

RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN

# The evaluation of English slogans in contrast to the mother tongue

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## An experiment amongst German and Dutch participants

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## Abstract

In this study, an experiment among 238 participants was conducted to discover if Dutch and German participants evaluated a logo with an English slogan as more modern, international and prestigious than a logo with a slogan in the mother tongue. Correspondingly, differences between the evaluation of the logo and slogan and differences between the evaluation of the brand between Dutch and German participants were included in this study. Since Dutch citizens are generally more exposed to the English language, Dutch participants were thought to evaluate English higher than German participants. Two product categories were tested, based on earlier research of Rossiter, Percy & Donovan (1991): soap as a low-involvement product, and life insurances as a high-involvement product. Results showed a significant difference between Dutch and German participants regarding the evaluation of symbolic value on the English language. Dutch participants rated English as more modern, international and prestigious than German participants did, which could be a result of the mere-exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968) of English for Dutch participants.

### 1. Introduction

In modern days' world English is embedded everywhere around us: advertisements, commercials and it even infiltrated some languages with common used words or sentences. Throughout the years the English language has developed itself as a *lingua franca*, where it acts as a 'contact language' (Firth, 1996, p. 240). That is to say, English is used as a language for non-native speakers of English who do not share a common national culture and for whom English is the chosen foreign language to communicate with each other. English manifested itself as ELF, which refers to the communication in English between speakers of different mother tongues (Seidlhofer, 2005). Briefly, English as a lingua franca allows people over the world to communicate and share information more easily. The language has evolved in such a way that nowadays only one out of four English speakers is in fact a native speaker (Bryson, 1991; Seidlhofer, 2005). This phenomenon is proved to be developing worldwide, therefore it is reasonable to state that it is also present in Europe. Statistics show that in 2006, 51 per cent of the European inhabitants claimed to speak English in addition to their mother tongue (European Commission, 2006). For 2012, this number even increased to 54 per cent, showing an evident growth (European Commission, 2012). English has also become increasingly important in the business sector. Research by Crystal (1997) found that 99 per cent of the

companies say they use English as an official language, and that virtually all reports are in English. Additionally, several studies proved that a majority of European organisations include English next to their mother language in advertisements, commercials and slogans (Raedts et al., 2016; Gerritsen, Korzilius, Van Meurs and Gijsbers, 2000; Gerritsen et al., 2010).

### **Logos, slogans and brands**

Companies' slogans are closely related to companies' logo and support the business identity and the brand (Kohli, Suri & Thakor, 2002). Therefore, in order to gain sustainable competitive advantage a company should see it as an essential activity to create the best logo and slogan that fits their company values and subsequently communicates these values to their customers (Henderson & Cote, 1998). In short, a logo serves as a graphic design of a company to identify itself or its products, with or without the company's name (Henderson & Cote, 1998). A logo is crucial for a company as of multiple reasons. Firstly, a logo serves as an identification symbol of a company (Van Grinsven & Das, 2016). Secondly, logos are useful tools for the recognition of a company (Henderson & Cote, 1998) Lastly, it helps to recall the company's name (Henderson & Cote, 1998). Several studies already investigated the concept of logos. The study of Henderson & Cote (1998) for instance assisted managers in selecting and modifying logos to achieve their corporate image goals, while Lans et al. (2009) examined the universality of design perception and response, to see whether logo designs were evaluated similarly in different countries. Subsequently, another research covering the effects of fair trade logos on speakers of their mother tongue and a second language has proven that fair trade logos made products taste better, merely because of the presence of a fair trade logo (Tang et al., 2016).

A slogan is defined as a short phrase which captures the identity or philosophy of a brand (Piller, 2001). Take Nissan for instance, a company who operates under the slogan: *innovation that excites* (nissanbrand-me, 2016). The company's mission, as stated on their website, is that 'Nissan provides unique and innovative automotive products and services that deliver superior measurable values to all stakeholders in alliance with Renault' (Nissan-global, 2016). The car manufacturer's mission is to excite their stakeholders with the new technology that has been installed in their cars, which relates to their slogan.

Even though a good logo or slogan is essential for a company, the language used in a slogan could be quite a hassle and is not always as easy as it seems. The use of a second language in advertisements, like English, can result in incorrect interpretations of a company's slogan and therefore its brand (Gerritsen et al., 2010). Several studies prove that a majority of European advertisements, commercials and slogans include English next to their mother

language (Raedts et al., 2016; Gerritsen et al., 2007; Gerritsen, 2010), but using English in a slogan does not necessarily mean that a slogan, logo or brand is better understood and evaluated higher. A misunderstanding of a slogan could result in an incorrect understanding of a company's values and beliefs. For example, a study of Leffers (2004) found that many German people struggled with the English slogan of Douglas, a German perfumery retail. Douglas' slogan: *'Come in and find out'* was falsely interpreted as: *'Come in and find the exit'*, completely missing the message Douglas wanted to bring to the German people (Leffers, 2004). Also, a study of Gerritsen et al. (2000) found a miscomprehension in a Dutch advertisement of Lion, which featured the slogan *'Nothing beats a Lion'*. More than half of the Dutch participants interpreted this as *'nothing beast a Lion'*, which resulted in a completely different and incorrect sentence. Studies of Raedts et al. (2016) and Hornikx et al. (2007) gave empirical evidence too that an English slogan which is not understood, is evaluated lower than when it is in fact understood. In this case, participants preferred a slogan in the mother tongue over a difficult English slogan.

### **Mere exposure**

In Europe, the Netherlands is one of the leading countries regarding the amount of citizens who speak English as foreign language next to their mother language (90%), (European Commission, 2012; ef, 2016). For Germany, this number is relatively lower (56%). Over time, speaking English has become almost as normal as speaking Dutch for many Dutch people. This phenomenon is reflected in many aspects of the Dutch culture, one example being Dutch television. If one were to switch on a television in the Netherlands, one would find as many channels in Dutch as in English with the addition of Dutch subtitles (anglik, n.d.). Research of De Bot (1994) pointed out that 40 to 60 per cent of the Dutch television programmes are in English with Dutch subtitles. Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof (2001) even conducted a research on subtitling and dubbing and found the Netherlands to be a typical subtitling country. This is quite remarkable as most European countries choose to dub their television programmes instead of using subtitles in their mother tongue. This is the case in Germany, which is a typical dubbing countries (Koolstra, Peeters & Spinhof, 2001).

This development could mean that Dutch people in general evaluate English higher on certain aspects than German people do. If this is the case, a certain effect occurred here: *'the mere-exposure effect'*. The mere-exposure effect is a condition which makes the stimulus accessible to perception (Zajonc, 1968). Simply put, this effect occurs when someone creates a preference for something that one has been exposed to before, over something that one has

Met opmerkingen [AT1]: 'this effect occurs when'

not been exposed to before. For this study, this effect is displayed as a higher evaluation of the English language than the mother tongue, as a result of exposure to English. Since different countries' inhabitants experience different amounts of exposure to English, differences in evaluation between countries are likely to occur as of the mere-exposure effect.

If the mere-exposure effect in English exists for the Dutch people, it could also affect other fields of English apart from subtitling. English has also become increasingly important in the business sector. Several studies already proved that a majority of European organisations include English next to their mother language in advertisement, commercials and slogans (Raedts et al., 2016; Gerritsen, Korzilius, Van Meurs and Gijsbers, 2000; Gerritsen et al., 2010). Research of Hornikx, Van Meurs and De Boer (2010) showed that Dutch people prefer easy English slogans over the same slogans in Dutch, which could have been a result of the mere-exposure effect, though no similar study was found for German people. Raedts et al. (2016) confirms the findings of Hornikx et al. (2010) by doing a similar research. In their country-comparing research 711 participants were asked to evaluate a fictional toothpaste add. The add was identical for the participants from the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Germany, apart from the difficulty of the English slogan used in the add. Results showed that all participants had approximately the same outcome: participants who had understood the slogan had a more positive attitude for the slogan, brand and advertisement, though had no clear preference for the English slogan or the slogan in their mother tongue. Participants who did not understand the slogan, preferred the add in their mother tongue (Raedts et al., 2016). The researchers stated that this preference for English slogans over the mother tongue could be explained through the 'symbolic value' of English. However, it is difficult to state that the preference for English is in fact the result of the symbolic value of English. This leads to an interesting gap in science where the occurrence of the symbolic value of English could quite influence slogans of organisations. A gap this study will try to fill by further investigating the symbolic value of English in English and mother tongue slogans.

### **Markedness model and symbolic value**

Since English is used as a *lingua franca*, and numbers of Europeans who are able to speak English next to their native language increases (European Commission, 2012), it could be understandable that the English language causes several different effects on non-native speakers of English. A well-known effect translated through the markedness model (Myers-Scotton, 1983). This model states that the use of a foreign language is not only convenient for processing certain information, it may also awaken certain associations linked to that particular

language. The markedness model could therefore assist in the decision making process of people. For example, Hornikx and Hof (2008) found that the use of a non-native language in an advertisement is more effective when this particular language fits a particular product. Spanish, for instance, has a better fit with oranges than with washing machines because of the association one gets when talking about or in Spanish (Hornikx & Hof, 2008). Hornikx, Van Meurs and Starren (2007) delivered empirical evidence for these arguments. Dutch participants in their research were asked to mention associations for two advertisements of an electronic device. These two ads were identical, except for the language used. Results showed that the participants opted for 'reliable' and 'business-like' in the German ad more than in the French and Spanish ones. Likewise, Kelly-Holmes (2000, 2005) and Piller (2001) even argue that English in advertisements is particularly used for its symbolic value, which evokes associations too such as modernity, internationality (Bhatia, 1992; Piller, 2003) and prestige marker (Martin, 2006). These associations are part of the 'symbolic value' of English, meaning that when English is spoken, these associations might arise in the thoughts of a person. However, empirical evidence of the actual presence of symbolic value in the English language is hardly available (Raedts, Roozen, Peeters, Dupré & Cueppens, 2016).

### **Research goals**

The choice between a local or foreign language in a slogan proved an important aspect when someone wants to communicate their company's brand (Gerritsen et al., 2000; Raedts et al., 2016, Hornikx et al. (2010)). The markedness model evokes certain associations when a foreign language, like English, is spoken (Myers-Scotton, 1983). This symbolic value of the English language is associated with modernity, internationality (Bhatia, 1992; Piller, 2003) and prestige marker (Martin, 2002), yet research which could further support these theories is still absent. This is quite remarkable as many companies use English slogans without realizing what kind of effect it could evoke to its consumers. Further research into the symbolic value of English could therefore be a good indicator whether a company should use English or the mother tongue in a slogan, especially in countries as the Netherlands where it is supposed that English has a higher preference than a country as Germany (European Commission, 2012). This is where this study is particularly interested in. This study wants to further investigate to what extent the Dutch and German people evaluate logos containing English slogans as more modern, international and prestigious than logos containing slogans in their native language. For that reason, it is interesting to test if this symbolic value is of any influence for English slogans for Dutch and German participants.

*RQ: 'To what extent do German and Dutch people evaluate a logo with an English slogan as more modern, international and prestigious than a logo with a slogan in the mother tongue?'*

A further goal of this study is to find out to what extent logos with English slogans are rated higher or lower relative to logos with slogans in the native language by Dutch and German participants. Likewise, another goal is to gain insight into what extent the Dutch and German participants rate brands with an English slogan higher or lower than brands with a slogan in the mother tongue. Researches of Hornikx et al. (2010) and Raedts et al. (2016) showed that English slogans which are easy to understand are preferred over slogans in the mother tongue. Therefore, the following hypothesis of this research will be in line with the research of Hornikx et al. (2010) and Raedts et al. (2016):

*H1: 'Logos and brands with an English slogan are more positively perceived than logos and brands with a mother tongue slogan'.*

Since this study focuses on German and Dutch people, it is interesting to find out if Dutch participants are indeed more exposed to English than their German counterparts. If this is the case, it could be possible that Dutch participants will evaluate the English slogans more positively than German ones. As mentioned before, Germany was placed in the category of typical dubbing countries, whereas the Netherlands was a typical subtitling country (Koolstra, Peeters & Spinhof, 2006). Research of Gerritsen et al. (2007) discovered that 57 per cent of the German advertisements in a glossy magazine contained English, against 64 per cent of the Dutch advertisements in the identical Dutch magazine. Likewise, Gerritsen (2010) stated that 87 per cent of the Dutch inhabitants are able to hold a conversation in English, next to 45 per cent for the German inhabitants (European Commission, 2006). The assumption that Dutch people are more exposed to English than German people could therefore be a fairly realistic one. This could also mean that there is a possibility that Dutch people evaluate English slogans higher than German people, and that the Germans evaluate their native language slogans higher than the Dutch do. Consequently, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H2: 'Dutch participants have a more favourable evaluation of the logo and brand with an English slogan, while German participants have a more favourable evaluation of the logo and brand with slogans in their mother tongue'.*

The scientific relevance of the research question and the corresponding research goals is initially to try to fill the scientific gap regarding the symbolic value of English. Many researches already state that little research that has been conducted on this topic could support the assumptions for symbolic value (Raedts et al., 2016, Hornikx et al., 2010). Next to that, this study attempts to further investigate the evaluation of English slogans in countries where English is a non-native language, in this case the Netherlands and Germany. This could also supplement societal relevance as this research gives more insights for Dutch and German companies in choosing the most appropriate language in slogans.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Materials

In this study two independent variables were researched: the nationality of the participant (German or Dutch) and the language used in the slogan (mother tongue or English). Prior to this study, a pre-test was conducted to determine which four logos combined with four slogans met the criteria in the best possible way. Six Radboud University students selected these four logos, which were logos from products that could not be bought in Germany or the Netherlands.

#### 2.1.1. Logos

The logos were selected on one main criteria: the simplicity of the logo. This was done because the focus of this study was on the influence of language of slogans, not logos. In order to prevent the occurrence of unwanted recognition by participants the following criteria were applied: (1) no use of colour in the logo, (2) the logo should be unknown to the participants, (3) the brand name of the logo should not be revealed and (4) the logo had to be categorized in one of the two categories of involvement: high or low involvement, based on earlier research by Rossiter, Percy & Donovan (1991). As no colour was used in the logos, they were kept as simple as possible. In addition, participants experienced the logos as new ones because the logos were made unknown. Since the brand name was not revealed, the chances of participants recognizing the logos was kept at a minimum. The origin of the logo was thus of no use in this study due to the fact that standardized logos could be used all over the world without evoking associations (Van der Lans et al., 2009). Lastly, this study chose life insurances as a high-involved product and soap as a low-involved one. This distinction was made because earlier research by Raedts et al. (2016) stated that the understanding of English information could play a great part in the persuasion process of participants. High-involvement products such as cars (product of investigation in Hornikx et al., 2010), jewellery and life insurances (product of investigation in Gerritsen et al., 2000) go through a more extensive information process than low-involvement products such as toothpaste (product of investigation in Raedts et al., 2016) (Raedts et al., 2016).

In the pre-test six Radboud university students chose ten different unfamiliar logos; five of them were logos of soap brands and the other five were logos of life insurances, which could be found back in the appendix. Fourteen German and fifteen Dutch participants participated in this test (72.41% female, 24.14% male, 3.45 % unknown sex;  $M = 22.11$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ). The results enabled the students to choose two soap logos and two life insurance logos, as these logos were the least recognized by the participants. (appendix)

### 2.1.2. Slogans

The criteria applied for the slogans were that the slogan should be fictional and easy to understand. By using fictional slogans, the recognition of the slogans by participants is kept at a minimum. Consequently, researches of Raedts et al., Hendriks, Van Meurs and Poos (2016) and Hornikx et al. (2010) already investigated the difficulty of slogans and their influence on the evaluation of slogans. Difficult slogans could lead to participants not understanding the slogan, which is not desirable in this study. That is why this study only chose easy slogans and adapted them in a way that the slogans were in line with the chosen product categories.

Ten slogans were selected for the pre-test and were translated from Dutch to English and German. These translations were tested by a translation method used in earlier research of Gerritsen et al. (2010). All the slogans, so the Dutch, German and English ones, were tested on difficulty and comprehensibility by the Dutch and German participants. Eventually four slogans were indicated as easy and understandable, and were therefore chosen as the most fitting option.

### 2.2. Participants

The participants who took part in the survey were selected on basis of three norms: nationality, age and education level. German and Dutch nationalities were chosen in this survey as of the differences of the two nationalities regarding the mere-exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968). It was therefore mandatory that the participants either had a Dutch or German nationality. The participants should also have been between 16 and 30 years old in order to participate in this study. In addition, the participant had to own a tolerable knowledge of the English language. The Dutch participants required a minimum level of 'HAVO' or 'VWO' for the level of English required, while the German participants required at least 'Habitur' or 'Fachabitur' for the level of English required. The required minimum level of English is of B2 level as participants could therefore understand the main issues addressed to a text, either of concrete or abstract level (taalunieversum.org, 2006).

This study included 238 participants who filled in the survey; after erasing incomplete taken surveys, 132 surveys were labelled as useful. The 132 participants (31.06% male) varied from 16 to 29 years ( $M = 22.34$ ;  $SD = 2.37$ ). 73 participants were German, 59 participants were Dutch. The educational level of the participants varied between 'HAVO' and 'WO' level for the Dutch participants and between 'Habitur' and 'Universität' for the German participants.

These two different levels of education were recoded into one variable. Most participants had a WO (58.3 %) or VWO (28.8) level of education (Universität and Fachabitur in German).

A Chi-square showed a significant relation between version of the survey and educational level ( $\chi^2(9) = 23.73, p = .005$ ). The educational level of German participants had more 'VWO'-participants (43.84%) in comparison to 'HBO'-participants (4.11%) than Dutch VWO- (10.17%) and HBO-participants (18.64%) had and was therefore not equally distributed over the different versions. A second Chi-square test showed no significant relation between version of the survey and sex of the participant ( $\chi^2(3) = 3.02, p = .389$ ). Therefore sex was equally distributed over the different versions. However, more female than male participants partook in this survey, which could have influenced the results. Gerritsen (2000) stated in her research that women generally have a more positive attitude toward standard languages than men do, though no significant sex differences were found in her research into the evaluation of English in product advertisements (Gerritsen, 1996). A third Chi-square test showed no significant relation between version of the survey and age of the participant ( $\chi^2(39) = 40.16, p = .418$ ). For that reason age was equally distributed over the four different versions of the survey.

### 2.3. Design

This study used a 2 x 2 between-subjects design to distribute the level of independent variables across the participants, which were nationality (Dutch and German) x language (mother tongue and English). Every participant was shown two versions of the slogan, one in their native language and one in English.

### 2.4. Instruments

The dependent variables that were measured in this study were: (1) symbolic value of the English language, (2) evaluation of the logo and slogan, and (3) evaluation of the brand. These variables were included in the questionnaire with several items to measure them. A total of four versions were made: a Dutch questionnaire consisting of mother tongue slogans (NL-MT), a German questionnaire consisting of mother tongue slogans (DU-MT), a Dutch questionnaire consisting of English slogans (NL-EN) and a German questionnaire consisting of English slogans (DU-EN).

The symbolic value for the English language was measured by a 7-point Likert scale consisting of answer options of 'totally disagree – totally agree', on the items modernity,

internationality (Bhatia, 1992; Piller, 2003) and prestige marker (Martin, 2002). The reliability of 'symbolic value of the English language' comprising three items was good:  $\alpha = .83$ .

The evaluation of the logo and slogan was measured by a 7-point semantic scale with items measuring each dependent variable. These items were: 'uninteresting – interesting', 'unattractive – attractive', 'uninviting – inviting', 'boring – interesting' and 'impersonal – personal', based on earlier research of Maes, Ummelen and Hoeken (1996). The reliability of 'evaluation of the logo and slogan' comprising five items was good:  $\alpha = .90$ .

Additionally, the evaluation of the brand was measured by a 7-point semantic scale consisting of the following items: 'unappealing – appealing', 'bad – good', 'unpleasant – pleasant', 'unfavourable – favourable' and 'not enjoyable – enjoyable', based on earlier research of Spears and Sing (2004, p. 60). The reliability of 'evaluation of the brand' comprising five items was good:  $\alpha = .91$ .

### *2.5. Procedure*

An online questionnaire named Qualtrics ([www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com)) was used to conduct the information needed for this study between December 22, 2016 and January 2, 2017. Participants were firstly asked about their nationality before a hyperlink guided them to the questionnaire of their mother tongue. The experiment was conducted individually and each participant was asked to fill in the questionnaire through social media, e-mail or personal contact. It started with a short introduction of the researchers, the rights of the participant and the estimated time to complete the questionnaire. After the participants saw the logos and slogans they were asked questions about the evaluation of the brand, evaluation of the slogan and the symbolic value of English, followed by some questions about the participants' attitude toward English and their mother tongue. In the end some demographic questions were asked followed by a thankful note for the participants who completed the questionnaire. There was no incentive when a participant completed the procedure. This procedure was the same for each participant. No physical external factors played a role in the filling-in of the questionnaire. It took approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### *2.6. Statistical treatment*

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to check if it was allowed to combine the different logos. This was done to see if a distinction should be made between the soap and life insurance logos. Another independent-samples t-test was conducted to see if the different associations of the symbolic value could be combined. When all the data was collected, two

two-way ANOVAs were used to see whether a significant effect of 'language version' and 'nationality of the participant' on the 'evaluation of the logo and slogan' had occurred for the products soap and life insurances. Two additional two-way ANOVAs indicated if a significant effect occurred between 'language version', 'nationality of the participant' and 'evaluation of the brand'. For the symbolic value of English, two two-way ANOVAs were used to test if a significant effect occurred between 'language version' and 'nationality of the participant'. Consequently, two independent-samples t-tests were conducted to answer the research question on symbolic value of English.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Evaluation of the logo and slogan

##### 3.1.1. Soap

A two-way analysis of variance with nationality of the participant and the language used in the slogan showed no significant main effect of nationality of the participant on the evaluation of the logo and slogan for the product soap ( $F(1, 128) < 1$ ). Also the language used in the slogan was not found to have a significant main effect on the evaluation of the logo and slogan for the product soap ( $F(1, 128) < 1$ ). The interaction effect between the nationality of the participant and the language used in the slogan for the product soap was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 128) = 1.13, p = .291$ ). The means ( $M$ ) and standard deviations ( $SD$ ) could be found back in table 1.

##### 3.1.2. Life insurance

A two-way analysis of variance with nationality of the participant and the language used in the slogan showed no significant main effect of nationality of the participant on the evaluation of the logo and slogan for the product life insurance ( $F(1, 128) = 1.00, p = .318$ ). Also the language used in the slogan was not found to have a significant main effect on the evaluation of the logo and slogan for the product life insurance ( $F(1, 128) < 1$ ). The interaction effect between the nationality of the participant and the language used in the slogan for the product life insurance was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 128) = 1.96, p = .164$ ). The means ( $M$ ) and standard deviations ( $SD$ ) could be found back in table 1.

Table 1. Means ( $M$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD$ ) of the evaluation of the logo and slogan in function of the nationality of the participant and the language used (1 = very negative evaluation, 7 = very positive evaluation)

	Mother tongue		English	
	Dutch	German	Dutch	German
	n = 33	n = 38	n = 26	n = 35
	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$
Evaluation of the logo and slogan, soap	3.34 (1.15)	3.42(.83)	3.66(1.17)	3.35(1.05)
Evaluation of the logo and slogan, life insurance	3.33(1.06)	3.42(1.27)	3.64(1.44)	3.13(1.11)

### 3.2. Evaluation of the brand

#### 3.2.1. Soap

A two-way analysis of variance with nationality of the participant and the language used in the slogan showed no significant main effect of nationality of the participant on the evaluation of the brand for the product soap ( $F(1, 128) < 1$ ). Also, the language used in the slogan was not found to have a significant main effect on the evaluation of the brand for the product soap ( $F(1, 128) < 1$ ). The interaction effect between the nationality of the participant and the language used in the slogan for the product soap was not statistically significant ( $F(1, 128) = 3.17, p = .078$ ). The means ( $M$ ) and standard deviations ( $SD$ ) could be found back in table 2.

#### 3.2.2. Life insurance

A two-way analysis of variance with nationality of the participant and the language used in the slogan showed no significant main effect of nationality of the participant on the evaluation of the brand for the product life insurance ( $F(1, 128) = 3.52, p = .063$ ). The language used in the slogan was not found to have a significant main effect on the evaluation of the brand for the product life insurance ( $F(1, 128) < 1$ ). However, these main effects were qualified by a significant interaction effect between nationality of the participant and the language used in the slogan ( $F(1, 128) = 5.24, p = .024$ ). The difference between the two nationalities was only found at participants with English slogans ( $F(1, 59) = 7.30, p = .009$ ). Dutch participants ( $M = 3.83, SD = 1.25$ ) evaluated the brand higher than German participants ( $M = 3.01, SD = 1.12$ ). No differences were found between the two nationalities for participants with the mother tongue used in the slogan ( $F(1, 69) < 1$ ). The means ( $M$ ) and standard deviations ( $SD$ ) could be found back in table 2.

Table 2. Means and standard deviation of the evaluation of the brand in function of the nationality of the participant and the language used (1 = very negative evaluation, 7 = very positive evaluation)

	Mother tongue		English	
	Dutch	German	Dutch	German
	n = 33	n = 38	n = 26	n = 35
	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$
Evaluation of the brand, soap	3.45 (1.11)	3.62 (.79)	3.78 (1.01)	3.33 (1.14)

Evaluation of the brand, life insurance	3.49 (1.06)	3.57 (1.09)	3.83 (1.25)	3.01 (1.12)
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### 3.3. Symbolic value

#### 3.3.1. Soap

A two-way analysis of variance with nationality of the participant and the language used in the slogan as factors showed a significant main effect of nationality of the participant on the symbolic value for the product soap ( $F(1, 128) = 7.62, p = .007$ ). Dutch participants ( $M = 3.61, SD = .14$ ) were shown to have higher evaluation on symbolic value than German participants ( $M = 3.40, SD = .12$ ), irrespectively the language used in the slogan. Correspondingly, the language used in the slogan was found to have a significant main effect on the evaluation of the slogan for the product soap ( $F(1, 128) = 4.62, p = .012$ ). Although this main effect seemed to be significant, a Bonferroni Multiple Comparisons Post Hoc Test showed no significant effect on the symbolic value of the language used in the slogan. The means ( $M$ ) and standard deviations ( $SD$ ) could be found back in table 3.

An independent-samples t-test showed a significant difference between Dutch and German participants with regard to symbolic value of English for the product soap ( $t(59) = 2.50, p = .015$ ). Dutch participants ( $M = 3.97, SD = 1.04$ ) were shown to have a higher evaluation of symbolic value of English than German participants ( $M = 3.22, SD = 1.23$ ). No significant difference occurred between the Dutch and German participants with regard to symbolic value of the mother tongue ( $t(69) = 1.53, p = .131$ ). The means ( $M$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD$ ) could be found back in table 4.

Another independent-samples t-test showed a significant difference between the symbolic value of English slogans and the symbolic value of mother tongue slogans with regard to Dutch participants for the product soap ( $t(57) = 2.74, p = .008$ ). English slogans ( $M = 3.97, SD = 1.04$ ) were shown to have a higher evaluation of symbolic value for Dutch participants than mother tongue slogans ( $M = 3.24, SD = .99$ ).

#### 3.3.2. Life insurance

A two-way analysis of variance with nationality of the participant and the language used in the slogan showed a significant main effect of nationality of the participant on the symbolic value for the product life insurance ( $F(1, 128) = 6.53, p = .012$ ). Dutch participants ( $M = 4.21, SD = .15$ ) were shown to have higher evaluation on symbolic value than German participants ( $M =$

3.87,  $SD = .13$ ), irrespectively the language used in the slogan. The language used in the slogan was not found to have a significant main effect on the symbolic value for the product life insurance ( $F(1, 128) = 2.30, p = .104$ ). The means ( $M$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD$ ) could be found back in table 3.

An additional independent-samples t-test showed a significant difference between Dutch and German participants with regard to symbolic value of English for the product life insurance ( $t(59) = 2.48, p = .016$ ). Dutch participants ( $M = 4.50, SD = 1.20$ ) were shown to have a higher symbolic value of English than German participants ( $M = 3.74, SD = 1.16$ ). No significant difference occurred between the Dutch and German participants with regard to symbolic value of the mother tongue ( $t(69) = .29, p = .776$ ). The means ( $M$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD$ ) could be found back in table 4.

Note here that for both product categories for symbolic value no interaction effect could occur because of the fact three languages were used (English, Dutch and German) instead of two (English and mother tongue). This means that for instance Dutch participants with Dutch versions could impossibly have an interaction effect with German participants who had German versions of the questionnaire.

Table 3. Means and standard deviation of symbolic value in function of nationality of the participant (1 = very negative evaluation, 7 = very positive evaluation)

	Dutch participants	German participants
	n = 59	n = 73
	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$
Symbolic value, soap	3.61 (.14)	3.40 (.12)
Symbolic value, life insurances	4.21 (.15)	3.87 (.13)

Table 4. Means and standard deviation of symbolic value in function of nationality of the participant and the language of the slogan (1 = very negative evaluation, 7 = very positive evaluation)

	Dutch participants		German participants	
	Mother tongue	English	Mother tongue	English
	n = 33	n = 26	n = 38	n = 35
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Symbolic value, soap	3.24 (.99)	3.97 (1.04)	3.58 (.89)	3.22 (1.23)
Symbolic value, life insurances	3.92 (1.24)	4.50 (1.20)	4.00 (1.00)	3.74 (1.16)

#### 4. Conclusion

This study investigated to what extent German and Dutch people evaluated logos with English slogans as more modern, international and prestigious than logos with slogans in the mother tongue. More specifically, it focused on different aspects of an English slogan and a slogan in the mother tongue. First of all, an aim of the current study was to gain insight in whether German and Dutch participants evaluated logos with English slogans differently in comparison to logos with slogans in the mother tongue. Secondly, the current study focused on determining to what extent German and Dutch participants evaluated the English brand differently in comparison to the brand evaluated in the mother tongue. These two aims were included in the first hypothesis, which was: ‘Logos and brands with an English slogan are more positively perceived than logos and brands with a mother tongue slogan’.

The third and last aim in this study was to investigate if German and Dutch participants evaluated the symbolic value of English differently in comparison to the evaluation of the symbolic value of the mother tongue, as the research question indicated as well. All these tests were conducted for two types of products: ‘soap’, which represented a low-involvement product and ‘life insurances’, which represented a high-involvement product (Rossiter et al., 1991).

##### *4.1. Evaluation of the logos and brands on slogans*

Results of this study showed that the language of the slogan had no significant effect on the evaluation of the logo with the slogan. For both the product categories, the logos with English slogans were not evaluated higher by the Dutch and German participants than the logos with slogans in the mother tongue.

The language of the slogan neither showed a significant effect on the evaluation of the brand. Again, both product categories were not evaluated higher on the brand with an English slogan than the brand with a slogan in the mother tongue.

Bearing these results in mind, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis can be rejected.

##### *4.2. Differences in evaluation between Dutch and German participants*

The second hypothesis was not included in one of this study’s main goals. However, the difference between the evaluation of Dutch and German participants was linked to the mere-exposure effect, which was in fact one of this study’s main interest. The second hypothesis was

formulated as follows: ‘Dutch participants have a more favourable evaluation of the logo and brand with an English slogan, while German participants have a more favourable evaluation of the logo and brand with slogans in their mother tongue’.

The results regarding the difference between the evaluation of Dutch and German participants had different outcomes. The interaction effect between language used in the slogan and nationality of the speaker showed a significant effect for the product life insurance. Dutch participants evaluated the logo and brand with an English slogan higher than the logo and brand with a slogan in the mother tongue. For the mother tongue no significant effect was found between Dutch and German respondents. Also for the product soap no significant effect was found between Dutch and German respondents regarding the evaluation of the logo and brand. Since only one significant effect for the second hypothesis is found, this hypothesis can be rejected as well.

#### *4.3. Symbolic value*

The main research question in this study is related to symbolic value of English. The research question was formulated as follows: ‘To what extent do German and Dutch people evaluate a logo with an English slogan as more modern, international and prestigious than a logo with a slogan in the mother tongue?’

The results revealed that Dutch participants evaluated the symbolic value of English slogans significantly higher than German participants did for both product categories. No significant differences were found for the evaluation of the symbolic value of the mother tongue for both product categories. Additionally, the English slogans were significantly evaluated higher than the mother tongue slogans for Dutch participants for the product soap. For life insurances no significant difference was found between the English and mother tongue slogans for Dutch participants. German participants did not evaluate differently on symbolic value for both product categories regarding the English slogans or the mother tongue slogans.

In addition, the results showed that for both product categories, soap and life insurances, significant main effects were found for the nationality of the participant and the symbolic value. In both cases, Dutch participants evaluated higher on symbolic value than German participants, irrespectively the language used in the slogan.

In short, Dutch participants evaluate English slogans as more modern, international and prestigious than mother tongue slogans for soap, and Dutch participants also evaluated higher on symbolic value of English slogans than German participants did for both product categories.

A noteworthy comment here is that Dutch participants evaluate both English and mother tongue slogans higher on symbolic value than German participants, irrespectively the language.

## 5. Discussion

This study tried to gain more understanding in the evaluation of English slogans compared to slogans in the mother tongue for Dutch and German participants. Points of interest in this study were the evaluation of the logo and the brand, the symbolic value and the influence of the mere-exposure effect between the two different nationalities.

### 5.1. Symbolic value

The main research question in this study was concentrated on the symbolic value of English. The symbolic value of English concerned in this study contained modernity, internationality (Bhatia, 1992; Piller, 2003) and prestige marker (Martin, 2002). The results in this study are in line with the results of the researches of Piller (2003) and Martin (2002). These researches state that that the symbolic value of English is dependent on the participants' nationality and the type of product. This is also the case in this study as this study's results showed that Dutch participants evaluated English slogans higher than mother tongue slogans for the product soap, but also that Dutch participants evaluated higher on the symbolic value of English than German respondents. For both the nationality and the product category the statement of Piller (2003) and Martin (2002) is correct. Further research should point out if Dutch people indeed have the tendency to evaluate higher on symbolic value in general than other nationalities, or if German people have the habit to evaluate lower on symbolic value of course. Also the product category could have played a bigger role here, as it is still unclear if other products could have got the same evaluations as it got now.

As Raedts et al. (2016) also stated in their research: English could evoke associations like modernity, internationality and prestige marker, though clear from evidence from other research for this supposition is still missing. A study of Gerritsen et al. (2010) too confirms the statement of Raedts et al. (2010): no empirical evidence was found for presented products in advertisement with English, which were more associated with modernity, than the same products presented in advertisements in the local language. This study tried to start in the right direction and found some significant evidence that Dutch participants gave a higher evaluation on the symbolic value of English than German participants. Further research has to prove if

this finding is in fact the result of the English language on Dutch people, or that Dutch people have the habit to evaluate higher on symbolic value for any kind of language.

### *5.2. Evaluation of the logos and brands on slogans*

Although all results regarding the evaluation of the logos and brands on English slogans or slogans in the mother tongue were not significant, implications about these results could still be made. The research of Raedts et al. (2016) showed that participants who understood the easy to understand English slogans had a more positive attitude towards the slogan and brand. Even though Raedts et al. (2016) found significant results on this topic, they also had many participants available for their research. In the limitations of their study, it is even stated that this large group of participants could have positively influenced the results. This study however had a much smaller group of participants, thus meaning that it could be possible that the results in this study could also have been significant if more participant took the survey. More participants in further research could prevent these kind of implications.

The relatively small group of participants also resulted in the unequal distribution of the different groups. This was found back in the distribution of males and females to each group; more females partook in this study which could have altered the results. Gerritsen et al. (2000) stated in their research that women generally have a more positive attitude towards standard languages than toward substandard varieties, such as dialects. For men this is the other way around. For this study, this could have meant that women gained a more positive attitude towards the English slogans than men had because of this statement.

The distribution of the education level was not equal as well. More Dutch participants than German participants had an education level of HBO. There were also significantly more German VWO participants than Dutch ones. Even though this distribution of education level is not equal over all groups, all participants had to have a minimum level of B2 of English. This means that all the participants would have been able to understand all the English slogans used in this study, though the distribution was not equal.

Furthermore, this study chose to only include participants who were between the age of 16 and 29. This group of people is more likely to be exposed to English than older generations of people (Gerritsen et al., 2010). As this group could have been more exposed to English, the results could have also displayed a more positive image than when older generations were included in the survey too. Further research should include more generations of people in order to do more accurate statements. This was already done in studies of Hornikx et al. (2010) and Raedts et al. (2016) for instance.

Another result in the research of Raedts et al. (2016) showed that actual and assumed comprehension of English slogans can cause a big gap when the slogan is too difficult. The participants in this study could therefore have experienced the same phenomenon, which eventually led to miscomprehension of the English slogans used in this research. Unfortunately, evidence for this claim cannot be given, as comprehension was not a variable in this research. Further research could therefore also ask for a translation of the slogan to check if participants actually understood what was read, instead of assuming it is correct what was read.

Subsequently, the different logos in this study were combined in order to run the statistical tests, though t-tests indicated this was not allowed for each logo. As product categories were not considered as a variable in this study, it was still possible to combine these different logos. Further research should add multiple different product categories as a separate variable in order to investigate the differences per logo and to do valid statements.

### *5.3. Differences in evaluation between Dutch and German respondents*

Most results in this study were not significant, though an significant interaction effect has been found. Dutch participants showed a preference for the brand with an English slogan while German participants evaluated the brand with a slogan in the mother tongue over the English variant for the product life insurance. A previous study from Gerritsen et al. (2010) already showed that Dutch people have a significantly higher percentage of holding a conversation in English than German people do. It is therefore not striking that the Dutch participants in this study had a preference for the brands with English slogans. The study of Zajonc (1968) also shows that Dutch participants have been more exposed to English than their German counterparts. This mere-exposure to English is in line with the results in this study, where Dutch participants also chose brands with English slogans over brands with slogans in the mother tongue. German participants on the other hand have been less exposed than English, and would therefore opt for their mother tongue slogans over the English slogans. The result also show that this interaction effect only occurred with the high-involvement product life insurances. Further research on the mere-exposure effect could also include other kinds of products. This study chose to only include informational products, and not transformational products (Rossiter, Percy & Donovan, 1991), due to lack of time and resources. Also, further research could use different communication channels instead of slogans to see whether the mere-exposure effect also occurs under other circumstances.

This research tried starting to fill the scientific gap which is called symbolic value. Previous studies indicated that little research is yet done on this topic. Further research could point out if the findings in this research are indeed of value when evaluating a language on symbolic value. Furthermore, this research tried to add knowledge regarding the evaluation of English slogans on logos and brands for Dutch and German participants, though little significant results were found. Some minor differences between the two groups of participants indicated that the mere-exposure effect of English could in fact be in favour of the Dutch participants. Companies, locally or internationally, can use the information from this research to develop an appropriate slogan in English or their local language. Not every country is the same when it comes down to preferences in used languages in slogans. Therefore, a company should closely investigate whether inhabitants of a certain country prefer English over their local language, or the other way around.

## 6. Literature

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## 7. Appendix

Chosen logos, slogans and brands:

Dutch, soap



Extreem schoon en fris

German, soap



Extrem sauber und frisch.

English, soap



Extremely clean and fresh.



Voor een schoon en fris gevoel.



Für ein sauberes und frisches Gefühl.



For a clean and fresh feeling.

Dutch, life insurance



Haal het beste uit je leven.

German, life insurance



Mach das Beste aus deinem Leben.

English, life insurance



Make the most of your life.



Mijn leven, mijn levensverzekering.



Mein Leben, meine Lebensversicherung.



My life, my life insurance.