Radboud University

Bachelor Thesis
Corporate Narrative Persuasion in a Foreign Language
Narratieve overtuiging in een tweede taal

Completed by:

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Abstract

In the research field of narrative persuasion, how language choice (L1/L2) impacts the persuasiveness of corporate narratives has not been thoroughly investigated. A between-subject experiment design, including 66 German and 151 Dutch native speakers who either read a corporate narrative in their first language (German/Dutch) or in their second language (English), was set up. The results regarding language choice reveal that narratives written in L1 were more comprehensible for both the Dutch and the German respondents, and that the Dutch participants were more willing to buy the product when the narrative introducing the product was written in their L1. Furthermore, the Dutch rated the English language more positive than their L1. The findings on the effect of nationality on narrative persuasiveness reveal that the Dutch participants displayed a higher comprehension and rated the organisation more positive than the German participants. For marketers in the field of international business communication, the results suggest that they should design their marketing content in the target audience's first language, and bear in mind culture-dependent reactions to persuasive content and the target audience's language proficiency.

Keywords: corporate narrative, narrative persuasion, language choice, L1 L2, German, Dutch

Introduction

Reading narratives can ideally result in absorption and immersion into the alternative world of a narrative. In a corporate setting, narratives are seen as a powerful tool of persuasion and reputation management, as they are able to influence beliefs and attitudes of stakeholders towards brands and products introduced in the stories (Green, 2006).

In today's world individuals get exposed to a high amount of marketing messages on a daily basis, therefore, marketers increasingly face the challenge on how to best convey persuasive content and effectively cut through the large volume of advertising messages. Several studies on the persuasiveness of advertisements have confirmed the assumption of Knowles and Linn (2004, p.6), that customers are likely to create motivation to resist when their freedom to choose and act gets restricted in attempts to persuade them. Therefore, making use of the persuasive potential of corporate narratives can be seen as a means to restore the customer's freedom and tackle the issue of advertisement overexposure.

However, due to globalization, which according to Witalisz (2011) includes the spread of English as the main tool for global communication, marketers are faced with an important language choice, when it comes to creating marketing content such as corporate narratives. Marketers need to decide consciously, whether to develop corporate narratives in the target audience's first language (L1) or second language (L2). The choice, whether to standardise or localise external business communication for customers with different linguistic backgrounds and different levels of proficiency appears to be of high importance, as earlier conducted studies anticipate language-dependent reactions to advertisements (Noriega & Blair, 2008), that could possibly apply to corporate narratives as well. The current study addresses the question how the use of English (L2) affects the way corporate narratives gets processed and evaluated by German native speakers, whose L2 proficiency is anticipated to be relatively low, compared to Dutch native speakers, whose L2 proficiency is anticipated to be relatively high (EF English proficiency index, 2017). These newly gained insights aid marketer's language based choices in content creation and can help to optimise persuasive marketing efforts considering culture and proficiency of the target audience.

Literature Review

The current study focusses on the processing of a specific type of entrepreneurial narrative, namely the founding corporate narrative, usually told by the owner of a corporate business. O'Connor (2002) successfully defines the founding narrative as a tool to communicate the reason of being of a company, to persuade stakeholders and potential consumers to support the company or to enhance positive attitudes towards the business. O'Connor (2002) found that narratives told by the founder were able to add personal value to the business and to establish common ground for interacting with stakeholders. On the basis of a rich body of literature, the subsequent section will first recapitulate on the concept of narrative persuasion, as main objective of applying corporate narratives in marketing communications. Following, literature on the variables, that were found to be connected to narrative persuasion, will be introduced.

Narrative persuasion. The use of narratives as a persuasive tool ideally leads to narrative persuasion through overcoming resistance, people's deliberate effort to defend their existing attitude against change (Knowles & Linn, 2004, p.175). An important quality of narrative persuasion, in contrast to more obvious and direct persuasive marketing messages, is that narrative persuasion takes place on a subconscious level and therefore goes beyond rhetorical persuasion (Green & Brock, 2002). In line with that are discoveries that implicate that narrative persuasion effects reader's real-world beliefs through psychological mechanisms (Appel & Richter, 2007; De Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders, & Beentjes, 2012).

The only existing studies on second language use in corporate narratives. conducted by Spring (2017) and Hobelman (2015), hold similar incosistent results as previous studies on second language use in films and advertisements (Wissmath, Weibel, & Groner, 2009; Van Hooft, Van Meurs & Spierts, 2017). Findings of Wissmath et al. (2009) suggest unfavourable effects of L2 use in films, whereas studies on advertisements claim that foreign language evokes ethno-cultural associations (Herz & Diamantopoulos, 1989; Kelly-Holmes, 2005), which can impact the persuasive potential of advertisements both positively and negatively.

Different researchers have used various conceptualizations and models that mediate between the reading experience and narrative persuasion. The exact mechanisms, which exert the persuasive influence of narratives have not clearly been defined yet (De Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders, & Beentjes, 2009). Dimensions contributing to narrative persuasion, that have frequently been brought up by researchers, will be introduced in the subsequent sections.

Narrative comprehension. The concept of narrative comprehension rests on the reader's understanding of the actions in a narrative (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). Literature pertaining to narrative comprehension strongly suggests that narrative comprehension is a paramount premise in fostering several mechanisms of the narrative reading experience that presumably contribute to narrative persuasion (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008).

Regarding the impact of language choice on narrative comprehension, Busselle and Bilandzic (2009) mention second language as a possible distraction source, because more cognitive resources are needed for processing of the text and attention can shift away from the narrative. A dominant model in literature, used to clarify narrative comprehension with regard to language choice, is the Revised Hierarchical Model (RHM) introduced by Dufour and Kroll (1995). The RHM supposes that individuals possess a lexical store in memory, that is separate for L1/L2 words and concepts of these words, called semantic representations. Individuals, who are less fluent in their L2 than in their L1, are able to access the meaning of L1 words directly via a conceptual link. For their less fluent language however, they can only access the concepts of words indirectly via L1 translation, which takes more effort. It can therefore be expected that first language processing results in better comprehension of narratives.

Transportation. Next to narrative comprehension, the phenomenon of being transferred into the alternative world of a narrative is also seen as an important influential concept relating to narrative persuasion (Green & Brock, 2000; Murphy, Frank, Moran & Patnoe-Woodley, 2011). Green and Brock (2000, p.701) use the definition of a "convergent, mental process in which attention, emotion, and imagery become focused only on the events in the story". A transported reader is emotionally and cognitively soaked into a narrative and might, as result, show more beliefs that are in accordance with those embedded in the narrative (Appel & Richter, 2007). Likewise, a study of Green and Brock (2000), wherein transportation was manipulated, proved the mediating role of transportation persuasiveness. The transportation-imagery model by Green and Brock (2000, 2002) adds to the understanding, how persuasive effects in narratives function. The transportation-imagery model postulates that through transportation into the narrative's world, events in the storyline seem especially real to the reader through images that get activated. Vivid imagery, according to Green and Brock (2000, 2002), might be the reason why beliefs get affected immensely by stories.

Examination of the existing literature on transportation revealed, that, although different definitions of the phenomenon might use a distinct choice of words, they all describe an individual's degree of connection to a narrative (Murphy, Frank, Chatterjee, & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2013).

A study of de Graaf et al. (2009) revealed that the positive effects of transportation, namely the loss of attention for real-world surroundings, can be hindered by distraction. The findings of de Graaf et al. (2009) seem a plausible indication for assuming that reading in a second language and not being able to understand every single word in L2 is a barrier to transportation into a narrative.

Identification. An expanding body of literature indicates that a clear distinction between the concepts of transportation and identification is necessary (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010; Murphy et al., 2013). Identification goes beyond the concept of transportation, as it focuses on characters, instead of on the general storyline (Moyer- Gusé, 2008). Identification is described as the process of identifying oneself with characters of the narrative and shifting identities (Tal-Or and Cohen, 2010). According to Green, Brock, and Kaufman (2004), identification ideally leads to the adoption of the character's thoughts, beliefs, emotions and behaviours. Overall, there seems to be consensus in literature on the fact that identification with the characters in the narrative results in more engagement and therefore defines how narratives get experienced. An experiment conducted by De Graaf et al. (2012), wherein identification was manipulated, lends support to this assumption, as it indicated that identification can reinforce and attenuate existing attitudes of the audience.

Although the effect of language (L1/L2) on identification in a narrative context has been under-researched, it is believed that the weakened reading flow resulting from L2 use decreases perceived similarity between the narrative's protagonist and the reader (Slater & Rouner, 2002). Narratives written in L2 therefore might create more distance between reader and narrative's characters.

Emotional involvement. Besides transportation and identification, literature research revealed that emotional involvement can also be connected to the development of story-consistent beliefs, which means the reader's adoption of beliefs inherent to the narrative (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009; De Graaf et al., 2009). Emotional involvement is composed of empathy, sympathy, and enjoyment in the current study. Empathy was identified as the audience's ability to mirror the character's emotional experiences (Oatley & Duncan, 1994).

Sympathy is the ability of the reader to feel for a character, rather than feeling the same as the character, according to Oatley and Ducan (1994). Enjoyment got defined as a state of amusement that goes beyond simply liking the content of a narrative (Nabi & Kcmar, 2004). Puntoni, de Langhe and van Osselaer (2009) found that the L1 tends to be perceived as more emotional, than the L2. A study on emotionality of unbalanced bilinguals conducted by Hsu, Jacobs and Conrad (2015), found evidence for stronger emotional responses in L1 as well. The language-specific episodic trace theory of language emotionality suggests that the higher amount of general emotional experiences in the first language could explain the phenomenon (Puntoni et al., 2009). The model is based on the theory that experiences leave episodic traces in memory, in the specific language that the experiences were encountered in. When a reader is faced with a stimulus, for example through a corporate narrative, certain memory traces get activated and the echo appears in form of emotional intensity. The language-dependent recall therefore lends support to the assumption that reading in L1 results in a more emotional intense experience, as people, especially when their learned English at a later point in their life, have experienced more in their L1.

Attitude towards language and attitude towards the organisation. Literature suggests that a main intention of using persuasive narratives, is the transmission of attitudes conveyed by the narrative on the behalf of the company (Hoeken, Hornikx, & Hustinx, 2012). Van Hooft et al. (2017) found the language (L1/L2) used in advertisements is able to predict how the target audience evaluates the advertisement, the company and the product.

Purchase intention. Along with the transmission of beliefs and attitudes transferred by corporate narratives, behavioural change, resulting in a higher willingness to buy the product, is considered the ultimate goal of narrative persuasion (Escalas, 2004; Im, Lennon & Stoel (2010).

Gap statement and Relevance

Previous studies on corporate narratives did not offer tangible solutions for the central problem of marketers in today's globalised world: making decisions on the standardisation or localisation of marketing efforts. The current study will address these shortcomings and will, through the inclusion of respondent groups with different sociocultural backgrounds, add a cross-cultural component. The comparison between Dutch and German respondents of different age groups is especially interesting, as both respondent groups are considered

proficient enough to read English narratives (Man, Weinkauf, Tsang, & Sin, 2004), but based on the EF English proficiency index (2017), Dutch respondents are more proficient in English, than the Germans. Through the inclusion of not only students, which have been identified as a frequently researched group (Leentjes & Levenson, 2013), but also older German generations, new insights based on a possibly existing generation-gap can be gathered. While the effect of second language on narrative comprehension, transportation, identification, emotional involvement and attitude towards the organisation have partly been investigated (Spring, 2017; Hobelman, 2015), attitude towards language and purchase intention have been added in the current study, to more detailed insights into what exactly postulates persuasiveness in narratives written in a foreign language.

What supports the need for more research in this area, is the spread of English as a lingua franca (Puntoni et al., 2009), which according to Witalisz (2011) is the most visible of all processes surrounding globalisation. Despite decades of research on the narrative reading experience, the consequences of second language use in the corporate setting continue to be under-researched. Through the insights gained in this paper, new ways on how to attractively and effectively convey corporate stories can be found. Furthermore, results will aid marketers making language choices based on their target group.

Research questions

RQ1: What effect does the use of either Dutch (L1), German (L1) or English (L2) and the nationality of the readers (Dutch or German) have on the underlying dimensions of corporate narrative persuasiveness?

RQ2: What is the difference in second language proficiency between German and Dutch native speakers?

Method

Materials

In order to answer the two main research questions, a founding corporate narrative in three different languages was embedded in a questionnaire, that communicated the reason to exist of the company 'Perfect Cereals', through the eyes of company-owner Tom and his friend Oscar. Tom and Oscar experienced starting difficulties before they finally achieved great success. The narrative for this questionnaire was adapted from Spring (2017). The food-based company domain was originally chosen to assure accessibility to all readers. According to the author, food-based products do not ask for any previously gained knowledge or experience. The narrative was developed through translation – back – translation and pre-tests, to ensure high appropriateness of the narrative (Craig & Douglas, 2005)

For the current study, both, the German and Dutch version of the corporate narrative were revised by native speakers. The revision of the narratives was considered advantageous to assure the highest possible language standards. The two independent variables, used in this experience, were language of the narrative and nationality of the respondents. The independent variable language version of the narrative had three levels: German (L1), Dutch (L1) or English (L2). The independent variable nationality of the respondents had two levels: Dutch or German.

Subjects

The participants in this experiment were German and Dutch bilinguals, who learned English as a second language. In total, 217 valid questionnaires were collected. From the German participants, 66 valid questionnaires were collected and from the Dutch participants, 151 valid questionnaires were collected. Of the German participants, 30 read the English narrative and 36 the German narrative. Of the Dutch participants, 77 read the English narrative and 74 read the Dutch narrative.

German native speakers were considered suitable to participate in this study, if they were older than 40 years. The age limit of 40 was set, in order to ensure the participants attended secondary school after 1965, when English lessons became a mandatory subject of the educational programme (Historisches Lexikon Bayerns, 2018). A basic level of English proficiency was necessary to be able to read the L2 narrative. The age of the German participants ranged from 40 to 78 with a mean of 52 ($M = 52.89$, $SD = 7.02$). Of all German

participants 68.2 % (45) were female. The education ranged from Hauptschule to Master's degree, with the Fachhochschulreife being the most frequent level (34.8%). Of all German participants, 7.6 % indicated to not read literature frequently in their L1, 36.4 % sometimes and 56.1% frequently. In their L2 however, 75.8 % of all German participants indicated to not read literature frequently, 21.2 % sometimes and only 3.0 % frequently. There was no relation between gender and language version of the narrative (χ^2 (1) = 1.825, p = .177). A chi-square test for the German participants showed a significant relation between education and language version of the narrative (χ^2 (5) = 17.747, p = .003). Relatively more German participants with a Hauptschulabschluss read a German narrative (25%) than an English narrative (0.0%). Furthermore, relatively fewer German participants with a Mittlere Reife read a German narrative (8.3%) than an English narrative (33.3 %). Also, relatively more German participants with a Bachelor's degree read a German narrative (13.9 %) than an English narrative (0.0 %). A two-way analysis of variance showed no relation between age and language version of the narrative for German participants (F (1, 64) = 0.23, p = .630).

Dutch native speakers were considered suitable, if they were under the age of 20 and attended the last year of secondary school, as their English proficiency level needed to be sufficient to participate in the study. The age of the Dutch participants ranged from 15 to 19 with a mean of 16 (M = 16.44, SD = 0.95). Of all Dutch participants 57.6 % (87) were female. The level of education ranged from HAVO 5 to VWO 6, with VWO 5 being the most frequent level (42.4). Of all Dutch participants, 34.4 % indicated to not read frequently in their L1, 47.7 % sometimes and 17.9 % frequently. In their L2, 54.3 % indicated to not read literature frequently, 29.8 % sometimes and 15.9 % frequently. There was no relation between gender and language version of the narrative (χ^2 (1) = 0.202, p = .653). A chi-square test for the Dutch participants showed a significant relation between education and language version of the narrative (χ^2 (3) = 13.768, p = .003). Relatively more Dutch participants with a VWO 6 level of education read a Dutch narrative (16.2 %) than an English narrative (0.0 %). A two-way analysis of variance showed that there was no relation between age and language version of the narrative for Dutch participants (F (1, 149) = 1.51, p = .220).

Design
A 2 (Language of the narrative L1/L2) x 2 (Nationality German/Dutch) between-subject design was used.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire was designed, in which the dependent variables were operationalised. For the purpose of the current study, literature on the topic of narrative persuasion was examined, in order to identify a limited number of dimensions to include. It was decided to integrate the dependent variables narrative comprehension, transportation, identification, emotional involvement, attitude towards the organisation, attitude towards language and purchase intention, which were considered underlying dimensions of narrative persuasion. Tested language proficiency and self-assessed language proficiency were included in order be able to make assumptions regarding the influence of language competence on narrative persuasion.

Narrative comprehension was measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree) adapted from Busselle and Bilandzic (2009). A sample item for measuring transportation was "At points, I found it hard to make sense of what was going on in the story". The reliability of narrative comprehension comprising of six items was good for the for the German respondent group (α = .85) and good for the Dutch respondent group (α = .81).

Transportation was measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree) adapted from Green and Brock (2000). A sample item for measuring transportation was "While reading the narrative, I could easily picture the events in it taking place". The reliability of transportation comprising nine items was acceptable for the German respondent group (α = .75) and acceptable for the Dutch respondent group (α = .79).

Identification was measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree) based on Cohen (2001). A sample item for measuring identification was "At key moments in the story, I felt I knew exactly what Tom was going through". The reliability of identification comprising of eight items was acceptable for German respondents and good for Dutch respondents (α = .86).

Emotional involvement was measured on three levels, namely enjoyment, sympathy and empathy. Enjoyment was measured using a 1-item 7-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree) based on Wissmath et al. (2009). The reliability for emotional involvement for the Dutch respondent group was good (α = .82). However, the reliability for

emotional involvement for the German respondent group was inacceptable (α = .34). Therefore, it was decided to exclude the variable from the results and discussion section.

Attitude towards company and attitude towards language were both measured by means of 7-point semantic differentials scales (e.g., positive – negative, interesting – not interesting, appealing – not appealing) based on Matthes, Schemer and Wirth (2007). The reliability of attitude towards the company comprising six items was excellent (α = .95) for the German respondent group and acceptable (α = .79) for the Dutch. The reliability of attitude towards language, comprising ten items, was good for the German respondents (α =.83) and acceptable for the Dutch respondents (α =.77).

Tested language proficiency was measured by means of the LexTALE test (Lemhöfer & Broersma, 2012). Participants received a list of 63 either real or fictitious words and were asked to determine which ones were real. The language of the test was consistent with the language of the narrative. On the basis of the final score (between 0.00 and 60.00), each participant's English language proficiency was calculated by hand. The scores of the LexTALE test conform to the levels of language proficiency A1-C2, established by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, n.d.).

Self-assessed language proficiency was measured using a 7-point Likerd scale (1 = very bad; 7 = very good) in which respondents rated their own reading, writing, listening and speaking skills of the language they read the narrative in. The scale was adapted from Luna, Ringberg and Peracchio (2008). The reliability of self-assessed proficiency comprising four items was excellent for Germans (α = .94) and good for Dutch participants (α = .81).

Purchase intention was measured by means of a 7-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree) using the item "I would want buy the product".

Procedure
The questionnaires, designed to measure the dependent variables, were administered using the research software Qualtrics and were forwarded to German participants via the online messaging service WhatsApp. For Dutch participants, questionnaires were conducted on paper in secondary schools. The data collection took place during April and May 2018. A short introduction text was written in the participants' mother tongue and comprised the approximate

time it would take to fill in the questionnaire, as well as information about the procedure. Participants were ensured that data would be kept confidential. After agreeing to the terms and conditions of the experiment, by signing a consent form, participants got assigned randomly to either a narrative written in their mother tongue (Dutch/German), or to a narrative written in their second language English.

Upon reading the narrative, participants were asked to answer questions that measured the dependent variables. Participant's self-assessed proficiency was measured as an addition to the participants' tested language competence, which was measured by means of the LexTALE. The LexTALE test was considered a valid manner to test English vocabulary knowledge and proficiency. Lastly, questions about the respondent's demographics were asked. The questionnaire was designed to take approximately 20 minutes.

Statistical treatment

Two-way analyses of variance were carried out for each dependent variable, in order to examine whether language of the narrative (L1/L2) and nationality of the participants (German/Dutch) had an effect on narrative comprehension, transportation, identification, attitude towards the company, attitude towards language and purchase intention. In addition to that, two two-way analyses of variance were carried out for tested English proficiency and self-assessed English proficiency. The data was analysed using SPSS Statistics 23.

Results

In the subsequent section, the results will be discussed for each of the dependent variables. Table 1 shows an overview of the means and standard deviations of the effects of language version of the narrative and nationality of the participants on the dependent variables.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations (between brackets) for the effect of language version of the narrative and nationality of the participants on the underlying dimensions of narrative persuasion (1 = completely disagree; 7 = completely agree) (N = 217) (RQ1)

Nationality	Dutch	Dutch	German	German	Total
Language version	L1	L2	L1	L2	
	N = 74	N = 77	N = 36	N = 30	N = 217
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Narrative comprehension	5.82 (.66)	5.47 (.90)	5.17 (.83)	4.80 (1.17)	5.45 (.92)
Transportation	4.44 (.93)	4.18 (.97)	4.00 (.93)	4.17 (.81)	4.24 (.93)
Identification	4.64 (1.04)	4.45 (1.02)	4.58 (.69)	4.73 (.74)	4.57 (.95)
Attitude towards organisation	5.55 (.94)	5.47 (.80)	4.48 (1.58)	4.86 (1.65)	5.25 (1.21)
Attitude towards language	4.15 (.69)	5.12 (.78)	4.61 (.85)	4.89 (1.01)	4.68 (.90)
Purchase intention	4.66 (1.79)	3.86 (1.86)	4.03 (1.72)	4.67 (1.40)	4.27 (1.78)

Narrative Comprehension

A two-way analysis of variance with language of the narrative and nationality of the respondents as factors on comprehension showed a significant main effect of language version (F (1, 213) = 8.01, p = .005). The narrative written in the participants' first language was found to be more comprehensible (M = 5.61, SD = 0.78) than their second language (M = 5.28, SD = 1.02). Furthermore, a significant main effect of nationality (F (1, 213) = 27.01, p <.001) on narrative comprehension was found. Dutch participants (M = 5.64, SD = 0.81) indicated a higher level of comprehension than German participants (M = 5.00, SD = 1.01). The interaction effect between nationality and language of the narrative regarding comprehension was not statistically significant (F (1, 213) < 1).

Transportation

A two-way analysis of variance with language of the narrative and nationality of the respondents as factors found no significant main effect of language of the narrative on transportation (F (1, 213) = 0.122, p = .727) and no significant main effect of nationality on transportation (F (1, 213) = 2.77, p = .098). The interaction effect between language of the narrative and nationality was found to be not statistically significant (F (1, 213) = 2.45, p = .119).

Identification

A two-way analysis of variance with language of the narrative and nationality of the respondents as factors found no significant main effect for language of the narrative on identification (F (1, 213) = 0.02, p = .883) and no significant main effect of nationality of the respondents on identification (F (1, 213) = 0.61, p = .436). The interaction effect between language of the narrative and nationality was found to be not statistically significant (F (1, 213) = 1.47, p = .228).

Attitude towards organisation

A two-way analysis of variance with language of the narrative and nationality of the respondents as factors on attitude towards the organisation showed no significant main effect of language version on the attitude towards the organisation (F (1, 213) = 0.76, p = .383). However, a significant main effect of nationality on attitude towards the organisation was found (F (1, 213) = 24.69, p <.001). Dutch participants (M = 5.51, SD = 0.87) indicated a significantly more positive attitude towards the organisation than German participants (M = 4.65, SD = 1.61). The interaction effect between nationality and language version of the narrative on the attitude towards the organisation was statistically not significant (F (1, 213) = 1.78, p = .184).

Attitude towards language

A two-way analysis of variance with language of the narrative and nationality of the respondents as factors on attitude towards language revealed a significant main effect for language of the narrative on the attitude towards language (F (1, 213) = 27.82, p <.001). No significant main effect of nationality on attitude towards language (F (1, 213) = 0.90, p = .345). The interaction effect between nationality and language version on the narrative on

attitude towards language were found to be statistically significant (F (1, 213) = 8.78, p = .003; see Figure 1). The file was split on the basis of nationality and two separate analyses of variances were conducted. The analysis of variances revealed a significant interaction effect for the Dutch participants only (F (1, 149) = 65.80, p <.001). Dutch participants rated their second language (M = 5.12, SD = 0.78) significantly more positive than their first language (M = 4.15, SD = 0.69). However, there was no significant interaction effect found for the German participants (F (1, 64) = 1.43, p = .237).
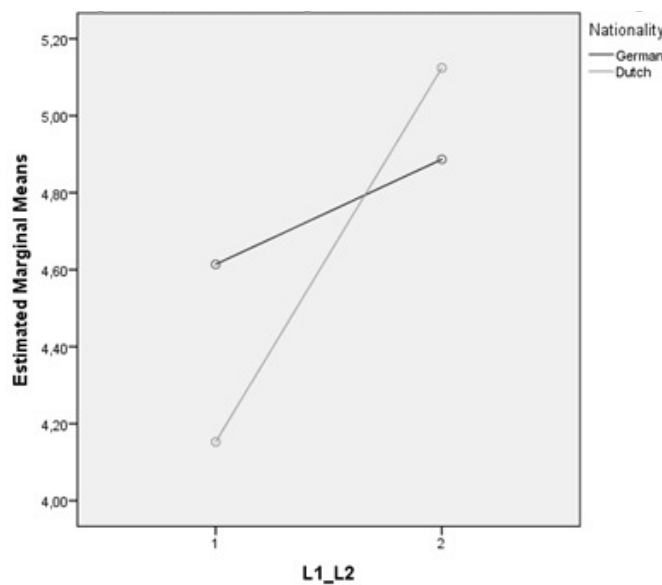

Figure 1.   Estimated marginal means of attitude towards language
for L1/L2 across nationalities (German/Dutch)

Purchase intention

A two-way analysis of variance with language of the narrative and nationality of the respondents as factors on purchase intention found no significant main effect of language of the narrative on purchase intention (F (1, 213) = 0.10, p = .749) and no significant main effect of nationality on purchase intention (F (1, 213) = 0.11, p = .736). The interaction effect between language version and nationality of the narrative on purchase intention was found to be statistically significant (F (1, 213) = 7.73, p = .006; see Figure 2). The file was split on the basis of nationality and two separate analyses of variances were conducted. The analysis of variances revealed a significant interaction effect for the Dutch participants only (F (1, 149) = 7.35, p = .008). Dutch participants indicated a significantly higher intention to purchase the muesli introduced in the narrative in their first language (M = 4.66, SD = 1.79) than in their

second language ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.86$). However, there was no significant interaction effect found for the German participants ($F (1, 64) = 2.68$, $p = .107$).
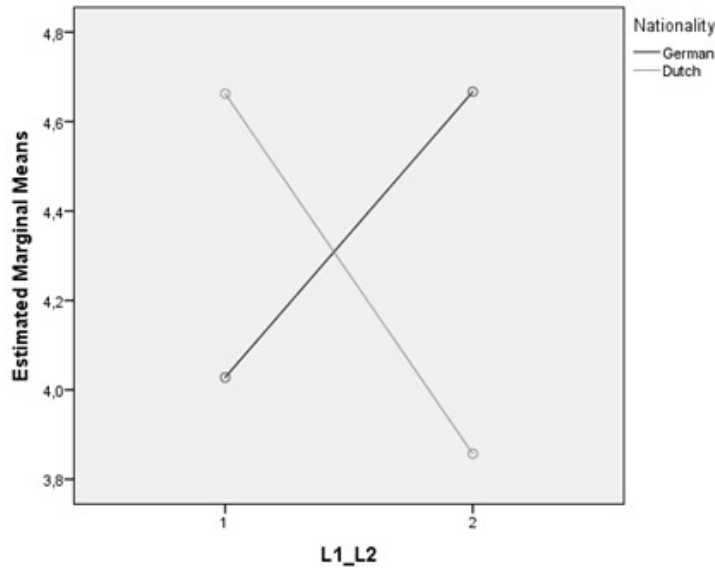

Figure 2.　　Estimated marginal means of purchase intention for
　　　　　　　L1/L2 across nationalities (German/Dutch)

Table 2 shows an overview of the means and standard deviations for proficiency of German and Dutch participants in their first and second language.

Table 2.　　Means and standard deviations (between brackets) for proficiency of German
　　　　　　and Dutch participants in their L1 and L2 ($N = 217$) (RQ2)

Nationality	Dutch	Dutch	German	German	Total
Language version	L1	L2	L1	L2	
	$N = 74$	$N = 77$	$N = 36$	$N = 30$	$N = 217$
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Tested proficiency	84.85 (7.16)	69.27 (12.00)	86.84 (8.62)	63.11 (10.03)	76.61 (13.38)
Self-assessed proficiency	5.50 (0.79)	4.98 (1.34)	3.74 (1.46)	4.04 (1.40)	4.82 (1.38)

Tested language proficiency (LexTALE)

A two-way analysis of variance with language version and nationality as factors on proficiency found a significant main effect for language of the narrative on proficiency (F (1, 213) = 185.23, p <.001). However, there was no significant main effect found of nationality on proficiency (F (1, 213) = 2.08, p = .151). The interaction effect between language version and nationality for proficiency was significant (F (1, 212) = 7.97, p = .005; see Figure 3). The file was split on the basis of language version and two separate analyses of variances were conducted. The analysis of variance revealed a significant interaction effect for the second language only (F (1, 105) = 6.21, p = .014). Dutch participants (M = 69.27, SD = 12.00) were found to be more proficient in their L2 than Germans (M = 63.12, SD = 10.03). The file was split again on the basis of nationality. The analysis of variance revealed a significant effect for both the Dutch (F (1, 148) = 92.01, p <.001) and the German participants (F (1, 64) = 106.93, p <.001). Dutch participants were more proficient in their L1 (M = 84.85, SD = 7.16) than in their L2 (M = 69.27, SD = 12.00). German participants were also more proficient in their L1 (M = 86.84, SD = 8.62) than in their L2 (M = 63.11, SD = 10.03).
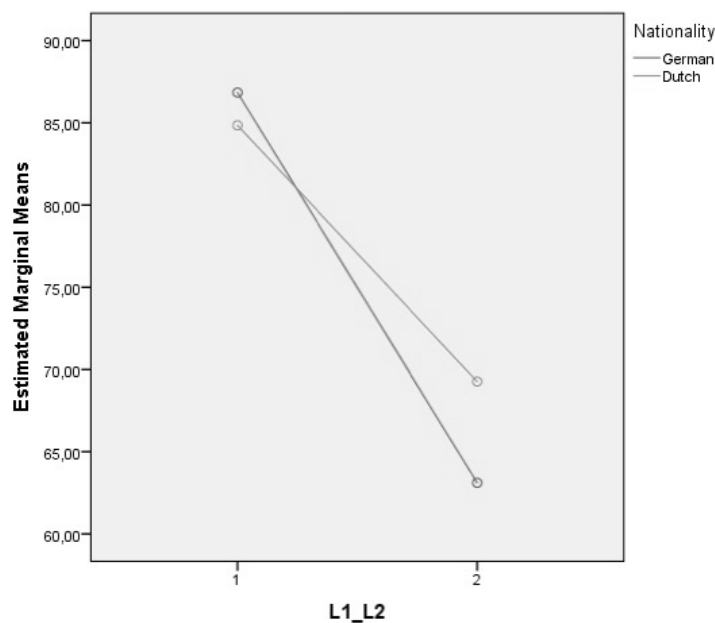

Figure 3.   Estimated marginal means of tested English proficiency for
L1/L2 across nationalities (German/Dutch)

Self-assessed language proficiency

A two-way analysis of variance with language version and nationality as factors on self-assessed proficiency found no significant main effect of language version on self-assessed proficiency (F (1, 213) = 0.38, p = .539). However, there was a statistically significant main effect found of nationality on self-assessed proficiency (F (1, 213) = 56.17, p <.001). The analysis of variances revealed a significant interaction effect for self-assessed language proficiency between language version and nationality (F (1, 213) = 5.20, p = .024; see Figure 4). The file was split on language version and two separate analyses of variances were conducted. There was a significant difference between German and Dutch participants regarding their self-assessed proficiency in their L1 (F (1, 108) = 66.82, p <.001). Dutch participants rated themselves as more proficient in their L1 (M = 5.50, SD = 0.79), than German participants (M = 3.74, SD = 1.46). There was a significant difference between German and Dutch participants regarding their self-assessed proficiency in their L2 (F (1, 105) = 10.30, p = .002). Dutch participants rated themselves as more proficient in their L2 (M = 4.98, SD = 1.34), than German participants (M = 4.04, SD = 1.39). The file was split again on the basis of nationality. The difference between self-assessed proficiency in first and second language was only found to be statistically significant for Dutch participants (F (1, 149) = 8.35, p = .004). Dutch participants rated themselves as more proficient in their first language (M = 5.50, SD = 0.79), than in English (M = 4.98, SD = 1.34). There was no difference found between the self-assessed proficiency of the first and second language for German participants (F (1, 64) < 1).
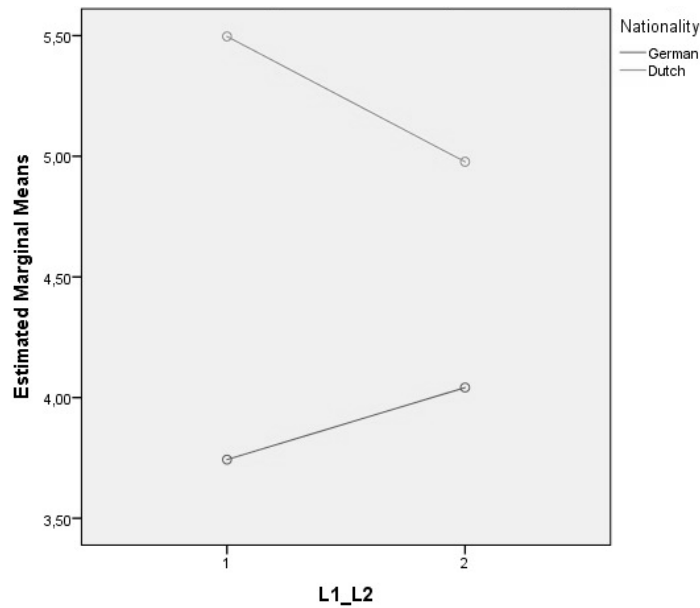
Figure 4.   Estimated marginal means of self-assessed English proficiency
             for L1/L2 across nationalities (German/Dutch)

Conclusion and Discussion

This section will recapitulate on the purpose of the current study and summarise the results by referring back to the two main research questions. Findings will be compared to the groundwork of literature on narrative persuasiveness and for outstanding results, possible explanations will be given.

It is widely accepted that narratives can be fortunate approaches to influence reader's attitudes and beliefs (Murphy et al., 2013). However, in today's globalised world, it is more likely that target audiences with different cultural backgrounds receive marketing content such as corporate narratives in their second language, mostly English. In relation to this, the aim of the current study was to investigate whether language version and nationality influence the dimensions underlying narrative persuasion. In doing so, an additional aim was to investigate whether the German and Dutch native speakers differed in their second language proficiency.

RQ1: The first research question examined the extent to which the language version of the narrative (L1/L2) and the nationality (Dutch or German) led to different outcomes for the dependent variables of narrative comprehension, transportation, identification, attitude

towards the organisation, and attitude towards language and purchase intention. In this chapter, the findings are discussed in detail per dependent variable.

The findings regarding narrative comprehension reveal that for both Dutch and German respondents, narrative comprehension was higher in L1 than in L2. The results provide evidence for the RHM model introduced by Dufour and Kroll (1995). Apparently, being able to access the meaning of English words only indirectly through translation from either German (L1) or Dutch (L1) to English (L2) resulted in a higher comprehension of the narratives written in the first language. Expectations were confirmed, and the results suggest that, indeed, the more challenging processing of L2 content is a disruptive factor for narrative comprehension in the reading experience (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). Regarding the effects of nationality on comprehension, the Dutch participants comprehended the corporate narrative better than the German participants in both L1 and L2. One possible explanation for this result is the age gap of 36 years (on average) between the Dutch and the German respondents. As the Dutch participants were high school students, still actively learning and all highly educated, they might have been able to follow the storyline more easily.

No effects of language version or nationality on the variables of transportation and identification were found. The findings on the variable of transportation suggest that written and filmed narratives differ in the way they transport readers and viewers into the storyline. These results explain the apparently contradictory findings of a study conducted by Wissmath et al. (2009), in which respondents indicated a lower level of transportation into a filmed narrative using L2 subtitling. Regarding identification, the findings suggest that the use of L2 does not disrupt the reading flow and weaken identification with the protagonists, as previously expected based on the findings of Slater and Rouner (2002). Further experimental investigations need to focus on how language choice influences transportation and identification, especially when the proficiency levels of the respondents are below the B1 level (CEFR, 2018).

Regarding the variable attitude towards language, the Dutch participants had a more positive attitude towards their L2 than towards their L1. One possible explanation for the more positive attitude of Dutch participants towards the English language could be their higher tested English proficiency, which was supported by the outcomes of LexTALE, led to a more positive evaluation of the English language (L2). The findings regarding attitude towards the organisation revealed that the Dutch participants evaluated the organisation more positively than the German participants in both languages. It is possible that the lower overall comprehension of the narrative by the German participants led to frustrations being projected

onto the organisation the narrative dealt with. The Dutch respondents, due to them being able to follow the storyline better, might have developed a more positive attitude towards the narrative and, consequently, towards the company. Statistical tests on the mediating effect of comprehension on attitude are necessary to validate these assumptions.

One remarkable observation regarding purchase intention is that the Dutch participants were more willing to buy the product when the narrative was written in L1 rather than in the L2. It could be that, for the Dutch participants, although they were found to hold a higher attitude towards English, their L1 remains the more trusted and preferred language in terms of making purchase decisions.

RQ2: As the current study focused on narrative persuasion in a foreign language, and English was considered an important influential factor regarding the dependent variables, the second research question examined proof the extent to which the German and the Dutch participants differentiated in their L2 proficiency.

The LexTALE proved that the tested English proficiency of the Dutch participants (69.27 %) was higher than that of the German participants (63.12 %). According to Lemhöfer and Broersma (2011), both respondent groups should be categorised as upper-intermediate English speakers, equivalent to the CEF Level B1. The Dutch participants being slightly more proficient in English than the German participants lends support to the findings of the EF Language proficiency index (2017), in which 80 countries are ranked according to non-native English proficiency. In the Index, the Dutch are ranked first and the Germans ninth. What could have contributed to this ranking is that the Dutch read more frequently in English than their German counterparts. Of the Dutch respondents, 15.9 % indicated they read literature in English frequently; whereas, only 3% of their German counterparts indicated the same. Consequently, the higher L2 proficiency of the Dutch respondents in the current study could have caused the greater English narrative comprehension. English proficiency might have had a mediating effect on the remaining dependent variables. The results concerning self-assessed English proficiency support the findings of the LexTALE test, as the Dutch participants rated themselves more proficient in English than their German counterparts. The Dutch participants rated themselves more proficient also in their L1 than the Germans participants rated themselves. These findings can seem initially inexplicable but are supported by a study by Onna and Jansen (2006), in which Dutch people were found to overestimate systematically their own language proficiency.

Limitations and further research

Finally, several potential weak points of this thesis need to be considered. First, given that the comparison between the German and the Dutch respondents was based on a small number of German participants, the results should be treated with caution. Furthermore, some additional difficulties with the German respondent group appeared during the data collection phase, which could be considered another shortcoming. More than half of the German participants were found to prematurely terminate their participation in the study when they were randomly assigned the questionnaire including the English narrative. Through oral feedback, it appeared that some participants misused the randomisation button embedded in the questionnaire on Qualtrics. Restarting the survey led the participants to the questionnaire including the German narrative, when they were initially assigned to the questionnaire including the English narrative. In addition, using the online software Qualtrics gave the German participants the free choice to stop taking the survey whenever they wanted. It could, therefore, be that only those participants who felt confident enough about their English skills completed the questionnaire including the English version of narrative. Consequently, a potential weakness of the current study could be that the actual English proficiency of the German participants is lower than the findings suggest; especially as the Dutch respondents completed the questionnaires in a more controlled classroom setting, where the perceived pressure to finish the study was higher. Based on these shortcomings, future research should include a larger sample and focus on getting the respondents to complete the questionnaires on paper.

An additional shortfall of the current study is that no conclusions could be drawn regarding the variable emotional involvement, which had to be excluded from data analyses due to the low reliability of the scale. Further experimental investigations should briefly consider emotional involvement, especially as previous studies anticipate weaker emotional responses to L2 content.

Although the comparison between the German and the Dutch native speakers revealed some valuable insights, comparing only two nationalities, both of whom have high English proficiency levels, could be considered a shortcoming. Future studies should, therefore, include respondents of other nationalities, especially from countries where the EF English proficiency index (2017) predicts a lower English proficiency level. A greater difference in English skills might lead to a higher influence of second language use on narrative persuasion. In addition, a replicating study should investigate not only the influence of English as a lingua franca, but investigate Spanish or French as an L2. Furthermore, such a

study should use other samples and other types of corporate stories, as proposed by O'Connor (2002), and apply regression analyses to discover whether the dependent variables predict one another and to attain more generalisable results.

Theoretical implications

Despite the current study clearly having some limitations, strong theoretical and practical implications can still be made. First, the current study confirms the LexTALE test as an adequate measure for language proficiency. LexTALE scores were found to be in line with proficiency levels proposed by the EF English proficiency index (2017). The confirmed validity of the LexTALE might prove useful in future studies investigating possible correlations between language proficiency and the underlying dimensions of narrative persuasion.

Second, even if the language version of the narrative appeared to be an influential factor only with reference to the variables of narrative comprehension and purchase intention, differences based on nationality still occur. Additionally, the current study demonstrates existing differences in English proficiency between cultures. English proficiency could have even more influence on narrative persuasion when cultures with a lower English proficiency are compared.

Finally, the levels of narrative comprehension, transportation, identification and attitude towards the organisation, language and purchase intention were average, which supports the idea that corporate narratives work as a persuasive tool, as previously suggested by Spring (2017).

Practical implications

The observations have several practical implications for marketers who wish to utilise corporate narratives as a persuasive marketing tool. First, regarding the continuing debate on standardisation versus localisation of business communication, the current study strongly advises localisation; which means designing corporate narratives in the reader's most fluent language (L1).

Second, when spreading corporate messages internationally across different nationalities, marketers should bear in mind that reactions to persuasive content will probably depend on the culture of the target audience. As corporate narratives were found to be a successful persuasive tool on an unconscious level, marketers should apply the potential of

corporate narratives in an ethically acceptable manner. If the aim of the narrative is to promote the company and sell a product, that aim should clear to the audience.

Overall, the current study makes fundamental additions to the existing knowledge about narrative persuasion, has several implications for corporate international business communication, and proves that founding corporate narratives can be successfully utilised as persuasive tools.

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Appendix

Narrative German

Alles außer Rosinen

Ich liebe das Campen. Als ich klein war, machte ich mit meiner Familie oft Reisen und erlebte was großartig in der Welt war. Immer bei uns war mein Nachbar und bester Freund: Oskar. Er ist der lustigste Typ, den ich je in meinem Leben getroffen habe und er konnte einen Rückwärtssalto, was ihm großen Respekt überall in der Nachbarschaft verschaffte. Die Zeit fliegt dahin: Ich wurde erwachsen, beendete die Schule und begann Mathe zu studieren, um Lehrer zu werden. Die Ausflüge mit meinen Eltern gehörten der Vergangenheit an, aber Oskar war immer noch jedes Mal bei mir und in unserem alten rostigen Auto wenn wir uns zweimal im Jahr aufmachten, um die Welt zu entdecken. Es war eine dieser legendären Reisen, die alles in Gang setzte! Auf unserem Weg zu den schönen Stränden Frankreichs hörten wir einen furchtbaren Radiospot, in dem eine quietschende Stimme versuchte, für Müsli mit neuem Rosinengeschmack zu werben. Nach einer angeregten Diskussion waren Oskar und ich sicher, dass wir nicht nur bessere Radiowerbung machen wollten – Warum nicht auch besseres Müsli? Denn, mal ehrlich: Wer will Rosinen in seinem Müsli? Da Oskar und ich Essen als Leidenschaft teilen, dauerte es die restlichen Stunden bis nach Frankreich und die beiden ersten Tage unserer Reise, um zu diskutieren, was das perfekte Müsli ausmacht. Wir dachten an Bananen, Leinsamen und Blaubeeren oder sogar Cashewnüsse, kombiniert mit Mango. Für Oskar war es ein Mix aus fruchtigen und knusprigen Zutaten, für mich war Schokolade das Wichtigste. Letztendlich wurde uns klar, dass das perfekte Müsli für jeden etwas anderes ist. Die Idee hinter Perfect Cereal war geboren. Zurück zu Hause stellten wir unsere Idee Familie und Freunden vor und glücklicherweise waren alle davon begeistert. In unserer Fantasie hatten wir schon eine Million Euro mit diesem super Plan verdient. Aber in der Praxis stellte es sich als viel schwieriger heraus, als ich erwartet hatte. Ich musste noch mein Studium an der Universität beenden und Oskar war in einem nine to five job in der nächsten Stadt gefangen. Wir hatten sehr wenig Zeit, um an unserer Idee zu arbeiten und keine Erfahrung darin ein Unternehmen zu gründen. Zu der Zeit war ich mir auch wirklich nicht sicher, ob es mein Ziel im Leben sein sollte, ein Unternehmer zu sein. Könnte das wirklich funktionieren? Ehrlich gesagt, hätte ich an diesem Punkt vielleicht aufgehört und wäre jetzt ein phänomenaler und beliebter Lehrer, aber ich hatte nicht mit Oskars Enthusiasmus gerechnet. In endlosen Treffen an seinem Küchentisch überzeugte er mich, dass Perfect Cereal wirklich funktionieren könnte und, dass unsere Idee es wert war, dafür zu kämpfen. Und bis heute bin ich ihm immer noch dankbar für seine Dickköpfigkeit. In den folgenden Monaten steckten wir unsere Köpfe zusammen um herauszufinden, wie unser Unternehmen funktionieren könnte. Da wir beide die Stimmen unserer Mütter in unseren Köpfen klingeln hörten „Frühstück ist die wichtigste Mahlzeit des Tages", entschieden wir uns, dass Perfect Cereal zu einer gesunden Lebensweise beitragen sollte (Schokolade zählt in kleinen Mengen offiziell als gesund!). Unser Müsliangebot sollte organisch sein, ohne zusätzliche Geschmacks- und Farbstoffe, und aus Zutaten aller Art bestehen. Von Bananen, Sesam und Feigen zu Schokoladenstückchen: Du kannst alles für dein eigenes perfektes Müsli auswählen! Wir hatten Geld von Familie und Freunden geliehen um unseren ersten Lagerraum zu eröffnen. Unglücklicherweise im obersten Stock eines Gebäudes, was eine Menge Treppensteigen für uns und unsere ersten beiden Mitarbeiter bedeutete. Aber abgesehen davon lief unser Unternehmen gut. Unsere Website war fertig und Perfect Cereal konnte endlich online bestellt werden. Unsere Idee, für die wir all diese endlosen Tage und Nächte gearbeitet hatten. Unser Baby. Ich war sehr froh, diese Reise mit meinem besten Freund begonnen zu haben. Aber dann kam der Schock.

Ein paar Monate nachdem wir anfingen, stagnierten die Bestellungen für Perfect Cereal. Alle, denen wir von dem Unternehmen erzählt hatten, waren sehr begeistert, aber bis jetzt hatten wir es nicht geschafft unser Produkt richtig zu vermarkten. „Hallo. Wir machen Müsli. Du kannst deine eigenen Geschmacksrichtungen online auswählen und wir schicken sie dir zu". Scheinbar war das nicht genug, um von selbst zu funktionieren. Unser Produkt brauchte ein bisschen Hilfe aber wegen den hohen Kosten für Versand und Lagerung war jedoch nichts vom Budget übrig. Ich habe mir ehrlich nie vorstellen können wie teuer professionelle Werbung ist. Auf der einen Seite erklärt das vielleicht den furchtbaren Radiospot, der uns inspiriert hat, aber auf der anderen Seite konnte das auch das Ende unseres Traums sein. Wie konnten wir das nicht kommen sehen? Wir waren wirklich nah dran aufzugeben. Ich erinnere mich genau an eine von diesen schlaflosen Nächten in Oskars kleiner Küche, wo wir alle möglichen Optionen bei einer Tasse furchtbarem schwarzen Kaffee diskutierten. Ich saß zusammengesunken auf meinem Stuhl, während Oskar sich gegen den hölzernen Tisch lehnte und mit seinen Fingern gegen seine Tasse trommelte.

Oskar: „Aber was wenn wir..."

Ich: „Das haben wir schon probiert."

Oskar: „Ja, ich weiß, Thomas, aber vielleicht kann uns mein Onkel..."

Ich: „Wie? Dein Onkel hat kein Geld mehr ... niemand hat das. Aaahh! Ich kann es immer noch nicht glauben, dass es so teuer ist, eine einzige Werbeanzeige zu produzieren! Ich wünschte wir könnten es selbst tun!"

Oskar: „Hmm"

Ich: „Hmm mich nicht an! Wir haben einige ernsthafte Probleme, abgesehen von deinen fehlenden Fähigkeiten, anständigen Kaffee zu machen!"

Oskar: „Ich dachte gerade... wenn wir das Werbeproblem nicht lösen können, sollten wir vielleicht etwas anderes probieren... Was wenn wir unser Produkt sichtbarer machen, ohne wirklich dafür zu werben?"

Und so haben wir unseren ersten Laden bekommen. Letztendlich war Oskars Idee einfach brilliant! Glücklicherweise haben wir ein Ladenlokal nahe an der Stadtmitte, für wenig Miete gefunden. Hier waren wir sichtbarer für alle. Mit den neuen Kunden, die spontan in den Laden kommen konnten, konnten wir unsere Lieferkosten reduzieren und erhöhten unseren Bekanntheitsgrad. Außerdem mussten wir nicht mehr 47 Stufen laufen, um in unseren Lagerraum zu kommen und wir konnten mehr Zutaten für geringere Kosten lagern. Unsere Verkäufe stiegen endlich wieder an. Dadurch inspiriert, versuchten wir mehr alternative Wege zu finden, um für unser Müsli zu werben. Wir scheiterten mit einer riesigen aufblasbaren Müslischüssel, aber die Sticker mit unserem Logo stellten sich als großer Erfolg heraus. Wir brauchten noch ein paar weitere Monate um endgültig genug Geld zu haben, um eine echte Werbeanzeige zu schalten. Und ich will nicht angeben, aber sie war wirklich gut. Die Verkäufe erreichten einen neuen Höhepunkt und alles war fantastisch. Naja, abgesehen von den kleinen Problemen, die jedes Unternehmen hat, wie verspätete Lieferung oder dass deine zehn Angestellten dafür stimmen Rosinen auf deine Zutatenliste zu setzen (scheinbar gibt es Leute, die das wirklich mögen...). Letztendlich war alles der Dickköpfigkeit und Kreativität meines besten Freundes zu verdanken, dass unser Traum wahr geworden ist. Und das ist nicht das Ende, sondern nur der Anfang unserer Reise! Kürzlich fanden wir heraus, dass Essen viel besser bei Nacht am Lagerfeuer oder unter dem endlosen, blauen Himmel schmeckt - also warum nicht unserer Idee Flügel verleihen? Perfect Cereal to go? Jetzt kommen wir!

Thomas

Narrative Dutch

Alles behalve rozijnen

Ik hou van kamperen. Toen ik klein was, ging ik vaak op vakantie met mijn familie en beleefde ik geweldige dingen in de wereld. Mijn buurman en beste vriend Oscar was altijd bij ons. Hij is de grappigste vent die ik ooit heb ontmoet in mijn leven en hij kon een achterwaartse salto, wat hem groot respect opleverde in de hele buurt. De tijd vloog voorbij: Ik groeide op, maakte de middelbare school af en begon wiskunde te studeren om leraar te worden. De tripjes met mijn ouders waren verleden tijd, maar Oscar was nog elke keer aan mijn zijde en in onze oude roestige auto gingen we twee keer per jaar de wereld ontdekken. Het was een van die legendarische vakanties waar het allemaal mee begon!

Onderweg naar de mooie stranden van Frankrijk hoorden we een verschrikkelijke radioreclame waarin een piepstemmetje ontbijtgranen met rozijnen als hun nieuwe smaak probeerde te adverteren. Na een levendige discussie waren Oscar en ik er zeker van dat we niet alleen betere radiocommercials wilden maken – waarom niet ook betere ontbijtgranen? Ik bedoel, kom op: wie wil er nou rozijnen in zijn ontbijtgranen? Aangezien Oscar en ik een passie voor eten delen, kostte het ons de resterende uren in de auto richting Frankrijk en de eerste twee dagen van onze vakantie om erover te discussiëren wat de perfecte ontbijtgranen zijn. We dachten aan bananen, lijnzaad en bosbessen of zelfs cashewnoten in combinatie met mango. Voor Oscar was het een mix van fruitige en knapperige ingrediënten, voor mij was chocolade het belangrijkst. Uiteindelijk realiseerden we ons dat de perfecte ontbijtgranen voor iedereen iets anders zijn. Het idee achter Perfect Cereal was geboren.

Eenmaal thuis presenteerden we ons idee aan familie en vrienden en gelukkig was iedereen er enthousiast over. In onze fantasie hadden we al miljoenen euro's verdiend met dit geweldige plan, maar in werkelijkheid bleek het lastiger dan ik had verwacht. Ik moest mijn opleiding op de universiteit nog afmaken en Oscar zat vast in een negen tot vijf baan in een stad verderop. We hadden heel weinig tijd om aan ons idee te werken en geen ervaring met het opzetten van een bedrijf. In die tijd wist ik nog niet helemaal zeker of ondernemen mijn doel in het leven was. Kon dit echt werken? Eerlijk gezegd had ik op dat punt misschien ook kunnen stoppen en had ik nu een fantastische leraar geweest kunnen zijn, maar ik had niet gerekend op Oscars enthousiasme. In eindeloze vergaderingen aan zijn keukentafel overtuigde hij me ervan dat Perfect Cereal echt zou kunnen werken en dat ons idee het waard was om voor te vechten. Tot op de dag van vandaag ben ik dankbaar voor zijn koppigheid.

In de volgende maanden staken we onze koppen bij elkaar om uit te zoeken hoe ons bedrijf zou kunnen werken. Omdat we allebei de stemmen van onze moeders in ons hoofd hoorden zeggen "Ontbijt is de belangrijkste maaltijd van de dag", besloten we dat Perfect Cereal bij moest dragen aan een gezonde manier van leven (chocolade telt officieel als gezond in kleine hoeveelheden!). Ons assortiment ontbijtgranen zou biologisch moeten zijn, zonder toegevoegde kleur- en smaakstoffen en bestaan uit allerlei ingrediënten. Van bananen, sesam en vijgen tot chocolade stukjes, je kan alles kiezen voor je eigen perfecte ontbijtgranen! We hadden geld geleend van familie en vrienden om onze eerste opslagruimte te openen. Helaas was het op de bovenste verdieping van een gebouw, wat veel traplopen betekende voor ons en onze eerste twee werknemers. Afgezien daarvan liepen de zaken goed. Onze website was klaar en Perfect Cereal kon eindelijk online besteld worden! Ons idee waar we al die eindeloze dagen en nachten aan gewerkt hadden, onze baby. Ik was erg blij dat ik deze reis was begonnen met mijn beste vriend.

Toen kwam echter de schok.

Een paar maanden nadat we gestart waren, stagneerden de orders voor Perfect Cereal. Iedereen die we verteld hadden over ons bedrijf was erg enthousiast, maar tot nu toe waren we er nog niet in geslaagd om ons product te adverteren. "Hallo. Wij maken ontbijtgranen. Je kan je eigen smaken online kiezen en wij sturen ze naar je op". Blijkbaar was dit niet genoeg om vanzelf te werken. Ons product had wat hulp nodig, maar er was geen budget meer over vanwege de hoge kosten voor verzending en opslag . Ik had me eerlijk gezegd nooit voor kunnen stellen hoe duur professionele advertenties zijn. Aan de ene kant verklaart dit natuurlijk de verschrikkelijke commercial die ons toentertijd inspireerde, maar aan de andere kant kon dit ook het eind van onze droom betekenen. Hoe konden we dit niet hebben zien aankomen? We hadden echt bijna opgegeven. Ik herinner me nog duidelijk één van die slapeloze nachten in Oscars keuken, waar we al onze opties bespraken met een kop vreselijke smakende, zwarte koffie. Ik zat onderuitgezakt op mijn stoel, terwijl Oscar tegen de houten tafel leunde, trommelend met zijn vingers tegen zijn mok.

Oscar: "Maar wat als we…"
Ik: "Dat hebben we al geprobeerd."
Oscar: Ja, dat weet ik, Thomas, maar misschien kan mijn oom…"
Ik: "Hoe? Je oom heeft geen geld meer… dat heeft niemand. Aargh! Ik kan nog steeds niet geloven dat één enkele advertentie zo duur is om te produceren! Konden we het nou maar zelf doen!"
Oscar: "Hmm"
Ik: "Hmm niet naar me! We hebben een serieus probleem naast het feit dat jij geen fatsoenlijke koffie kan maken!"
Oscar: "Ik zat net te denken…Als we het probleem van adverteren niet op kunnen lossen, moeten we misschien iets anders proberen…Wat als we ons product zichtbaarder maken zonder het echt te adverteren?"

En zo kregen we onze eerste winkel. Uiteindelijk was Oscars idee gewoon briljant! Gelukkig vonden we een winkel dichtbij het centrum tegen een lage huurprijs. Hier waren we zichtbaarder voor iedereen. Doordat nieuwe klanten spontaan de winkel in konden lopen, hadden we de mogelijkheid om de verzendkosten te verlagen en onze merkbekendheid te vergroten. Verder hoefden we niet meer 47 traptreden op om bij onze opslagplaats te komen en konden we meer ingrediënten opslaan tegen minder kosten. Eindelijk stegen de verkoopcijfers weer. Hierdoor geïnspireerd probeerden we meer alternatieve manieren te vinden om onze ontbijtgranen te adverteren. We flopten met een enorm opblaasbaar ontbijtgranenbord, maar de stickers met ons logo bleken een enorm succes. Het kostte ons nog een paar maanden voordat we eindelijk genoeg geld hadden om een echte advertentie te maken. Ik wil niet opscheppen, maar die was heel goed! De verkoopcijfers bereikten een nieuw hoogtepunt en alles was fantastisch. Nou ja, naast de kleine problemen die elk bedrijf heeft, zoals vertraagde verzendingen of dat je tien werknemers ervoor stemmen om rozijnen op je lijst van ingrediënten te krijgen (blijkbaar zijn er toch mensen die dat echt lekker vinden…). Uiteindelijk was het allemaal dankzij de koppigheid en creativiteit van mijn beste vriend dat onze droom is uitgekomen. Dit is niet het einde, maar pas het begin van onze reis! Onlangs hebben we ontdekt dat eten veel beter smaakt in de nacht bij een kampvuur of onder de eindeloze, blauwe lucht – dus waarom zouden we geen vleugels kunnen geven aan ons idee? Perfect Cereal to go? We komen eraan!

Thomas

Narrative English

All but raisins

I love camping. When I was young, I often went on holidays with my family and experienced what was magnificent in the world. Always with us was my neighbour and best friend: Oscar. He is the funniest guy I have ever met in my life and was able to do a back flip, which earned him great respect all around the neighbourhood. Time flies: I grew up, finished school and started studying math to become a teacher. The trips with my parents became a thing of the past but, Oscar was still with me every time and in our old rusty car we went to discover the world twice a year. It was one of those legendary trips that started it all!

On our way to the beautiful beaches of France, we listened to a horrible radio spot in which a squeaky voice tried to advertise cereals with raisins as their new flavour. After a vivid discussion, Oscar and I were sure that not only did we want to make better radio ads - Why not also better cereals? Because, I mean honestly: Who would want raisins in their cereals? As Oscar and I share food as passion, it took all the remaining hours to France and the first two days of our journey to discuss what makes a perfect cereal. We thought about bananas, linseeds and blueberries or even cashew nuts combined with mango. For Oscar, it was a mix of fruity and crunchy ingredients, for me chocolate was the most important. Eventually we realised that the perfect cereal was something different for everyone. The idea behind Perfect Cereal was born.

Back home, we presented our idea to family and friends, and luckily everybody was excited about it. In our imagination we had already made one million Euros with this awesome plan. But in practice, it turned out to be more difficult than I had expected. I still had to finish my studies at university and Oscar was stuck in a nine to five job in the next town. We had very little time to work on our idea and no experience in setting up a business. At this time, I also wasn't sure whether being an entrepreneur should really be my aim in life. Could this really work? Honestly, I might have stopped at that point and now be a phenomenal and much-loved teacher, but I didn't take Oscar's enthusiasm into account. In endless meetings at his kitchen table, he convinced me that Perfect Cereal could really work and that our idea was worth fighting for. And to this day, I am still thankful for his pigheadedness.

In the following months, we put our heads together to figure out how our business could work. As we both heard our mothers' voices ringing in our heads "Breakfast is the most important meal of the day", we decided that Perfect Cereal should contribute to a healthy way of living (chocolate officially counts as healthy in small amounts!). Our range of cereals should be organic, without added flavouring or colouring, and consist of ingredients of all kinds. From bananas, sesame and figs to bits of chocolate: You can choose everything for your own perfect cereal!

We had borrowed money from family and friends to open our first storehouse. Unfortunately at the top floor of a building, which meant a lot of stair climbing for us and our first two employees. But apart from that, our business was going well. Our website was finished and Perfect Cereal could finally be ordered online! Our idea that we had worked for all these endless days and nights. Our baby. I was really glad to have started this journey with my best friend. But then came the shock.

A few months after we started, the orders for Perfect Cereal stagnated. Everyone we had told about the business was very enthusiastic, but so far now we had not managed to properly advertise our product. "Hello. We make cereals. You can choose your own flavours online and we will send them to you". Apparently this was not enough to work by itself. Our product needed a little help, but there was no budget left due to the high costs for shipping and storage. I could honestly never have imagined how expensive professional advertising is. On the one hand, that might explain the horrible radio commercial that inspired us, but on the other hand, that could also be the end of our dream. How could we not have seen this coming? We were really close to giving up. I clearly remember one of those sleepless nights

in Oscar's small kitchen, where we were discussing all the possible options over a cup of horrible black coffee. I was sitting sunk down on my chair, while Oscar leaned against the wooden table drumming with his fingers against his mug.

Oscar: "But what if we…"
Me:" We have already tried that."
Oscar: " Yes I know, Thomas, but maybe my uncle can…"
Me:" How? Your uncle has no money left…no one has. Aargh! I still can't believe that a single advertisement is so expensive to produce! I wish we could just do it ourselves!"
Oscar:" Hmm"
Me: "Do not hmm at me! We have a serious problem besides you lacking skills for making decent coffee!"
Oscar: "I was just thinking… if we cannot fix the advertising problem maybe we should try something else…What if we make our product more visible without really advertising it?"

And this is how we got our first shop. In the end Oscar's idea was simply brilliant! Luckily, we
found a shop close to the city centre for a low rent. Here, we were more visible to everyone. With the new customers who could spontaneously walk into the shop, we were able to reduce our shipping costs and increase our brand awareness. Furthermore, we didn't have to walk 47 steps to get to our storage room anymore and could store more ingredients at smaller costs. Finally, the sales went up again. Inspired by that, we tried to find more alternative ways to advertise our cereals. We flopped with a giant inflatable cereal bowl, but the stickers with our logo on them turned out to be a huge success.
It took us another few months before we ultimately had enough money to make a real advertisement. And I do not want to brag, but it was really good! The sales reached a new high and everything was fantastic. Well, apart from the little problems every business has like delayed shipping or that your ten employees vote to get raisins into your list of ingredients (apparently there are people who really like that…). In the end, it was all thanks to the stubbornness and creativity of my best friend that our dream came true. And this is not the end, but just the start of our journey! Recently we discovered that food tastes much better at night by a campfire or under the endless blue sky - so why not give wings to our idea? Perfect Cereal to go? Here we come!

Thomas

Questionnaire (Dutch)

De volgende stellingen gaan over het verhaal dat je zojuist gelezen hebt.

Geef op een schaal van 1 tot 7 aan of je het eens of oneens bent met de stellingen (1 = helemaal mee oneens; 7 = helemaal mee eens)

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Enigszins mee oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Enigszins mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Ik had medelijden met Thomas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik voelde plaatsvervangende schaamte voor Thomas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik maakte me zorgen om Thomas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Geef op een schaal van 1 tot 7 aan of je het eens of oneens bent met de stellingen (1 = helemaal mee oneens; 7 = helemaal mee eens)

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Enigszins mee oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Enigszins mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Op bepaalde momenten in het verhaal, wist ik precies wat Thomas emotioneel gezien doormaakte	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik voelde precies dezelfde emoties als Thomas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Als Thomas succes had, voelde ik me blij. Als Thomas faalde, stelde me dat teleur.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik voelde niet dezelfde emoties als Thomas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Geef op een schaal van 1 tot 7 aan of je het eens of oneens bent met de stellingen (1 = helemaal mee oneens; 7 = helemaal mee eens)

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Enigszins mee oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Enigszins mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Ik vond het leuk om het verhaal te lezen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Geef op een schaal van 1 tot 7 aan of je het eens of oneens bent met de stellingen (1 = helemaal mee oneens; 7 = helemaal mee eens)

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Enigszins mee oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Enigszins mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Ik was in staat de gebeurtenissen in het verhaal te begrijpen op dezelfde manier als Thomas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik denk dat ik Thomas goed begrijp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik geloof dat ik de redenen begrijp waarom Thomas doet wat hij doet	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Terwijl ik het verhaal las, kon ik de emoties voelen die Thomas ervoer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Terwijl ik het verhaal las, voelde ik dat ik echt in het hoofd van Thomas kon kijken	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Op belangrijke momenten in het verhaal dacht ik precies te weten wat Thomas meemaakte	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Terwijl ik het verhaal las, wilde ik dat Thomas erin zou slagen zijn doelen te bereiken	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Toen Thomas succes had, was ik blij en toen hij faalde, was ik verdrietig	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Zie volgende pagina. Geef op een schaal van 1 tot 7 aan of je het eens of oneens bent met de

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Enigszins mee oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Enigszins mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Tijdens het lezen van het verhaal kon ik de gebeurtenissen voor me zien	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tijdens het lezen van het verhaal dacht ik aan andere dingen die om me heen gebeurden	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik kon me voorstellen dat ik me zelf bevond in de gebeurtenissen die beschreven werden	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mijn gedachten waren betrokken bij het verhaal tijdens het lezen van het verhaal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Toen ik klaar was met het lezen van het verhaal, vond ik het gemakkelijk om er niet meer aan te denken	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik wilde weten hoe het verhaal zou aflopen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Het verhaal raakte me emotioneel gezien	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik merkte dat ik dacht aan manieren waarop het verhaal anders had kunnen lopen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik merkte dat ik afgeleid was tijdens het lezen van het verhaal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

stellingen (1 = helemaal mee oneens; 7 = helemaal mee eens)

Geef op een schaal van 1 tot 7 aan of je het eens of oneens bent met de stellingen (1 =

helemaal mee oneens; 7 = helemaal mee eens)

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Enigszins mee oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Enigszins mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
Ik kon de actie en gebeurtenissen makkelijk volgen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik vond het moeilijk om de rode draad van het verhaal te herkennen.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Het verhaal was logisch en overtuigend	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik begreep waarom het verhaal is gelopen zoals het is gelopen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Op sommige momenten in het verhaal was het niet helemaal duidelijk waarom iets gebeurde	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ik vond het moeilijk om te begrijpen wat er in het verhaal gebeurde	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Geef op een schaal van 1 tot 7 aan wat jouw mening ten opzichte van het bedrijf *Perfect Cereal* is. Naar mijn mening is het bedrijf *Perfect Cereal* uit het verhaal…

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
Sympathiek	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Onsympathiek
Onvriendelijk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Vriendelijk
Negatief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Positief
Aantrekkelijk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Onaantrekkelijk
Interessant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Oninteressant
Modern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Ouderwets

Geef op een schaal van 1 tot 7 hoe graag je de ontbijtgranen van *Perfect Cereal* zou willen

kopen naar aanleiding van het verhaal:

	Helemaal mee eens (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Helemaal mee oneens (7)
Ik zou het product willen kopen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Ik vind de Nederlandse taal….

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
Sympathiek	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Onsympathiek
Onvriendelijk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Vriendelijk
Aangenaam	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Onaangenaam
Elegant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Onelegant
Lelijk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Mooi
Rationeel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Emotioneel
Modern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Ouderwets
Internationaal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Nationaal
Hoog aanzien hebben	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Laag aanzien hebben
Goedkoop	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Duur

Geef op een schaal van 1 tot 7 aan hoe goed je bent in de volgende vaardigheden in de Nederlandse taal (1 = heel slecht, 7 = heel goed)

	Heel slecht (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Heel goed (7)
Lezen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Schrijven	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luisteren	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spreken	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

De test die nu volgt bestaat uit 63 testobjecten. Je krijgt steeds een letterreeks te zien. Jouw taak is om te beslissen of dit een bestaand Nederlands woord is of niet. Als je denkt dat het een bestaand Nederlands woord is, kies je "ja", als je denkt dat het geen bestaand Nederlands woord is kies je "nee".

Als je er zeker van bent dat het woord bestaat, ook als je niet precies weet wat het betekent, mag je toch met "ja" antwoorden. Maar als je twijfelt of het wel een bestaand woord is, kies dan "nee".

Je hebt zoveel tijd als je wilt voor elke beslissing. Als alles duidelijk is kun je het experiment nu starten

	Ja	Nee		Ja	Nee		Ja	Nee
1 pastitie	0	0	22 speven	0	0	43 maliteit	0	0
2 scheur	0	0	23 geraakt	0	0	44 verspilling	0	0
3 fobisch	0	0	24 martelaar	0	0	45 haperie	0	0
4 markatief	0	0	25 ontpelen	0	0	46 proom	0	0
5 laakbaar	0	0	26 stagnatie	0	0	47 fornuis	0	0
6 slaags	0	0	27 dronkenschap	0	0	48 exploitatie	0	0
7 riant	0	0	28 voornemen	0	0	49 acteur	0	0
8 joutbaag	0	0	29 vertediseren	0	0	50 hengel	0	0
9 doornat	0	0	30 normatief	0	0	51 flajoen	0	0
10 woelig	0	0	31 zetelen	0	0	52 aanhekking	0	0
11 paviljoen	0	0	32 zolf	0	0	53 kazerne	0	0
12 doop	0	0	33 publiekelijk	0	0	54 avonturier	0	0
13 starkatie	0	0	34 vluk	0	0	55 leurig	0	0
14 onledig	0	0	35 compromeet	0	0	56 chagrijnig	0	0
15 toetsing	0	0	36 romig	0	0	57 bretel	0	0
16 affiniteit	0	0	37 getint	0	0	58 klengel	0	0
17 mikken	0	0	38 gelovig	0	0	59 etaal	0	0
18 knullig	0	0	39 nopen	0	0	60 matig	0	0
19 streuren	0	0	40 kluiper	0	0	61 futeur	0	0
20 rups	0	0	41 geloei	0	0	62 onbekwaam	0	0
21 paars	0	0	42 retorisch	0	0	63 verguld	0	0

Tot slot zou ik graag nog wat algemene zaken van je willen weten (omcirkel wat van

toepassing is):

Opleidingsniveau:

HAVO 4   HAVO 5   VWO 4   VWO 5   VWO 6

Nationaliteit:

Nederlands   Anders

Moedertaal:

Is Nederlands je moedertaal/één van je moedertalen?

Ja   Nee

Geslacht

Man   Vrouw   Anders

Leeftijd: _____

Lees je vaak verhalen/boeken? (kruis aan en omcirkel wat van toepassing is)

0   Ja, alleen in het Nederlands/een andere taal, namelijk _____/beide

0   Soms, alleen in het Nederlands/een andere taal, namelijk _____/ beide

0   Nee

Zo ja, wat voor genre lees je? (bijv. romans, biografieën, science-fiction,

etc.)_____

EINDE

Heel erg bedankt voor het invullen van de vragenlijst!