e.g. prof., Dr) with or

without a last name.” (p. 299). But it is also for these difficulties in categorizing lexical address strategies in formal and informal language that it would be interesting to study English in relation to formality.

Moreover, it was chosen to focus on formality in English, for it is the most spoken and studied language in the world (Smith, 1976). The function of English as lingua franca is essential in the tourism sector, where one has to deal with different people and cultures. It should also be noted that there are more foreign speakers of English than native speakers of English, which means English is more widely used as a lingua franca than as a native language (Medgeyevs, 2001). As an access code to communication, the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in the context of economic-commercial activities (Business English Lingua Franca, BELF) does not only concern verbal and physical exchanges but also and above all those in written form (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009), like via e-mail and chat, which constitute the clearest proof of how a company communicates with the external and internal world, building its corporate identity and its international image (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009).

Another factor to take into account is how English proficiency might influence sensitivity to formality. In fact, “knowledge and awareness of English vocabulary and formulations need to be sufficient to enable speakers to assess the relative formality of stylistic variants” (Ureel et al., 2022, p. 81). According to Kouwenhoven et al. (2016), which explored the different communication strategies used by Spanish speakers of English in formal and informal speech, “L2 speakers take account of the situational context and choose communication strategies based on the need for explicit information exchange” (p. 298). This evidence suggests that speakers of English as ELF are sensitive to formality at least in their own productions and are able to perceive changes in the situational context and vary their use of formal and informal registers accordingly.

However, results on L2 speakers’ perception of formality in ELF are less conclusive. A study by Ureel et al. (2022) explored the accommodative competence of speakers of English as L2 by asking them to revise sentences through style-shifting and observing how they decoded and corrected (in-)appropriateness. This study found that ELF speakers did not find “the same categories of stylistic variants similarly salient in communicating formality”, suggesting that speakers of English as L2 do not always perceive the same level of formality as English native speakers. These findings could be due to differences in English proficiency of the speakers and thus suggest that proficiency should be considered when assessing the perception of formality. In short, given the contrasting results of previous studies, it is

uncertain whether L2 speakers are sensitive to formality in English, especially if the difference is not easily noticeable nor marked differently than in their mother tongue.

Furthermore, a study by Jakic, Wagner & Meyer (2017), which explored the effects of companies' language style accommodation strategy on brand trust focusing on interactions in social media, revealed that informal style contributes more positively to brand trust and tends to be preferred for it is more relationship-oriented than the formal style. Another study by Decock et al. (2020) investigated the impact of formality on customer outcomes in online complaint management, revealing a positive effect of informality and personalized responses. These findings suggest that an informal style is likely to be preferred in comparison to the formal style. However, it should be noted that these studies focused on native speakers and it would be useful to determine if also non-natives have this preference for informality, especially for the context of international tourism since, in this sector, most of the communication processes happen in English used as *lingua franca*.

To our knowledge, no studies have been carried out specifically on accommodation in terms of formality in English, nor on the channel of website chat support as a customer relations tool in the tourism sector. Investigating the effect of convergence on formality level in English as L2 in customer service chats would give companies useful inputs on how to respond to the customer's effectively. This information would help companies improve communication with customers, contributing to a more effective and specialized customer service department, able to inspire trust and create positive conversations around the company, its services, and its products.

Therefore, the following study consisted of an experiment aiming to observe whether responding to a customer's message by gradually accommodating to the customer's level of formality has a positive impact on the perception of the conversation, the perception of the agent, and the intention to book with the company. The aim was to provide companies with more insight into how accommodation on formality level influences these elements of success. The conversations used for the experiment were set in the context of the tourism sector, specifically the live chat implemented on the website of a hotel company. The goal of the study was to determine whether there is a difference between the accommodated and the non-accommodated replies. Given the previous studies, the expectation was that the accommodated version was going to be preferred. Additionally, we expected to find a general preference for the informal style.

In conclusion, the research question was: Does the use of accommodation in terms of formality in customer service interactions have a positive influence on the attitude towards the conversation, the perception of the agent, and the intention to book with the company?

The hypotheses were the following:

1. H1: An accommodated (converging) response leads to a more positive attitude towards the conversation.
2. H2: An accommodated (converging) response leads to a more positive perception of the agent.
3. H3: An accommodated (converging) response increases the intention to book with the company.
4. H4: The informal responses are preferred to the formal responses.

Methodology:

Materials

The independent variables were “formality” and “accommodation”. The variable “formality” referred to whether the customer’s message used formal or informal language. The two conditions of “formality” were “formal” and “informal”. The variable “accommodation” referred to whether the company accommodated or not to the communication style of the customer. The two conditions of “accommodation” were “converging” and “diverging”. Of the four interactions, one was formal and converging, one formal and diverging, one informal and converging, and one informal and diverging. The customer was either formal or informal and his replies were constant. For practical purposes, participants did not directly experience any customer service interaction, nor were they told to put themselves in the shoes of the customer, but were merely observers. They reported their attitudes, perceptions, and intentions based on their evaluation of a given interaction that already occurred and that they simply had to read.

The study made use of a set of 4 fictive conditions between a customer and a customer service agent. It was decided to create fictive interactions rather than to research and use real conversations in order to be able to manipulate the communication style. This way, the researchers could design a customer’s message that met the requirements to be

considered formal and one that could be considered undoubtedly informal. A further reason to use fictive interaction is that it is not possible to have access to real online live chats from websites of real hotel companies. It was also decided to not use a known hotel brand because the brand attitude participants might have, from previous experience, word-of-mouth or advertising, could influence the results. Therefore the hotel company had a random invented name.

In order to create realistic interactions but at the same time manipulate formality and accommodation, the researchers followed the guidelines provided by the academic articles by Formentelli (2018), Kraut, Fish, Root & Chalfonte (1990), Getry, Horvat, Belei & Van Riel (2017), Irvine (1979) and the book by McFarlane & Waibel (2012). These sources contained plenty of notions on what elements, word choices, and formulations make a sentence formal or informal. The four customer service interactions were made according to these guidelines and can be found in full in the Appendix. The main differences we used to mark the formality or informality of the messages are highlighted in Table 1 for the customer and in Table 2 for the customer service agent.

Table 1. Markers of formality used by the customer

	Formal markers	Informal Markers
Introducing himself	“Hello, my name is John Brown”	“Hey, it’s John”
Asking a question/making a request	“Would it be possible to..” “May I also ask..”	“Can I also have..”
Thanking the agent	“Thank you for the information”	“Thank you so much!” “Thanks!”
Expressions of appreciation	“I’m glad to hear that”	“Cool!”, “That’s nice!” “Sounds amazing!”, “Omg!”
Level of personal disclosure	“Can one request an extra bed?”	“I’m coming with my wife and son.” “You know, we’re taking the flight in the late evening”
Expressing excitement	“I am looking forward to”	“I’m so excited about”

Table 2. Markers of formality used by the agent (hotel)

	Formal markers	Informal Markers
Greeting	“Good afternoon”	“Hello!”
Thanking the customer	“Thank you for contacting us”	“Thanks for reaching out!”
Referring to the customer	“Sir”	“John” (first name)
Referring to the agent	“The resort”, “We”	“We”
Verb choices in explanations	“To provide you with..”	“To get you a..”
Expressing availability of services	“It would be a pleasure to”	“Sure!”, “Of course!”
Wishing the customer a positive experience	“We wish you a pleasant stay”	“Hope you will have a great time 😊!”
Responding to a thank you	“You are welcome”	“We’re here to help!”
Expressing future availability	“We are here for your assistance”	“We’re always here”
Other	“24/h” “In the following days” “Information”	“Anytime” “As soon as possible” “asap” “Infos”

In the formal converging condition, the agent (hotel) started the conversation by addressing the customer by his first name and making use of emojis, exclamation marks, and formulations such as “Of course!” and “Sure!”, but, as he/she starts converging to a formal style, the exclamation marks disappear, the customer is addressed as “sir” and the formulations used are “It will be a pleasure to”, “We are here for your assistance” and “We wish you a pleasant stay”. On the other hand, in the informal converging condition, the agent (hotel) started with a formal “Good afternoon”, addressing the customer as “sir” and as he/she starts converging to the informal style, he/she starts using exclamation marks, formulations such as “We’re happy to help!” and “Hope you have a great time!” and finishes the conversation with an emoji.

The test used was the LexTALE English, which consists of a series of words, some from the English language and some invented. The participants were asked for each word

whether it was an English word or not. This test was chosen because it has been proved to be a good predictor of English vocabulary knowledge and English proficiency in general (Lemhöfer, 2011). Furthermore, according to the same study, it was also found to be more reliable than self-ratings. The test has no time limit but it lasts on average 5 minutes and the scores are expressed in percentages.

Subjects

The study had a total of 60 participants. The population of the study mostly consisted of students (18-25 years old) and a few adults (25-60 years old). The average age was 22 years old ($M= 22.41$, $SD= 6.14$). Two t-tests for accommodation and formality did not show any significant difference in age between the groups.

It was made use of the snowball sampling method, in which the first study subjects found are asked to recruit other subjects among their acquaintances. The one requirement of participants was to be of a mother tongue other than English. This is because the study focuses on English as a second language since most customer service interactions occur between non-natives (Medgeyes, 2001; Wilson, 2018).

Design

The study had a between-subject design to make sure the participants are not aware of the manipulation. They were divided into four groups, each exposed to only one condition, and were equally distributed across the two conditions of accommodation and also across the two conditions of formality.

The participants were not given any information about the concept of accommodation before being exposed to the conditions and were not told that the conversations are fictive. This way, they evaluated the interactions based only on their previous experience and personal opinion without interference from previous experiences.

-Group 1 (formal, converging) was exposed to a conversation between a customer who used formal language and a customer service agent who replied accommodating gradually to this formal style.

-Group 2 (formal, diverging) was exposed to a conversation between a customer who used formal language and a customer service agent who replied with informal language, not accommodating to the customer's preferred style.

-Group 3 (informal, converging) was exposed to a conversation between a customer who used informal language and a customer service agent who replied accommodating gradually to this informal style.

-Group 4 (informal, diverging) was exposed to a conversation between a customer who used informal language and a customer service agent who replied with formal language, not accommodating to the customer's preferred style.

It was decided to test the effect of accommodation (converging/diverging) in both formal and informal conditions because the preferences of customers can vary. Some might prefer a formal style and others an informal style.

Instruments

The dependent variables of the study were "Reader's attitude towards the conversation", "Reader's perception of the agent" and "Reader's intention to book with the company". The three dependent variables were measured with an online questionnaire on Qualtrics composed of 7-points-Likert scales (strongly disagree-strongly agree). The questionnaire was made using as a theoretical basis the work by Angelova and Zekiri (2011), Oliver (1981), and Mirabi, Akbariyeh & Tahmasebifard (2015). In addition, the format for the questions was realized according to a guide on creating questionnaires for customer service studies which was available on the Qualtrics official website.

It was decided to choose the wording "Reader's attitude towards the conversation" instead of "customer satisfaction" because, in this case, it would be improper to use this term because our participants are not the customers in the interactions, but a third party evaluating from the outside conversations which already occurred and expressing their opinion about them. In a similar way, it was decided to use the wording "reader's perception of the agent" instead of "speaker's perception", because the participants are reading, not listening to a conversation, so it is not exact to refer to the customer service agent as a "speaker". Furthermore, it was concluded that it would be more convenient to unify "perception of the agent" and "perception of the company" in one single variable, since the agent is representing his/her company when interacting with the customers. Finally, it was decided to use the wording "Reader's intention to book with the company" instead of "intention to buy again" since the reader is not the customer and did not book with the company. The verb "to buy" was substituted by the verb "to book" because of the context of hospitality.

The questionnaire was composed of a total of fourteen statements, of which five measured the reader's attitude towards the conversation, seven measured the reader's perception of the agent and two measured the reader's intention to book with the company. At the start of each set of statements, the sentence "Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements" was added to introduce the scales, which were all anchored by "Strongly disagree-strongly agree".

For the reader's attitude towards the conversation, the 5 items were the following:

"This conversation would make me satisfied", "This conversation would make me unhappy", "The replies were informative", "The replies were inappropriate" and finally "The replies were logic".

For the reader's perception of the agent, the 7 items were the following: "The company's representative was kind", "The company's representative was unpolite", "The company's representative was competent", "The company's representative was unfriendly", "The company's representative was helpful", "The company's representative was unprofessional", and finally "I had a good impression of the company thanks to this representative".

For the reader's intention to book with the company, the 2 items were "I would be motivated to book with this company" and "I would recommend booking with this company".

Some items, specifically "happy" and "appropriate" for the reader's attitude towards the conversation and "polite", "friendly" and "professional" for the reader's perception of the agent, were negatively worded (e.g. "unhappy") in order to make the participants pay more attention to the questions and the values of the scales.

Procedure

As stated above, the whole study took place as an online survey on Qualtrics. The participants were invited through a link that was sent either by phone or by email.

After clicking on the link, the participant was shown a page containing the Instructions, a brief explanation of what he/she is asked to do for the experiment. The participants were only told that they were about to read a conversation consisting of a message of a customer and its reply from the agent representing the company, and that he/she would be asked to take an English test afterwards. The Instructions' text can be found in the Appendix. After clicking on "Continue", the participant were asked to either click on "I consent" or "I do not consent" and, if they agree to take part in the study, a second page containing a few socio-demographic questions appeared (see Appendix).

Then, the start page of the experiment was displayed (see Appendix). On this page, the participant was informed that it would not be possible to go back to the previous page during the whole questionnaire, and was invited to read the conversation carefully before skipping to the next page. Once the participant clicked on “Start”, he/she was shown the one condition to which he/she has been assigned. The time to read was unlimited, so that participant was able to read the conversation as many times as he/she wishes, and when he/she clicked on “Continue”, the questionnaire page with the Likert scales appeared. On this page, the participant was asked to evaluate the conversation and the agent and to express his/her intention to book with the hotel company. The time to fill in the scales was also unlimited.

Clicking on “Continue” again, a new page displayed a brief text thanking the participant for having given his/her opinion and informing him that the English test would start on the following page (see Appendix). It was specified that the time to do the test was unlimited and that one could not go back. Once the participant clicked on “Start”, the first English test page appeared.

Once the participant was done with the test, a page with a short text thanking for the participation appeared (see Appendix).

Statistical treatment

A two-way MANOVA was executed to test the effect of accommodation and formality on the reader’s attitude towards the conversation, the reader’s perception of the agent, and the reader’s intention to book with the company. In order to determine whether the level of English proficiency of the participants had any influence on our results, two more two-way MANOVAs were executed, one with accommodation and English level as factors, and one with formality and English level as factors.

Results

MANOVA Accommodation and Formality

A two-way multivariate analysis for the reader’s attitude towards the conversation, reader’s perception of the agent, and reader’s intention to book with the company, with accommodation and formality as factors, showed a significant effect of accommodation ($F(3, 54) = 8.5, p < .05$) on all three dependent variables. No significant effect of formality ($F(3,$

54)= 1.728, $p=.172$) nor of the interaction between accommodation and formality was found ($F(3, 54)=.463, p=.709$).

The effect of accommodation was significant on reader's attitude towards the conversation ($F(1, 56)= 25.45, p < .05$), reader's perception of the agent ($F(1, 56) = 23.65, p < .05$), and reader's intention to book with the company ($F(1, 56) = 17.58, p < .05$), indicating that participants exposed to the converging (accommodated) condition had a more positive attitude towards the conversation, a more positive perception of the agent, and a higher intention to book with the company than participants exposed to the diverging (non-accommodated) condition as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations (Std.D) per dependent variable

Dependent Variable	Accommodation	Mean	Std. D
Attitude towards the conversation	converging	33.23	3.22
	diverging	28.33	4.16
Perception of the agent	converging	46.97	4.15
	diverging	40.10	6.55
Intention to book with the company	converging	12.80	2.20
	diverging	10.43	2.23

MANOVA Accommodation and English level

A two-way multivariate analysis for the reader's attitude towards the conversation, reader's perception of the agent, and reader's intention to book with the company, with accommodation and English level as factors, showed a significant effect of accommodation ($F(3, 54)=10.161, p<.05$), of English level ($F(3,54)= 3.012, p=.038$) and of the interaction between accommodation and English level ($F(3.54)= 5.930, p= .001$).

The simple main effect of accommodation was significant for all three dependent variables: on reader's attitude towards the conversation ($F(1, 56)= 29.46, p < .05$) on reader's perception of the agent ($F(1, 56)= 29.21, p<.05$), and reader's intention to book with the company ($F(1, 56)= 21.94, p<.05$). Furthermore, the interaction between accommodation and English level was also significant for all three dependent variables: reader's attitude towards the conversation ($F(1, 56)= 9.39, p =.003$), reader's perception of the agent ($F(1, 56) = 12.73, p = .001$), and reader's intention to book with the company ($F(1, 56) = 18.39, p < .05$). No

significant effect of English level was found on the reader's attitude towards the conversation ($F(1, 56)=.394, p=.533$), reader's perception of the agent ($F(1, 56)=3.37, p=.072$), and reader's intention to book with the company ($F(1, 56)= 353, p=.555$).

As can be seen in Table 4, the positive effect of convergence on our three dependent variables was especially present for the most advanced speakers of English, suggesting that participants with a higher level of English are sensitive to accommodation to a higher extent.

Table 4. Means and standard deviations (Std.D) per dependent variable

Dependent Variable	English Level	Accommodation	Mean	Std. D
Attitude towards the conversation	high	converging	34.33	2.58
		diverging	26.67	3.69
	low	converging	32.13	3.50
		diverging	30.00	3.86
Perception of the agent	high	converging	48.07	3.61
		diverging	36.67	6.70
	low	converging	45.87	4.48
		diverging	43.53	4.32
Intention to book with the company	high	converging	13.73	1.03
		diverging	9.20	2.11
	low	converging	11.87	2.66
		diverging	11.67	1.63

In order to have a clearer idea of the difference between participants with a high level of English and those with a low level in relation to their sensitivity to accommodation, it was decided to split the file and look at the “between-groups” effects.

As can be seen in Table 5, accommodation was a relevant factor for high-level speakers, while for those with a low level it did not matter if the agent converged or not to the customer's style.

Table 5. Between-groups effects for English level in relation to accommodation.

Dependent variable	English level	F (df)	p-value
Attitude towards the conversation	high	F(1)= 43.36	p<.001
	low	F(1)= 2.39	p= .133

Perception of the agent	high	F(1)= 33.60	p<.001
	low	F(1)= 2.10	p= .158
Intention to book with the company	high	F(1)= 55.81	p<.001
	low	F(1)= 0.06	p= .806

MANOVA Formality and English level

A two-way multivariate analysis for the reader's attitude towards the conversation, reader's perception of the agent, and reader's intention to book with the company, with formality and English level as factors, showed a significant effect of English level ($F(3, 54) = 2.84, p = .046$), though the between-subject effects showed no significant effect of English level on reader's attitude towards the conversation ($F(1, 56) = .236, p = .513$), reader's perception of the agent ($F(1, 56) = 1.979, p = .265$), and reader's intention to book with the company ($F(1, 56) = .216, p = .094$). No significant effect of formality ($F(3, 54) = 1.67, p = .184$) nor of the interaction between formality and English level was found ($F(3, 54) = .625, p = .602$).

Conclusion

The main findings allowed us to observe a significant effect of accommodation. As a matter of fact, participants evaluated the conversation and the agent more positively when the responses were converging with the customer's style. In addition, accommodation increased the intention to book with the company. Accordingly, evidence was found that, in cases in which the company's responses were not converging to the customer's preferences, the evaluations of the participants were more negative for all three dependent variables.

Also, the interaction between English proficiency and accommodation had a significant effect. People with a high level of English rated the three variables more positively than people with a low level of English in the converging conditions and more negatively in the diverging conditions. This suggests that people with a high English level could be more sensitive to accommodation. It was also found that, contrastingly, people with a low level of English were not sensitive to accommodation.

On the other hand, no significant effect was found for formality. In fact, readers did not present any significant preference for either formal or informal style in the agent's

responses, as long as those responses were converging with the customer's preferred style. Overall, formality did not have any significant effect, not on its own and not interacting with neither accommodation nor English level.

Regarding English level, it was not significant on its own. Namely, it was not found that people with a higher proficiency were more satisfied with the conversation in general. However, it is observable that the participants with a low level of English tended to rate all three variables more positively than those with a high level of English, although this effect was not significant enough. So, there seems to be a trend in that direction that did not come out to a relevant extent in this experiment.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine whether accommodating to the interlocutor's communication style in terms of formality increased the chances of the conversation being successful. By "successful" is meant that the conversation not only has satisfied the needs of the customer by answering his/her questions, but has also transmitted a positive feeling towards the conversation, leading the customer to have a good opinion of the company, and increasing the chances of the customer proceeding with the booking.

To this end, we analysed how participants judged four different conversations between a customer and a customer service agent. These interactions were designed so that two would display evident accommodation to the customer's current style and the other two would not. The conversations were four in total in order to have a version in which the formal style was preferred and one in which the informal style was preferred. In addition, to gain insight into how English proficiency might play a role in the evaluations, participants were also tested on their English skills with a test.

The results confirmed that converging with the interlocutor's style leads to a more positive attitude towards the conversation and a more positive perception of the agent and that it also increases the intention to book with the company. So it can be stated that H1, H2, and H3 were confirmed. Apparently, accommodation does have a relevant influence on the three dependent variables. These findings confirm what had been found by previous studies about accommodation. According to what early research on the concept of Accommodation stated, our study found further evidence for convergence evoking positive reactions in its recipients and for divergence evoking negative reactions (Giles, Taylor & Bourhis, 1973).

Our study also found evidence supporting what had been previously stated by Jakic, Wagner & Meyer (2017), namely that the ability to assess the communication environment and adapt to the customer's preferences to develop a common language is likely to lead to more successful business interactions. It was also proved to be true that this change can have a positive impact on customer satisfaction and benefit the company (Jakic, Wagner & Meyer, 2017).

Regarding formality, previous research by Jakic, Wagner & Meyer (2017) and Decock et al. (2020) had found a general preference for the informal style in native speakers of English. Contrastingly, in our study, which had exclusively L2 speakers as participants, formality did not influence the results to a significant extent. Therefore H4 was rejected. These results suggest that non-natives might not have a preference for a certain degree of formality, but, as highlighted above, they do prefer it when the formality level is converging to the customer's.

Furthermore, as explained in the introduction, English was taken into account because a low English level could have limited the participants' understanding of the conversation, and consequently their perception of the stylistic features that make a given phrase formal or informal, making them less aware of the accommodation taking place. The study found that a high English level might strengthen the effect of accommodation. In other words, proficient people are likely to be more sensitive to accommodation than people that are not proficient. In this specific case, accommodation was found to have an effect exclusively on high-level speakers, while it made no difference for low-level speakers. The reason behind it could be that the higher the English level the wider is the vocabulary, and therefore the participants with a good English proficiency know more stylistic features that make a given sentence more formal or more informal and are able to perceive the most subtle differences between word choices that might seem equivalent to someone not as proficient.

Previous studies had presented contrasting results, but it could be claimed that our study partly confirmed what had been stated by Kouwenhoven et al. (2016), namely that "L2 speakers take account of the situational context and choose communication strategies based on the need for explicit information exchange". This was found to be the case for high-level speakers but not for low-level speakers. However, it should be noted that the study by Kouwenhoven et al. (2016) did not include the proficiency of the participants. In general, ours was the first study, to our knowledge, to test L2 speakers on accommodation in terms of formality dividing them per English level and researching whether differences in proficiency affected the results. Other studies only compared a group of speakers of English as ELF with

a group of English native speakers, e.g. Ureel et al. (2022). It would be useful if future studies could observe from which English level on customers are sensitive to accommodation.

Nevertheless, the study also presented some limitations. First of all, it only had sixty participants. Having a significantly higher number of participants could help to gain more insight into the topic of accommodation in terms of formality and increase the chances of English level having an effect on its own, so not only in the interaction with accommodation, on the dependent variables singularly. As explained in the previous section, this factor's effect was almost significant, and the most probable explanation is the small number of participants. In addition, it should be noted that there was not much variety in terms of nationality and age. As a matter of fact, most of the participants were of Italian nationality and in their 20s. Future studies could work with more participants of different age ranges and could keep them divided into nationality groups to see if certain nationalities are more or less sensitive to accommodation and/or formality. Another useful addition to the study could be a pre-test in which a separated group of participants evaluates the 4 interactions in terms of credibility. This way, it would be sure that the conversations look real and authentic. It should also be taken into account that, in this study, the participants evaluated the interactions from the outside, as a third party. It is not to exclude that they could react differently in real life when they are directly involved. Therefore, future research could attempt to give the participants a more active role, for example by showing them two possible replies to a given message, one converging and one diverging, and having them pick the one they consider more appropriate and then asking them to motivate their choice.

To conclude, this study provided evidence suggesting that accommodating to the customer's preferred style leads to more positive outcomes and makes a difference in customer service live chats. Our study also found the following evidence: it is not formality itself that influences the evaluation of the conversation, but rather the appropriateness of the degree of formality given the context and the customer's preference. Namely, participants did not seem to prefer neither the formal style nor the informal style, but it did matter if the agent's choice was coherent with the customer's communication style.

Moreover, it could be stated that our study added to previous research that linguistic accommodation strategies also work with non-native speakers of English and are noticed and appreciated by people with a high level of English proficiency, while they remain unnoticed by people with a low level. This evidence suggests that English proficiency plays a relevant

role in the interaction with accommodation when it comes to perceiving the degree of formality.

Thus, a customer service agent might be more likely to succeed if he/she makes use of accommodation strategies when answering to customers' messages. Since companies do not have control over the customer's English level, it is advisable to always accommodate to the customer's style. If the customer is proficient, the effort will be appreciated, and, otherwise, it will simply go unnoticed, but it will not lead to negative outcomes in either ways. Being aware of this phenomenon could reveal itself useful for hospitality companies as well as any kind of business with a customer service department. One impactful initiative could be to design courses for customer service agents to train them to recognize the linguistic features which denote a certain style and consequently be able to choose the right words to use when replying. This kind of training could be expanded beyond the concept of formality and cover other aspects of accommodation as well, and maybe a similar preparation could be implemented for those roles that entail face-to-face communication with the customers.

Today's customer service professionals must be proactive and knowledgeable. They must be able to provide information to potential customers at every stage of the buying process, in order to be able to influence their decisions when they still have their attention. Doing it accommodating to the customer's style preference is very likely to increase the chances of the interaction being successful, leading to a more positive opinion of the company and consequently improving its revenues as well as its reputation.

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Appendix

a. **Introduction**

Dear participant,

Thank you for helping us with our research.

We are a group of students of International Business Communication students at Radboud University and we are conducting an experiment about customer service interactions. You will be shown a chat between a customer and a customer service agent and then you will be asked to express your opinion about it. Afterward, you will be asked to do a short English assessment test. You have unlimited time to complete it. The whole experiment will take maximum 15 minutes. The information will remain anonymous.

You can always contact us if you have further questions (francesca.bacchilega@ru.nl).

Click on "Continue" to give consent and answer some socio-demographical questions before the start.



b. **CONSENT FORM**

Researcher responsible: Francesca Bacchilega

Statement of executive researcher:

I declare that I have informed the above-mentioned person correctly about the research study and that I abide by the guidelines for research as stated in the protocol of the Ethics Assessment Committee Humanities.

Statement of participant:

The aim of the research study has been outlined to me. I participate voluntarily in the research study. I understand that I can stop at any point during the research study, should I wish to do so. I understand how the data of the research study will be stored and how they will be used. I consent to participating in the research study as described in the information document.

By clicking on "I consent" you agree to take part in this study.

I consent

I do not consent



c. **Socio-demographic information**

First of all, we would like to ask you some background questions. The information is strictly confidential.

1. What is your age?

2. What is your nationality?

3. What is your native language?

4. What is your level of education?

Secondary school

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

PhD

other

5. What is the average of trips that you usually do in one year period?

More than one per month

One per month

One every few months

One per year

Less than one per year

6. How often do you book your accommodation online?

Every time

Most of the times

Sometimes

Rarely

Never



d. **Start of the study**

Thank you for filling in the socio-demographic information. You will now be shown an interaction between a customer service agent and a customer. It is not possible to go back, so take your time to read carefully. Click on "Continue" to start the experiment.



- **The 4 conditions** (each participant will only see one)

FORMAL CONVERGING condition

Hotel: Hello! Here's WIS Resort. How can I help you?

Customer: Hello, my name is John Brown. I would like to know whether you have rooms available for the month of July.

Hotel: Hello John! Thank you for reaching out. Yes, we still have rooms for July, except the Deluxe Twin Suite. But we're receiving a lot of bookings these weeks because summer vacations are just around the corner. So make sure to book as soon as possible! Hope you find the perfect room for your holiday 😊.

Customer: Thank you for the information. May I also ask what is the difference between a double room and a twin room?

Hotel: Of course! A double room has two single beds while a twin room has one bed for two people. Does it answer your question?

Customer: Yes, thank you. I have one more question. Can one request an extra bed for a third person in a twin room? And, if so, at what cost?

Hotel: Sure! We would be glad to accommodate you with a third bed. The cost of an additional bed in a twin room is of 65 € per night. You can call our team at 1-888-599-5959 to confirm the reservation and make a request.

Customer: Thank you for the information. May I also ask if you have a shuttle service that connects the resort to the airport? And, if so, would it be possible to call a shuttle later than 11 pm?

Hotel: Yes, the shuttle service is active 24/h. The number to call for the service is 0542-28953.

Customer: Thank you. This is very helpful. Do you also offer shuttles to go to the parks?

Hotel: Yes sir, we can arrange the service that best fits your needs. The options include hourly busses that leave from the resort for the two amusement parks of the city, Steel Fun Park and Thrill & Chills. The time schedule and prices per person can be found in this link: <https://www.wisresort.com/bus-service-parks-/>. Alternatively, we can provide you a personal driver with our partner company, Elite Cabs, that also offers services for our guests to events, such as concerts and conferences. Does it answer your question?

Customer: Yes, thank you for the information. Just one more question. We have a small dog and we plan to take it with us for the holiday. Does the resort have services for animals? And, if so, what would be the price?

Hotel: It will be a pleasure for us to have your pet at the resort. The tariff per day is 45€ for a small dog. It includes the cleaning fee, food 3 times per day, a daycare center for entertainment, which includes a reserved area in the outdoors, and our highly qualified dogwalkers.

Customer: I'm glad to hear it. I'm going to inform my family before proceeding with the booking. I'm looking forward to our stay at the resort. Thank you for your help.

Hotel: You are welcome. We are looking forward to your arrival. If you have any further questions, we are here for your assistance. We wish you have a pleasant stay at the WIS Resort.

FORMAL DIVERGING condition

Hotel: Hello! Here's WIS Resort. How can I help you?

Customer: Hello, my name is John Brown. I would like to know whether you have rooms available for the month of July.

Hotel: Hello John! Thank you for reaching out. Yes, we still have rooms for July, except the Deluxe Twin Suite. But we're receiving a lot of bookings these weeks because summer vacations are just around the corner. So make sure to book as soon as possible! Hope you find the perfect room for your holiday 😊.

Customer:

Thank you for the information. May I ask what is the difference between a double room and a twin room?

Hotel:

Of course! A double room has two single beds while a twin room has one bed for two people. Is it clearer now?

Customer:

Yes, thank you. I have one more question. Can one request an extra bed for a third person in a twin room? And, if so, at what cost?

Hotel:

We can surely get you an extra bed! The cost is of 65€ per night. To confirm the reservation and make the request you can call our team at 1-888-599-5959.

Customer: Thank you for the information. May I also ask if you have a shuttle service that connects the resort to the airport? And, if so, would it be possible to call a shuttle later than 11 pm?

Hotel: Sure! We have shuttles ready to pick you up anytime. All you have to do is call this number: 0542-28953.

Customer: Thank you. This is very helpful. Do you also offer shuttles to go to the parks?

Hotel: Yes, there are many options you can choose from. We have busses going to the amusement parks Steel Fun Park and Thrill & Chills every hour. Here's the link with all you need to know: <https://www.wisresort.com/bus-service-parks-/>. Or we can also find you a driver! We collaborate with the transport company Elite Cabs, that also offers services for our guests to events, such as concerts and conferences. Does this help you?

Customer: Yes, thank you for the information. I will look at the link you sent. Just one more question. We have a small dog and we plan to take it with us for the holiday. Does the resort have services for animals? And, if so, what would be the price?

Hotel: Of course! We're glad to welcome your pet! The tariff of a small dog per day is 45€ and it includes cleaning, food 3 times per day, a daycare center for entertainment, and of course our passionate dog walkers!

Customer: I'm glad to hear it. I'm going to inform my family before proceeding with the booking. I'm looking forward to our stay at the resort. Thank you for the help.

Hotel: We're happy to help! If you have any further questions, we're always here. We're looking forward to have you at the resort. Hope you have a great time! Have a nice day 😊!

INFORMAL CONVERGING condition

Hotel: Good afternoon. Here's WIS Resort. How can I help you?

Customer: Hey, it's John. I wanted to ask if you still have rooms available for the month of July.

Hotel: Hello sir. Thank you for contacting us. Yes, it is still possible to book an accommodation at our resort in July. The only exception is the Deluxe Twin Suite, which is unfortunately already reserved. We should also inform you that the rooms might not be available anymore in a short time. All spots are usually reserved for the summer break by the end of April. We would recommend to make your booking in the following days to make sure we can provide you with the perfect room for your vacation.

Customer:

Thank you! By the way, what is the difference between a double room and a twin room?

Hotel:

The only difference between a twin and double room is the number of beds. A double room has two single beds while a twin room has one bed for two people. Does it answer your question?

Customer:

Yes! Thank you so much! Also, if I book a twin room for me and my wife, can I ask for an extra single bed for my son? And how much does it cost?

Hotel:

We can surely get you an extra bed! The cost is of 65€ per night. To confirm the reservation and make the request you can call our team at 1-888-599-5959.

Customer: Got it! I was also wondering if you have a shuttle that can pick us up from the airport. You know, we're taking the flight in the late evening and if we land later than scheduled we could really use a ride!

Hotel: Sure! We have shuttles ready to pick you up anytime. All you have to do is call this number: 0542-28953.

Customer: Cool. Thanks! And do you also offer a shuttle for the parks?

Hotel: Yes, there are many options you can choose from. We have busses going to the amusement parks Steel Fun Park and Thrill & Chills every hour. Here's the link with all you need to know: <https://www.wisresort.com/bus-service-parks-/>. Or we can also find you a driver. We collaborate with the transport company Elite Cabs, that also offers services for our guests to events, such as concerts and conferences. Does this help you?

Customer: Nice! Yes, those were just the infos that I was looking for! I will look further into it asap. Just one more question, do you accept animals? We have a small dog that we would like to take with us. And what is the price?

Hotel: Of course! We're glad to welcome your pet! The tariff of a small dog per day is 45€ and it includes cleaning, food 3 times per day, a daycare center for entertainment, and of course our passionate dog walkers!

Customer: Omg! That's so nice! Sounds amazing! I'm going to inform my family before booking our rooms. I'm so excited about our stay! Thanks for your help!

Hotel: We're happy to help! If you have any further questions, we're always here. We're looking forward to have you at the resort. Hope you have a great time! Have a nice day 😊!

INFORMAL DIVERGING condition

Hotel: Good afternoon. Here's WIS Resort. How can I help you?

Customer: Hey, it's John. I wanted to ask if you still have rooms available for the month of July.

Hotel: Hello sir. Thank you for contacting us. Yes, it is still possible to book an accommodation at our resort in July. The only exception is the Deluxe Twin Suite, which is unfortunately already reserved. We should also inform you that the rooms might not be

available anymore in a short time. All spots are usually reserved for the summer break by the end of April. We would recommend to make your booking in the following days to make sure we can provide you with the perfect room for your vacation.

Customer:

Thank you! By the way, what is the difference between a double room and a twin room?

Hotel:

Yes, there is indeed a difference. A double room has two single beds while a twin room has one bed for two people. Does it answer your question?

Customer:

Yes! Thank you so much! Also, if I book a twin room for me and my wife, can I ask for an extra single bed for my son? And how much does it cost?

Hotel:

We would be glad to accommodate you with a third bed. The cost of an additional bed in a twin room is of 65 € per night. You can call our team at 1-888-599-5959 to confirm the reservation and make a request.

Customer: Got it! I was also wondering if you have a shuttle that can pick us up from the airport. You know, we're taking the flight in the late evening and if we land later than scheduled we could really use a ride!

Hotel: Yes sir, the resort can provide you with a shuttle anytime. The number to call for the service is 0542-28953.

Customer: Cool. Thanks! And do you also offer a shuttle for the parks?

Hotel: Yes sir, we can arrange the service that best fits your needs. The options include hourly busses that leave from the resort for the two amusement parks of the city, Steel Fun Park and Thrill & Chills. The time schedule and prices per person can be found in this link: <https://www.wisresort.com/bus-service-parks-/>. Alternatively, we can provide you a personal

driver with our partner company, Elite Cabs, that also offers services for our guests to events, such as concerts and conferences. Does it answer your question?

Customer: Nice! Yes, those were just the infos that I was looking for! I will look further into it asap. Just one more question, do you accept animals? We have a small dog that we would like to take with us. And what is the price?

Hotel: It will be a pleasure for us to have your pet at the resort. The tariff per day is 45€ for a small dog. It includes the cleaning fee, food for your animal 3 times per day, a daycare center for entertainment, which includes a reserved area in the outdoors, and our highly qualified dogwalkers.

Customer: Omg! That's so nice! Sounds amazing! I'm going to inform my family before booking our rooms. I'm so excited about our stay! Thanks for your help!

Hotel: You are welcome. We are looking forward to your arrival. If you have any further questions, we are here for your assistance. We wish you have a pleasant stay at the WIS Resort.



f. **Start of the questionnaire**

You will now be asked a few questions about the conversation you just read. The time to answer the questions is unlimited.



g. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. This conversation would make me satisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. This conversation would make me unhappy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The replies were informative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The replies were inappropriate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The replies were logic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



h. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. The company's representative was kind	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The company's representative was unpolite	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The company's representative was competent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The company's representative was unfriendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The company's representative was helpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The company's representative was unprofessional	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I had a good impression of the company thanks to this representative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



i. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I would be motivated to book with this company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I would recommend booking with this company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



I. Introduction LexTALE English test

This test consists of about 60 trials, in each of which you will see a string of letters.

Your task is to decide whether this is an existing English word or not. If you think it is an existing English word, you click on "yes", and if you think it is not an existing English word, you click on "no". If you are sure that the word exists, even though you don't know its exact meaning, you may still respond "yes". But if you are not sure if it is an existing word, you should respond "no". In this experiment, we use British English rather than American English spelling.

For example: "realise" instead of "realize"; "colour" instead of "color", and so on. Please don't let this confuse you. This experiment is not about detecting such subtle spelling differences anyway. You have as much time as you like for each decision.

This part of the experiment will take about 5 minutes. If everything is clear, you can now start the experiment.



(Start of the LexTALE English test)

You have as much time as you like for each decision. This part of the experiment will take about 5 minutes.

	No	Yes
Platery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Denial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Generic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mensible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scornful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stoutly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ablaze	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kermshaw	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	No	Yes
Moonlit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	No	Yes
Lofty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hurricane	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flaw	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alberation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unkempt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Breeding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Festivity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	No	Yes
Screech	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Savoury	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plaudate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fluid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spaunch	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Slain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	No	Yes
Recipient	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exprate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eloquence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dispatch	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rebondicate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ingenious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bewitch	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	No	Yes
Skave	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plaintively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kilp	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interfate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hasty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lengthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	No	Yes
Fray	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crumper	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	No	Yes
Upkeep	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Majestic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Magrity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nourishment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aberg	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Proom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Turmoil	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Carbohydrate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	No	Yes
Scholar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Turtle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fellick	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Destription	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cylinder	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Censorship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Celestial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rascal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purrage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pulsh	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Muddy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quirly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pudour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wrought	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Dear participant,

you have reached the end of the survey.

You may now close this window.

- Ethics checklist

Checklist EACH (version 1.6, november 2020)

You fill in the questions by clicking on the square next to the chosen answer

After clicking, a cross will appear in this square

1. Is a health care institution involved in the research?

Explanation: A health care institution is involved if one of the following (A/B/C) is the case:

- A. One or more employees of a health care institution is/are involved in the research as principle or in the carrying out or execution of the research.
- B. The research takes place within the walls of the health care institution and should, following the nature of the research, generally not be carried out outside the institution.
- C. Patients / clients of the health care institution participate in the research (in the form of treatment).

No → continue with questionnaire

Yes → Did a Dutch Medical Institutional Review Board (MIRB) decide that the Wet Medisch Onderzoek (Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act) is not applicable?

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch [CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen](#) → end of checklist

2. Do grant providers wish the protocol to be assessed by a recognised MIRB?

No → continue with questionnaire

Yes → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch [CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen](#) → end of checklist

3. Does the research include [medical-scientific research](#) that might carry risks for the participant?

No → continue with questionnaire

Yes → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch [CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen](#) → end of checklist

Standard research method

4. Does this research fall under one of the stated [standard research methods](#) of the Faculty of Arts or the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies?

Yes → Standard evaluation and attitude research → continue with questionnaire

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist

Participants

5. Is the participant population a healthy one?

- Yes → continue with questionnaire
- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)

6. Will the research be conducted amongst minors (<16 years of age) or amongst (legally) incapable persons?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- No → continue with questionnaire

Method

7. Is a method used that makes it possible to produce a coincidental finding that the participant should be informed of?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- No → continue with questionnaire

8. Will participants undergo treatment or are they asked to perform certain behaviours that can lead to discomfort?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- No → continue with questionnaire

9. Are the estimated risks connected to the research minimal?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

10. Are the participants offered a different compensation than the usual one?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- No → continue with questionnaire

11. Should [deception](#) take place, does the procedure meet the standard requirements?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

12. Are the standard regulations regarding [anonymity and privacy](#) met?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

Conducting the research

13. Will the research be carried out at an external location (such as a school, hospital)?
- No → continue with questionnaire
 - Yes → Do you have/will you receive written permission from this institution?
 - No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
 - Yes → continue with questionnaire

14. Is there a contact person to whom participants can turn to with questions regarding the research and are they informed of this?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

15. Is it clear for participants where they can file complaints with regard to participating in the research and how these complaints will be dealt with?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

16. Are the participants free to participate in the research, and to stop at any given point, whenever and for whatever reason they should wish to do so?

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

17. Before participating, are participants informed by means of an information document about the aim, nature and risks and objections of the study? (zie [explanation on informed consent](#) and [sample documents](#)).

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → continue with questionnaire

18. Do participants and/or their representatives sign a consent form? (zie [explanation on informed consent](#) and [sample documents](#)).

- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → [go to assessment procedure](#)
- Yes → checklist finished

If you want to record the results of this checklist, please save the completed file.

If you need approval from the EACH due to the requirement of a publisher or research grant provider, you will have to follow the formal assessment procedure of the EACH.