

**Bachelor's Thesis
(pre-master)**

Final

**Should I Say It or Write It? The Role of Spoken and Written Gratitude in
Job Satisfaction**

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Abstract

Expressing gratitude when an individual reaches a certain milestone, accomplishes a task or receives a tangible or intangible gift has been shown to be important in human interactions. In addition, spoken and written gratitude is considered to motivate employees and consequently increase their job satisfaction. The current study aimed at answering the question of which form of gratitude intervention (written, spoken or no gratitude) had an effect on job satisfaction. A between-subject online experiment with 96 participants that have work experience in the Netherlands was conducted. It was concluded that the effect of expressing gratitude (either in spoken or written form) on job satisfaction was minor. However, when it has to be opted for, spoken gratitude was shown to influence job satisfaction more than written gratitude. Therefore, there was only a partial support from the literature to the findings of the present study.

Keywords: Spoken gratitude, Written gratitude, No gratitude, Job satisfaction

Introduction

Humans are interdependent; they need each other's presence, assistance and cooperation for survival. Our social rules and norms are conceptualized and strategized in a way to ensure that we maintain our relationships with others (Aktipis, Cronk, Alcock, Ayers, Baciu, Balliet, ... & Sullivan, 2018). Being complex and well-developed social animals, we possess unique communicative abilities that allow us to transmit ideas, views, and experiences to others. Communication becomes the main medium through which our relationship with others exist. Moreover, as Littlejohn and Foss (2008) affirm, communication could be found in every single part of our lives. A social aspect of our lives that requires abundant communication is the process of cooperation. Cooperation is when two or more people work together towards the same end (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008).

While animals cooperate on a small-scale due to limited interaction between different species, human beings conduct large-scale cooperation regularly. This sort of cooperation between humans is able to occur through following certain social norms which determine what is acceptable in a society (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004). Those rules shape well-organised interactions and entail a code of conduct that everybody is expected to follow throughout their lives at home, school, or work (Boyd & Richerson, 2009). Of these communication rules during cooperation, politeness is a commonly accepted and well-acknowledged rule.

Through their Politeness theory, Brown and Levinson (1987) help us understand how social interactions and communication work. When interacting and communicating with each other, people engage in politeness to minimise threat to their own “face” and that of the recipient and in order to avoid humiliation or embarrassment of both parties (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The notion of face, developed by Goffman, is something an individual emotionally invests into and has the possibility to lose, maintain and strengthen (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It comes down to “the positive consistent self-image or personality” (p. 61), i.e. positive face, and “the actions and thoughts of the self be unimpeded by others”, i.e. negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.62). A form of politeness which enhances and maintains positive face is expressing gratitude (Brown & Levinson, 1978) which could also be done simply by saying ‘Thank you’. Also, Bartlett, Condon, Cruz, Baumann and Desteno (2012) stated that despite the threat to the negative or positive face, expression of gratitude leads to saving face due to the fact that people see gratitude as something genuine, unlike payback, which encourages pro-social behaviour.

Emmons (2007) indicated that the word ‘gratitude’ is derived from Latin, roughly translating to “pleasing”. The definition of gratitude that is adopted for the purpose of this study is described as ‘a personal positive tendency to recognize and respond with gratitude to positive experiences’ (Cortini, Converso, Galanti, Di Fiore, Di Domenico, & Fantinelli, 2019, p. 41). More importantly, in the current study, gratitude is considered as the act of saying ‘Thank you’.

Non-institutional gratitude

Gratitude is a greatly valued tool to an extent that it is a life changer that brings positive feelings along (Kerns, 2006). In their experimental study, Algoe and Zhaoyang (2015) revealed that gratitude added value to interpersonal relationships. Couples that expressed gratitude showed appreciation for life, and their well-being was enhanced. Also, individuals perceived that their social worth was greater when they received gratitude, which consequently led them to practice a pro-social behaviour (Grant & Gino, 2010). However, the social role of gratitude and its life-changing abilities is perhaps made apparent in the experiment that Algoe and Stanton (2012) conducted among women with breast cancer. Women in a more stable emotional state, perceived higher levels of social support from their environment when they received gratitude, which was proposed to better their mental health. Hence, such findings lead us to understand the positive role that gratitude has in our social lives and in our communities (Bono & Sender, 2018).

Gratitude brings along positive emotions, however, fundamentally there are cross-cultural differences in how gratitude is expressed (Emmons & Shelton, 2002). For instance, linguistically, the Japanese make use of the same word to direct an apology and thankfulness (Emmons & Shelton, 2002). Additionally, it was found that in the South American language Cha'palaa, there was no explicit way of expressing thankfulness. Also, in some languages such as Lao and Siwu, showing gratitude was rare to none as it was considered to be culturally obscene for small scale events, such as granting of a request. On the other hand, Italian- and English-speakers were found to show gratitude on a regular basis, and it was said to be the norm, and the lack of it was perceived as inappropriate (Floyd, Rossi, Baranova, Blythe, Dingemanse, Kendrick, Zinken, & Enfield, 2018).

Institutional gratitude

The social benefits of gratitude such as maintaining relationships can be transmitted to the workplace as well. Institutional gratitude, which can be referred to as the extent to which the management cultivates a healthy work atmosphere by clearly communicating gratitude, was found to be an important aspect for organizations (Waters, 2012). According to existing academic works, gratitude creates a working place characterized by increased productivity, satisfaction with work, honour, delight with the job tasks, even the opportunity for reciprocal gratitude that was shown to be only with a small amount of staff members (Fehr, Fulmer, Awtrey, & Miller, 2017). Waters (2012) elaborates that there is a relationship between gratitude and various positive emotions. More gratitude, would lead to more positive emotions, which would positively influence the interactions between the employees, and generate fruitful work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction.

Defining job satisfaction is challenging and there is no consensus on one particular definition (Aziri, 2011). In the current study, Aziri's (2011) definition will be taken into account. Job satisfaction is a crucial internal matter for organizations that has positioned itself as a major determinant of pleasure at work. Also, it is a positive feeling of enjoyment resulted from how an employee views their job and how the job meets their needs. Hence, becoming a central discourse for many managers in organizations (Aziri, 2011). Theorists that have looked into how companies create job satisfaction, distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic motivating factors (Reiss, 2004). It was postulated that extrinsic motivators are known as drives and are tightly related to the basic needs of humans, particularly biological needs such as hunger, thirst, sex, salary, and incentives. The intrinsic motivators, on the other end of the spectrum, focus on aspects such as independence, achievement and appraisal (Reiss, 2004).

Work is not necessarily only about generating robust financial outcomes, but also about maintaining interpersonal relations between staff members. Therefore, gratitude—being a proven factor that enhances interpersonal relationships, was found to be a motivator for employees (Baker, 2011).

The recent study by Cortini et al. (2019) revealed that expressing gratitude is positively related to job satisfaction and can significantly enhance the climate within the company, reduce negative feelings and emotions, and support the organizations' human resource departments in an evidently positive way. Kerns (2006) also inserted that gratitude in organizations had a positive impact on employee loyalty and job satisfaction. Thus, those who received gratitude from their colleagues regularly rated their work as more pleasant than the ones that did not. Additionally, gratitude interventions occurring within the company potentially led to imposing a work culture that nurtured the needs of the employees (Waters, 2012).

The Multilevel Model of Gratitude in Organizations (MMGO) summarizes gratitude on various levels within an organization. It divides gratitude into three levels, i.e. event level, individual level and organizational level (Fehr et al., 2017). The researchers suggested that at various levels, gratitude differs and alters. Gratitude on an organizational level is seen as a shared meaning and positivism among employees. While the individual and organization levels capture the larger frame of gratitude, the event level adheres to the benefits that gratitude provides along (Fehr et al., 2017).

Plenty of research has shown the benefits of expressing gratitude for the recipient and sender such as, the encouragement of pro-social behaviour (Grant & Gino, 2010), enhancing relationships (Algoe & Zhaoyang, 2015), and creating happiness (Kerns, 2006). Also, non-institutional gratitude aspects such as expressing gratefulness with the aim of creating a pleasant and fruitful relationships were found to be applied in an organizational context (Baker, 2011). However, institutional gratitude is not as prominent in the academia as non-institutional gratitude (Waters, 2012), specifically it is not clear what the best ways of expressing gratitude in institutional settings are. The research problem that the current paper aims to address is whether different types of gratitude could assist organizations in managing their employee relationships and increase their satisfaction with the job.

Generally, in a casual setting, there are a few participants that the gratitude message is addressed to (e.g. among best friends, a number of family members), whilst in an institutional setting this differs. Predominantly, the message is aimed at a larger number of people working at a company, e.g., all employees in the subsidiaries (Altınöz, 2008). Additionally,

most of the work and interaction potentially occur without having an immediate face-to-face encounter, for example, when a task is completed, the employee sends an email to the manager (Men, 2014). Nevertheless, face-to-face channels such as meetings are still often used and preferred as a way of communication for meetings between managers and employees (Men, 2015). Therefore, communication in organizations is large-scale which includes a number of people, use of various channels, such as face-to-face, and written communication (Men, 2014). Hence, we would expect that expression of gratitude to be different in an institutional setting.

Studies have acknowledged two ways of expressing gratitude, i.e. written (Cortini et al., 2019) and spoken gratitude (Kerns, 2006), as most often occurring in organizations. When accomplishing tasks, employees might not always be in close proximity to each other and able to communicate efficiently. Therefore, they might use e-mails (as this is a frequently occurring channel). Informal spoken communication could also be utilized (e.g. in face-to-face interactions) (Altınöz, 2008). Interestingly, spoken communication was found to increase satisfaction more than the written communication, e.g., via emails. Face-to-face interactions were preferred by the employees because of the possibility of immediate feedback. It exhibited a willingness from the management to listen to the employees and genuinely care about them (Men, 2014).

Additionally, based on the work of Peterson (2006), Kerns (2006) proposed strategies that enable professionals to cultivate and enhance gratitude within organizations. Focusing on the person's strength and transforming ungrateful thoughts and experiences into actions that would benefit the self to eliminate social comparison and self-harm. Also, sharing gratefulness with a colleague or mentor at work was found to complement job satisfaction and positive feelings at the workplace. In an experimental study by Grant and Gino (2010) where participants received a written gratitude message, it was also found that when a manager expressed their gratitude in a written way, employees felt socially valuable to their organization and managers. Therefore, the strategies proposed suggest that written and spoken gratitude could shape healthier organizational cultures.

Various studies have shown the importance and effects of gratitude at work (e.g. see Grant & Gino (2010) for written gratitude; Kerns (2006) for spoken gratitude). Additionally, scholars showcased that expressing gratitude in either a spoken or written form resulted in increased motivation and job satisfaction (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Grant & Gino, 2010). However, to date only few studies have dealt with institutional gratitude in the context of job and task satisfaction, and even fewer in relation to written and spoken together (Baker,

2011), specifically at the workplace. More empirical evidence is needed to provide conclusions regarding the effects of written and spoken gratitude in organizations.

The study is societally relevant as professionals at management and line levels would be able to gain knowledge about the different channels and ways to express gratitude and enhance job satisfaction. Therefore, they would act upon their interactions with fellow team members with the aim of enhancing their workplace. Thus, the following research question will be the leading pillar of the current study derived from the insights discussed, **Does the manner of expressing gratitude (spoken vs. written) influence the degree of job satisfaction?**

Although, it was shown that both, spoken and written gratitude, increased satisfaction with the job itself (Waters, 2012), *it is anticipated that spoken gratitude will have a greater effect on job satisfaction than written gratitude*. Gratitude has an interpersonal nature and it takes place in person-to-person interactions where people are able to verbally exchange ideas and thoughts with each other (Algoe & Zhaoyang, 2015). It was concluded that couples expressing gratitude to each other had a more positive outlook on life and their appreciation for life increased than the ones that did not (Algoe & Zhaoyang, 2015) whilst also encouraging a pro-social behaviour that people should follow (Bartlett et al., 2012). Thus, it would be expected that the casual gratitude from our daily lives to also be transferred to an organizational environment (Waters, 2012). Additionally, it was concluded that verbalised face-to-face communication is more effective in an organisational setting than written communication (Men, 2014).

Also, it is known that in social interactions, receiving gratitude enhances people's mental health (Algoe & Stanton, 2012) and increases their well-being (Algoe & Zhaoyang, 2015). From an institutional perspective, expression of gratitude among public workers was shown to increase job satisfaction and decrease negative emotions (Cortini et al., 2019). While expression of gratitude resulted in positive outcomes in terms of job satisfaction, receiving no gratitude did not influence satisfaction positively (Kerns, 2006). Therefore, the hypothesis that *both, spoken and written gratitude, will positively influence job satisfaction in comparison to no gratitude intervention* is proposed.

Methodology

The current study aimed at evaluating how receiving spoken, written or no gratitude influenced job satisfaction.

Interviews

Gratitude, the independent variable, was studied on three distinct levels, written, spoken and no gratitude. To be able to determine those levels of the independent variable, explorative interviews were conducted. The authors of the current study conducted interviews (five in total) with employees in the Netherlands. The employees were varied in age, gender and professions. The youngest interviewee was a 27-year-old female, whilst the oldest was 62-year-old male. They had different professions such as a waitress, a PhD candidate in Biomedical cancer research, a former banker, an HR advisor and a teacher. The reason for using interviews was to uncover what aspects of gratitude expressed by their employers they most value in their organizations. Hence, we wanted to find whether spoken, written, material, financial or other type of gratitude seemed relevant for the employees themselves, and could be further used in the study. As also research has shown, the main aspects of gratitude applied in experiments are related to spoken and written forms (Grant & Gino, 2010; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Kerns, 2006). We conducted a semi-structured interview with the participants and asked questions such as:

- Do you know what gratitude means? / How would you define gratitude?
- How should gratitude be expressed to you as / how do you express gratitude to others?
- Do you feel valued at work?

The interviews were congruent with what previous research has found. Thus, written, spoken and no gratitude were chosen to be the independent variable levels. The preliminary interviews and the questions could be found in Appendix A and will not be used for further analyses.

Participants

The study comprised of 103 participants of which 7 were excluded from further analyses as they were outliers based on the scores of the dependent variable. Out of the remaining 96 participants 56 (58.3%) were females. The participants were randomly divided into three groups, spoken, written and no gratitude conditions. The spoken condition consisted of 31 participants (32.3%), the no gratitude condition also had 31 participants (32.3%) and the written gratitude condition had 34 participants (35.4%). The average age of the participants was 26 ($M = 25.95$, $SD = 8.20$, $range = 19; 56$). The participants that had a Bachelor's degree were 49 (51 %), followed by Master's degree 22 (22.9%), high-school degree 18 (18.8%), associate degree (2-years) 4 (4.2%) and doctoral degree 3 (3.1%). Lastly, the

majority of the participants were from the Netherlands 53 (55.2%), followed by Germany 11 (11.5%) and other nationalities 32 (33.3%).

Gender ($\chi^2 (2) = 0.32, p = .852$), age ($F (2, 93) < 1$) and education level ($\chi^2 (8) = 10.03, p = .264$) were equally distributed over the three conditions, namely spoken, written and no gratitude.

Procedure

The participants were reached online. Firstly, the authors of the current study (five in total) made use of their social network to gather participants. Secondly, other individuals that the researchers did not know personally were approached in a respective online medium with the question whether they wished to participate in the experiment or not. Information about the research was provided in a vaguely manner, stating the general purpose of the study. However, no details about the aim of the study were given. This was decided as in such a way so that the respondents' bias was controlled. The experiment began with an online Qualtrics questionnaire by requiring the subjects to read the consent to participate before the experiment. The participants were exposed to a condition where there was either written, spoken or no gratitude. Therefore, three separate questionnaires were developed with the only difference being the expression of gratitude. Each condition was randomly assigned to a particular participant using an online randomizer www.random.org.

All the questionnaires started the same way. The participants had to complete a task. The task was to pick the correct flag for a given country/ continent; there were four options to choose from. For example, the name of the country was given, i.e. Germany, and then four options of flags were provided with one correct option, i.e. the German flag. The criteria for the chosen task was to be moderately enjoyable, not easy and not difficult. The particular criteria were chosen to ensure that the task was not perceived as useless or cause boredom. After completion of the task, there was either written, spoken or no gratitude expressed either verbally, in a written way and no gratitude expression.

When written gratitude was assigned, the participants received a message expressing gratefulness. The note can be found in Appendix B.

When spoken gratitude was assigned, a voice recording that expressed gratitude explicitly was present. The expressed gratitude was exactly the same message as in the 'written' condition, but now verbalised with a British English accent.

When there was no gratitude, the participants were not thanked and the next step of the study commenced. This group was the control group.

The final step of the experiment consisted of filling out a survey regarding the enjoyability of the dependent variable. After completing the survey, the individuals that were not thanked, as they were in the control group, were also thanked for their participation after all. The average length of the experiment was approximately 6 minutes ($M = 5.56$; $SD = 8.92$).

Design

The study had a 1 x 3 between-subject design where each participant was exposed only to one of the conditions proposed earlier. The independent variable was one, namely gratitude expression, divided into three levels, namely written (manipulated), spoken (manipulated) and no gratitude (control group). The dependent variable was task enjoyability.

Instruments

The measure that was used to assess job satisfaction was ‘task enjoyability’, which was derived from Spector (1985) and adapted for the purposes of the present study. Task enjoyability was considered as the dependent variable for the current study because Aziri (2011) related enjoyability and pleasure with the work to job satisfaction. A seven-point Likert scale anchored by ‘1 = Very unenjoyable; 7 = Very enjoyable’ following the statement ‘In my opinion, the experiment was...’ was used. As indicated by Croasmun and Ostrom (2011), the most optimal measurement scale in general is a seven-point Likert scale. This was based on the findings that given that the scale was higher than seven, the reliability would not increase to an extent and it would make the analysis more complex. Additionally, the reason for choosing a single-scale item was based on Wanous, Reichers and Hudy’s (1997) conclusion that single items could be used to measure job satisfaction and the reliability of the scale would be at an acceptable level.

Background variables. Lastly, descriptive data was collected. Individuals were asked about their age, gender, educational level and nationality. Also, data regarding how religious the participants were, was gathered. A three-point Likert scale anchored by ‘1 = Not religious; 3 = Religious’ following the statement ‘How religious do you consider yourself to be?’. However, the item was not used for further analyses.

The instrument could be found in Appendix C.

Statistical treatment

Descriptive data about the sample and the conditions that were present in the experiment were used. Moreover, a One-way ANOVA was used to determine what form of gratitude

affected task enjoyability. Task enjoyability was measured at an interval level.

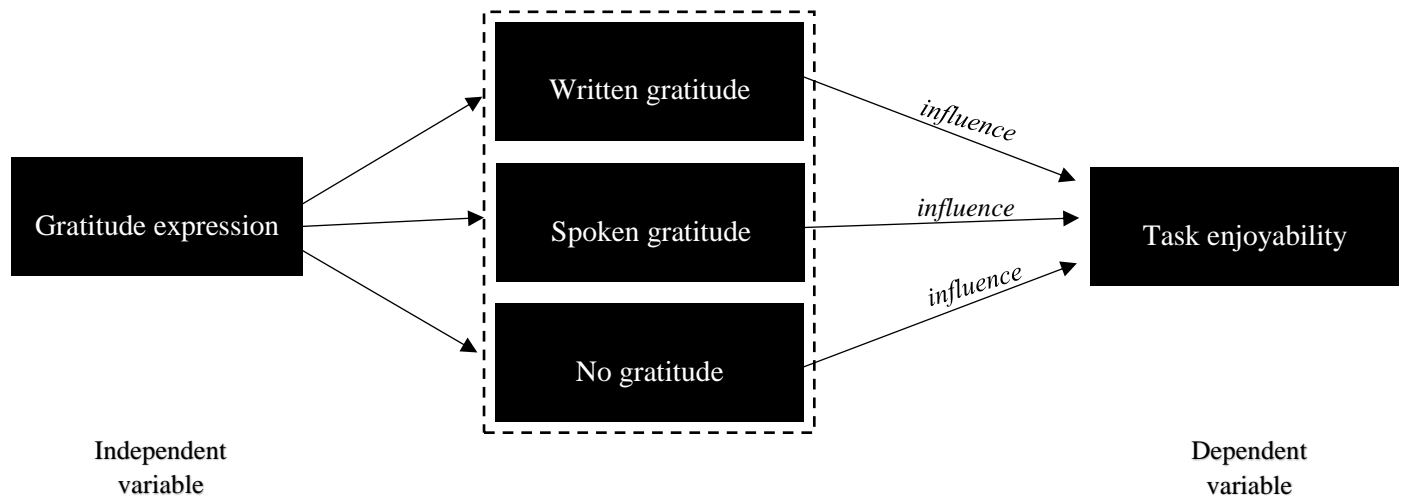


Figure 1: Analytical model of the current study

Results

The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated; therefore, the Welch F-ratio is reported. A one-way analysis of variance showed a significant effect of Type of gratitude expression, spoken, written or no gratitude, on task enjoyability ($F(2, 57.908) = 4.43, p = .016, \omega^2 = .063$). The participants in the spoken gratitude condition ($M = 5.87; SD = 0.72$) perceived the task as more enjoyable than the participants in the written gratitude condition ($p = .021$, Games-Howell procedure; $M = 4.97; SD = 1.73$). In terms of task enjoyability, there was no difference between spoken and no gratitude ($p = .208$, Games-Howell procedure), and written and no gratitude ($p = .314$, Games-Howell procedure).



Figure 2: Means for rating of task enjoyability in function of type of gratitude (1 = Very unenjoyable, 7 = Very enjoyable).

Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to investigate which type of gratitude expression, namely spoken, written or no gratitude, influences job satisfaction. The first hypothesis of the present study looked into which form of gratitude (spoken or written) had more influence on job satisfaction. The second hypothesis looked into the influence of gratitude expression on job satisfaction in comparison to no gratitude intervention at all. The results of the study support and confirm the hypotheses only partially.

This study concurred with the hypothesis that spoken forms of gratitude influence task enjoyability and satisfaction more than the written form. As mentioned in the literature, there is an occurring relationship between expressing gratitude towards employees and employees' satisfaction and happiness (Waters, 2012). Prior studies have also noted the importance of expressing gratitude to enhance the work environment and performance (Cortini et al., 2019). The current study found that the participants that received spoken expression of gratitude enjoyed the task more than the ones that received written gratitude. In organizations, face-to-face verbal communication was found to be more effective in creating job satisfaction than written communication (Men, 2014). Also, Kerns (2006) concluded that sharing gratefulness with a colleague facilitated job satisfaction. Our finding corroborates that spoken communication, in our case spoken expression of gratitude, is more successful in increasing job and task enjoyability. A possible explanation for this result might be that although there was no incentive included (an extrinsic motivating factor), intrinsic factors might have had an influence on the participants. Participants that received the spoken condition might have perceived it as maintaining some kind of an interpersonal relationship between the researchers and the participant (Baker, 2011). Hence, the voice recording is likely to have generated a more of a human-like environment and connection where participants perceived it as more genuine, resulting in higher scores for task enjoyability in comparison to written gratitude.

However, neither spoken, nor written gratitude forms were found to be significantly affecting job satisfaction in comparison to no gratitude intervention at all. Thus, the second hypothesis that states that gratitude expression has more significant influence on job satisfaction than no gratitude intervention, is not supported by this current study. The previously reviewed studies suggested that expressing gratitude in any form would result in positive outcomes such as enjoyability, happiness and job satisfaction (for spoken and written gratitude see Cortini et al., 2019; Grant & Gino, 2010; Kerns, 2006; for a clinical study on gratitude see e.g. Algoe and Stanton, 2012). Even more, studies generally have suggested that

not expressing gratitude would yield negative outcomes and might be detrimental to the workplace (Kerns, 2006). However, this does not appear to be congruent with the present study. There was no evidence found that spoken and written gratitude influenced task enjoyability more than no gratitude. As the means were relatively close to each other in all conditions for task enjoyability, it is suggested that including a gratitude message did not influence enjoyability. The task was enjoyable aside from the gratitude message. This would mean that people perceived the task enjoyable on its own, and expressing gratitude might depend on how boring or entertaining a task is rather than how complex it is. Although, the results were insignificant, it appears that the 'no gratitude' task was rated higher than the written gratitude task. Therefore, it could be speculated that people might prefer not to receive any gratitude than receiving a simple 'Thank you' message that they might not be able to relate to any person as it has no voice, no special articulation and no human-like social interaction effect.

The results of the current study with a medium effect size confirm previous findings that spoken gratitude overweighs written gratitude in making people enjoy a task and job more. It provides interesting insights that researchers should make use of verbal gratitude expression in their study frameworks more often as the majority of gratitude research gives less attention to the power of spoken gratitude (Waters, 2012). Also, it was shown that there was no significant effect of spoken and written gratitude in comparison to no gratitude intervention. This finding contributes to the theory by providing a new perspective and focusing on the fact that perhaps no gratitude is also something that literature should integrate within frameworks, and tailor the gratitude expression to a particular task.

Additionally, understanding the role of gratitude in institutions would also enhance the satisfaction that employees receive from their day-to-day tasks they implement at their jobs (Fehr et al., 2017). Thus, it is the managers' responsibility to acknowledge that perhaps the way a task is designed and implemented has a more significant influence on employees' satisfaction rather than the gratitude itself. Also, when needed, managers could use spoken gratitude to cater to the needs of their employees and make their work environment more enjoyable.

Our study's findings should be taken into account with some caution. One of the aspects that could be considered a limitation was the enjoyability of the task itself. It appears that the task itself was already relatively enjoyable despite the conditions, and this was not pre-tested due to the limited amount of time. Stringer, Didham and Theivananthampillai (2011) concluded that there was a correlation between intrinsic motivation and job

satisfaction. Perhaps, the task was already perceived intrinsically enjoyable that the reward, i.e. the gratitude expression, might not have been able to change the enjoyment that the participants already experienced. Highly recommended for further research is to pre-test the task to ensure that it is a neutral one.

Another point of consideration on the current study would be the way of providing the spoken gratitude. In this instance, the spoken gratitude was a recording, which was designed to be emotionally neutral. Also, it did not include a facial image that the participants could relate to. However, as it was shown, most of the communication in organisations that increases the job satisfaction was the face-to-face interactions (Men, 2014). Therefore, future research should take into account that the spoken gratitude could be provided in a different way, e.g., face-to-face or by including a picture so that the participants could relate to the voice recording. According to Jacob, Kreifelts, Brück, Erb, Hösl and Wildgruber (2012) non-verbal audio-visual cues, i.e. a face picture with a smiling person in our case, increase the emotional state of people.

Lastly, the study was conducted among people that have lived and worked in the Netherlands. However, as Floyd et al. (2018) reported, different cultures have different ways of expressing gratitude. Therefore, emphasizing on the cross-cultural aspects on expressing gratitude might also provide interesting insights on the current topic and allow researchers to understand how various cultures cooperate together in an institutional environment.

To conclude, a step towards understanding how written and spoken gratitude affect task enjoyability at work has been taken. There was no influence of using a gratitude message or not on task enjoyability. However, when zooming into the gratitude message itself, our study suggested that e.g., Christmas messages or emails might not be effective when expressing gratitude because written was perceived as less effective than spoken gratitude. More intimate ways of communication, i.e. face-to-face, yielded more satisfaction with a task instead.

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Appendix A – Semi-structured interviews

1. What's your personal experience with gratitude in your environment?
2. Do you know what gratitude means? / How would you define gratitude?
3. How should gratitude be expressed to you as / how do you express gratitude to others?
4. Do you feel valued at work?
5. How often do you receive compliments/ appreciation from your superiors?
6. What do you think is the best way to create satisfaction in terms of gratitude?
7. When was the last time your manager expressed their gratitude towards you?
8. What is more frequent; verbal or non-verbal forms of gratitude in your work environment?
9. Does your manager let you know when you are doing a good job at work?
10. Would you like to hear 'thank you' more frequently?

I: Interviewer

R: Respondent

Interview 1

I: Thank you for participating in our tiny research. Just to repeat maybe two of the the most important features of this interview: You can leave this at any given point and also it is going to be about gratitude in your work environment. So maybe if you could possibly start with a short introduction of yourself...

R: I'm a teacher at a local secondary school, 53 years old, my subjects are music and English. I've been teaching at this very school for 22 years now and yeah the question of gratitude is interesting. Usually you get a good feeling if especially the principal; so the head teacher, gives you some rewards. Some kinds of gratification for excellent work that could be a lesson off or something like that.

I: Are those monetary rewards or is it-

R: Not really.

I: Could you describe what kind of reward?

R: Well there is monetary reward but this would be in form of extra work and the school board pays you a little extra if you do a certain amount of extra work. That's not the only thing, no; we're talking about the appreciation of what you do. But of course, that doesn't

depend on the head teacher only. I think it's feedback you get from colleagues, from pupils you teach... Sometimes they just say "wow I like your lessons" or something like that.

I: Okay. Do you feel grateful the same way if you compare monetary rewards or appreciation as you say and let's verbal or non-verbal let's say it could be anything from 'thank you' to an email stating that "Dear M, we're very grateful to have you here. Good job."

R: These kinds of emails rarely happen but well I must say it doesn't depend on the money, no. It's not that. That doesn't give much gratification at all I would say. It's just the money you get and yeah you work for it and I think you somehow deserve a payment of course but no it's more the gratification coming from the interaction with colleagues and pupils and other members. So it's more the verbal thing like "Good job yesterday!" or concert or yeah as I said feedback from pupils and so on.

I: I feel if you think about those social interactions at your workplace – how, in your opinion, should gratitude be expressed to you? What's – for you – the best way; how would you appreciate it the most?

R: Well I appreciate it the most face-to-face; not in front of a big audience and everyone clapping because this is very often, to me at least, it's an artificial situation and not the honest way: straight from the heart as it-

I: Okay so it should be as you were saying- just to translate it into my world of communication it should be credible and direct(?)

R: Yes.

I: Okay. Thank you. And-

R: And if I may interrupt: You do feel if it's meant from the heart or not. So there's also empty gratification because if you focus on and repeat and if you actually say "I want to show gratitude for what you have done and great achievements" it's somehow the reverse: it's somehow the opposite what is reached by that.

I: So too much is..is-

R: Is bad-

I: -negative. Okay, okay. How do you by yourself express gratitude to others? That's also maybe interesting.

R: Well, basically the same way. I would give a brace to for example the pupil well if I catch them in the hallway saying “Good job today, you’ve really improved far better than usual” etc. etc. So this would be the smallest step of course. Or pupils I have worked with for over 5 or 6 years who I have known for a long time in other words; well I express gratitude for the chance to play music with them and to build our music community etc.

I: And you do this the same way you would say? Also direct and, well, as you said coming from the heart?

R: Yes, if it is verbally person-to-person, yeah.

I: Okay. How does it change in a written context?

R: Yeah it’s kind of more humorous; with a light humour. For example, if I have a chat in which pupils are involved and I want to point out that A did a good job in working for the group, whatsoever, I think pupils have learnt to understand my humour: The lighter it gets, the more serious the effect is because I have realised that the persons actually like this better than if I just formally say “That was very good, pupil X!”

I: So with your pupils you express gratitude in an informal and humorous way, kind of.

R: Yes. Yes. Yes.

I: And how does it then change if your superiors express gratitude to you in a written context? Could you elaborate on that-

R: You mean what has changed or-

I: No, kind of how do they communicate gratitude towards you. If they do, I don’t know.

R: In a written context?

I: Exactly, yeah. For sure, if I may, sometimes for example before Christmas when... Do you know where I’m getting?

R: I see yeah yeah. Now I understand. Yeah well this is exactly the formal way “I would really like to thank you for a year full of work for the school” etc. etc. etc. And actually I don’t need it and I don’t really like it because it’s just a collection of hollow phrases; stock phrases expressing this for my superiors. It’s quite different from mails I get by colleagues. This is entirely different because they would rather say, straight from the heart, “Good job mate” or something like that.

I: Okay, okay good. Well moving on to the next question: Do you feel valued at work?

R: So if my work is appreciated or if I as a person am?

I: Oh God that's another topic. I guess both but-

R: Yeah you can't separate it-

I: Yeah but through the eyes of well obviously yourself but yeah, go on.

R: So it's... Oh yeah that's really a good question; the feeling....

I: Or what makes you feel valued at work?

R: Okay, well that's very simple: If I get the same respect that I also pay to everyone. This is actually the basis. And that's where any kind of value starts. I- well as you say here in Germany it's called "*dutzen*", we say you in the informal way: I've got only 2 colleagues out of almost 100 which I find arrogant and have never come to terms with and all the others are on eye level: they can be 30 years old or 65; it's not a question of experience or age no, we're all the same.

I: And with the colleagues that you don't get along so super well do you use like the formal terms? Like "*Sie*"?

R: Yeah. Exactly. Just to keep a distance because I'm not really...

I: Language can be used for so many things; also as you said for social positioning. So yeah that's not far off at all. This is also really interesting: How often do you get compliments or appreciation for your work?

I: Well at school this is rather seldom in a way because your position as a teacher you have to make the pupils work and achieve something and you also give marks and you see it's another kind of gratification they get, the pupils, but not all are content with their achievements and sometimes they blame it on to you, the bad mark but well thinking about it: appreciation can be attention. Sometimes, when you really have the feeling that this is really interesting for the pupils and that they are engaged in conversation and contribute something: This actually happens. Not with all of the pupils all of the time that would be far too optimistic and even naïve but you know you do your job well when you see that they are here; I really opened up the pupils minds and yeah..

I: Of course yeah. Would you like to hear thank you from superiors as in forms of appreciation more?

R: More often? It depends for what. Well a simple thank you is something I would like to or everyone likes to hear – so do I. It just depends for what would I get a thank you. What do you mean? I mean it could be a very simple everyday situation or is it related to your job?

I: It's more related to yeah I guess to the job then. When... It can also I think... I personally think it also depends what type of let's call it job act, job action you've just performed and how gratitude is expressed to you because well I think if you receive.. Superogity it's called I think ; it's like highly explicit super overloadedly expressed gratitude for a simple task then I think it also becomes less credible.

R: That's right.

I: So the question – I think – also is to some extent how do you balance gratitude in an organisation no? In order to motivate employees-

R: Yeah..

I: Which actually leads me to the question: Would you feel more motivated or satisfied with your job if you received gratitude but let's call it "matched gratitude" more frequently? If it matches the task you performed.

R: If it matched the task I've performed yes. Otherwise it's... It easily gets well they easily develop some kind of inflation of praise. This is exactly what nobody needs and which is even as I said before adding to the contrary: Not so much creating a good feeling.

I: Okay but you would say in general, it does contribute to your job satisfaction?

R: It would, if it's meant seriously and if also – and this is perhaps strange but if it's also connected to critical feedback. So if there's a culture in an organisation or company or here in my school – if we talked more openly about what's really good and praising or giving gratitude to individuals and ALSO not closing our eyes to what's not going down so well that would be even better. So it's not only gratitude that helps it's also kind of openness that goes along with that. I mean openness to self-criticism.

I: Yeah yeah, I think I understand what you're on about. So actually, when was the last time gratitude was expressed to you? Let's start with your superiors ..

R: Okay well after I performed a week of rehearsing with a lot of pupils I was asked how it was and I everything went fine. And then I was very satisfied so great and thanks... That was the last one. So that's about 3 weeks ago or something.

I: 3 weeks ago? Okay. Does your superior actually let you know when you did a good job?

R: Yes. And...it's a she so she absolutely wants to but there's sometimes an embarrassing situation because I ... I-

I: What's going wrong when she tries to express gratitude?

R: I sense she comes to me and approaches me and Do(es) know I've done something great like performed a concert or whatever and it's... yeah well the atmosphere is... she wants to say something nice and say thank you and give gratification in that form but she overdoes it. So it's like like not inflation in words but in intensity so this doesn't get very believable.

I: Okay. Okay yeah.

R: Or convincing or...even not natural in a way. See; you can really do something really wrong by doing something like this.

I: Yes, yes of course. Yes, absolutely. Yeah..

R: But I wanted - if I may add something the last time I was praised was just 2 hours ago by a pupil who said "Wow you look good in your carnival costume" and so on or "You're my favourite teacher" that's what the little ones usually say if they don't know what else to say. I think this is really nice and I really appreciate it very much.

I: So actually gratitude occurs more between colleagues or let's say downstream gratitude and upstream from your students that sense; so your superiors do not express gratitude adequately.

R: No. Sometimes they repeat over and over again that this was really great so it's too much and sometimes I feel a bit... Not ignored but-

I: Not taken seriously?

R: Taken seriously rather than that. So it's not the frequency of thank yous but more.. yeah indeed.

I: Okay. What is the best way to create job satisfaction at work? And this is the last question.

R: Okay. Well as a superior in my opinion you should not only create the feeling that everyone is taken care of but you should actually take care of your employees. So in other words: You should focus on a healthy and clean work environment and also...

I: What does that mean?

R: Well it starts with rooms: temperature, equipment so that you feel physically well yes and also that you as an employer or as a superior take care about the mental health of your colleagues so having a good eye on who seems to be strained and overstressed or stressed out and take measures accordingly. So to both prevent further deterioration and also to enhance the identification and therefore the happiness at work or the contentment.

I: So there should be a personal relationship between the superior and the teachers in this case?

R: Yes. Yes is of course of tremendous add. The other side would be a head teacher who sits in his office all day long and lets the teachers do their business, their work but never gets in touch. So this would be not suitable at all, no.

I: And I think I cut you off when we were talking about job satisfaction right?

R: Yeah...

I: Sorry for the intervention-

R: Yeah no can we... We have somehow been spinning off this thing: What was the question exactly?

I: Yeah: What is the best way to create job satisfaction at work? And you started with physical needs and for your superior let's call it observe the staff...

R: Yeah well observe....Take care of the needs

I: Be there-

R: Yeah be present but, and this is the second part actually, that you create the feeling of trust, so that you trust in their employees that they will do their job fine and that you as an employee; teacher in this case; have the feeling that I can do my work alone; I'm capable of and this is also seen by my superior. I don't need any control or guidance really. Help yes but too much control and guidance is actually not productive.

I: Acknowledgement of your skills-

R: Yes. Yes-

I: In that sense.

R: Right.

I: Okay. Okay. Well then if you think about it, a lot of things are on the table now; if you think more in a written context; how could you improve job satisfaction?

R: Written context means anything I get...?

I: Anything any... In this case it's not corporate but any institutional email leaving the head office. For example.

R: The head office or rather that would be a superior board maybe yeah-

I: Do you think there's a need for more employee communication like... Would your workplace be enriched if there was a sort of communication specialist in the head office that can actually design those as I said institutional messages in a way that employees feel more valued feel more happy or-

R: I'm not too sure. I would rather say no because it's different. We have to sit through so many letters or emails each day that we rather not be actually overly thankful if we're emailed with something positive because it gets lost in the vast amount of other texts but well if I think about gratitude at work it's about being noticed. And once you've got a complaint for the higher board if you write to them, since I'm the speaker of my colleagues, I wrote a letter and never got response. A constructive letter about some critical issues it doesn't matter here but so it's also about non-gratification if nobody cares what you write or think about. So this is the thing: if your noticed in both your needs and wants but you don't get any response that would be bad. But okay that's not what my actual superior does but in general, as you asked.

I: Okay. Okay so yeah also it's a question of frequency and intensity absolutely.

R: So too much is definitely harmful but not at all is not good either.

I: Okay well thank you very much for this interview, we're done already: 25 minutes more or less.

R: I hope I could give some input at all...

I: Yes.

R: Of course, a business is a different organisation than a school but interaction works either way so..-

I: Exactly and it actually serves our research purposes...

R: So then I have not lived in vain.

I: Thank you very much. Good bye.

R: You're welcome. Bye.

Interview 2

I: What's your personal experience with gratitude in your environment?

R: In the family environment, gratitude plays a horrendous role. This is in contrast to the attitude towards gratitude in the work environment.

I: Do you know what gratitude means? / How would you define gratitude?

R: To appreciate someone's work to be able to say/show how thankful you are.

I: How should gratitude be expressed to you as / how do you express gratitude to others?

R: For me it would definitely be enough to know that my colleagues and bosses are happy with my work. Every now and then it is needed to simply mention, that someone does good work.

I: Do you feel valued at work?

R: It depends on the persons. In general, I do.

I: How often do you receive compliments/ appreciation from your superiors?

R: Once every half a year during a periodical meeting. Additionally, in case she presents my results, she mentions my name, which is a kind of appreciation from her.

I: What do you think is the best way to create satisfaction in terms of gratitude?

R: As mentioned in 3. While discussing different topics/results of work, mention (although the results are not convincing) that someone does great work.

I: When was the last time your manager expressed their gratitude towards you?

R: December 2019

I: What is more frequent; verbal or non-verbal forms of gratitude in your work environment?

R: Verbal

I: Does your manager let you know when you are doing a good job at work?

R: Sometimes.

I: Would you like to hear 'thank you' more frequently?

R: Yes, I would love to.

Interview 3

- **Question 1:**

If you put gratitude in the small version, it is not so much of importance I would say, but once you put it in a bigger perspective, in a holistic perspective, then it is a major important instrument but I would like to come back on that later.

- **Question 2:**

As I said already in question number one, of course I know what it means and it depends on how you look at it. Do you look at it on the small version or do you look at it with a holistic perspective? Because that makes the difference in defining the word. The word is nice but how do you load the word, that is the most important thing.

- **Question 3:**

Again, you need if you are using instruments as a leader or if you get is as an employee, you should always be able to load it, to load the term. I mean, uh, you say thank you to an employee, which, well, it is nice but it works for maybe 10 seconds you know if a boss says thank you to his employee. But to load it, that has a much more impact. This is what you want as a leader, you want to have impact on your employees. Uhm, so, yeah that is my answer.

- **Question 4:** (question modified to the respondent's circumstances: did you feel valued at work, when you were still working?)

Yeah, but mainly by my employees. I have been a very independent leader in the past, that means that sometimes it is very easy, but it means, practically it meant that if I

had any confrontations it was usually with MY boss or with the shareholders or with the board of directors where I also was part of, uhm, so when it comes to do you feel valued at work then I would say I got it more from my employees: the interaction between employees and myself. And, then again, I have the privilege to feel very independent so I didn't really care if I got compliments from my bosses because it was nice and it was there but it didn't have to. But what is important: employees! Because they make or break you. They are the most important!

- **Question 5:**

Not often, but I was also not asking for it and it was not in our culture so much on that level, it was not a common thing to give or receive compliments.

- **Question 6:**

Yeah, yeah, and now we get a little bit to the holistic area, right? I would say that the word gratitude, uh, I would take the word gratitude in a wider perspective. If you as a leader can offer a pack of instruments which can influence the vitality of employees and psychological basic needs of employees, being: competence, autonomy, relatedness, and meaning, and I will come back on those 4 elements, if you can offer them, then I know, and this is scientifically proved by my dear friend professor W. who by the way has been awarded one of the top 1 professors in the world, then, then you can have a REAL impact on employees and THEN you can use gratitude, again, if you see the in-depth perspective of these 5 elements (again: vitality, competence, autonomy, relatedness and meaning) if you can really LOAD those terms, then you get somewhere! Then you are getting REALLY somewhere with gratitude.

- **Question 7:**

Haha, today my manager is my wife! (laughs). No just kidding haha, but the last time gratitude was expressed I don't recall.

- **Question 8:** (question + additional explanation: 'so, what did you experience more, was it in the form of verbal communication like people saying 'thank you' or was it more non-verbal like you could read of their faces that they were very happy with you as an employee or as a boss or a leader. I mean, how did you experience that?)

Well, actually I experienced it in the numbers: the increasing revenue numbers and the increasing profit numbers and increasing happiness and the increasing mental energy of my employees. We measured that every year by Aon Hewitt at that time, Aon Hewitt was measuring the mental energy of employees in companies across Europe. Here we talk about the employee engagement level, the mental energy level,

that is sort of the school report for the CEO, because THAT says ‘Hey boss, I am happy to work for you and I will make sure I am never sick, I make sure I give you the revenues and the profits’ (sick as in ill so that the employee can’t go to work).

I: Would you link that skill to employee motivation as well?

DEFINITELY!

- **Question 9:**

Well, I as a manager let my people know that they were doing a fantastic job, YES! Every month, I had the figures: the increasing numbers of revenues and increasing numbers of profit and cashflows. I learned my people how to read the balance sheet, I learned my people how to read the profit and loss account, so that they could follow, with me, the development of our company and by THAT I am coming back to the relatedness thing of the 4 items that I used before. People loved it! And then, at the same time, I told my employees that these results were their efforts. This is what we did together! So, yes, this is the way how I did it every month.

- **Question 10:**

Only if it is loaded! Else it is just a useless thing! If I did something good, really something outstanding, then yes, of course, I want to have my credits. But a good employee comes to his boss and says ‘hey, I want your compliments now because I have done something f*cking good!’.

I: well, thank you for your time, we are now done with the ten questions!

Interview 4

I: What’s your personal experience with gratitude in your environment?

R: Well, besides people saying thankyou for your help and your advice, sometimes people give me a cart of something else to express their gratitude for my help to them.

I: So you sometimes receive a cart? How does that make you feel?

R: Yes, it is very nice when people do something extra to make you feel happy. I also receive messages from people expressing their thanks.

I: Do you receive those often?

R: No not very often, they are more like an exception than a rule. And they mostly come from clients.

I: Okay. Do you also receive gratitude from your supervisor sometimes?

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R: Yes, I do and those expressions are the nicest. Sometimes in a verbal form and sometimes in the form of a present.

I: Do you know what gratitude means?/ How would you define gratitude?

R: When people express their sincere feelings they have, because you helped them with something or in a particular situation. It can be an expression with words, a small present or by just giving them a hug.

I: What do you think is most common

R: Just saying thank you very much, so using words. The most important thing about showing your gratitude is taking an effort for someone, which I appreciate.

I: How should gratitude be expressed to you as / how do you express gratitude to others?

R: It depends why I want to express my gratitude and to whom

I: On what does it depend?

R: It depends on the relationship. If you give someone flowers or just a hug or a more expensive present.

I: Okay. And to whom would you give a hug and to whom flowers?

R: When you have a more friendly or family kind of relationship you would give a hug sooner. In a business relationship you would express your gratitude in terms of a cart, flowers or just by saying thank you.

I: Do you feel valued at work?

R: Yes, I do.

I: Okay. How is that expressed to you?

R: It is expressed by words, by reflecting on what went well in a group and by saying that you did a good job and that your work is appreciated.

I: Okay. And do you get that mostly from your supervisor or from you colleagues?

R: More supervisor than colleagues, but I receive gratitude from both.

I: How often do you receive compliments/ appreciation from your superiors?

R: Normally about once a month.

I: do you think that is enough

R: Yes I think that is enough. I do not want a compliment every day, because I think it would not be realistic any more then.

I: What would be not realistic anymore?

R: That your effort is appreciated.

I: So you think someone needs to express their gratitude at some point, but not every time you do something good?

I: I think showing gratitude is very important but it must not be something to be done easily, because uhm...

R: Because it will become common?

I: Yes. You should not forget it, but it should not be too common in order to be realistic.

I: What do you think is the best way to create satisfaction in terms of gratitude?

R: Well, I think that when you are working on a project and sometimes you have an evaluation with your team and then it is good to realize okay what are we doing, what did we achieve and how did we do it. Then it is good to say what went well and what went wrong and to express your gratitude about it in order to motivate everyone to finish their job. So it is a positive thing to mention everyone's achievements when you want to have a feeling of satisfaction.

I: When was the last time your manager expressed their gratitude towards you?

R: During Christmas

I: Okay. And what did you receive?

R: I could pick a Christmas present I liked.

I: And do you find that valuable?

R: Yes.

I: What is more frequent; verbal or non-verbal forms of gratitude in your work environment?

R: Verbal

I: Like?

R: You did a great job. Thank you. We finished this project very well.

I: Does your manager let you know when you are doing a good job at work?

R: Not on a daily or weekly base, but now and then, yes.

I: And that is mostly verbal?

R: Yes.

I: Do you ever get something tangible when perfectly finishing a project?

R: Sometimes.

I: And why do you get that?

R: Because then you went for the extra mile and you did something extra, which is being appreciated. For finishing normal projects, you usually do not receive some form of non-verbal gratitude.

I: Would you like to hear 'thank you' more frequently?

R: That is a difficult one. Not particularly, but if I would not receive it anymore, I would miss it.

I: Okay, so you are satisfied with how things are going in the workplace regarding gratitude?

R: Yes, all things considered, I am satisfied.

I: Okay, thank you for your time and information.

Interview 5

I: How would you define gratitude?

R: Ughm, it's like, it is like an expression how you say thank you or you show other people your appreciation or kindness.

I: What is your personal experience with gratitude in your environment?

R: In my environment, at work, for instance, I really like when you work hard, or simple things you do and your co-workers thank you or say 'nice job' or something simple like that is very nice to hear from your co-workers or people that work together with you showing that they appreciate that you work hard.

I: How should gratitude should be expressed to you? How do you express gratitude to others?

R: Sometimes I... if people offer me help, I don't know, helping me with the job/ work, I really do appreciate it and I always try to say thank you; those simple things are very nice.

I: Do you feel valued at work in this sense?

R: Sometimes.

I: Could you elaborate, please?

R: Like what do you mean?

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I: Do you feel valued from your manager – do they do something special to show their gratitude?

R: For me personally, when the manager or the supervisor says thank you or say something simple you do a nice job, it somehow makes me feel better, let's me know that I did something good at work.

I: Alright. And how often do you receive compliments or appreciation from your supervisor/manager?

R: Not very often, but also not really... I don't know... Mostly, every day that I work, especially when it's busy or during the weekend, they always say 'Thank you'. Mostly the managers.

I: Uhm... Is it only about saying 'Thank you' for you?

R: It's more like about the attitude that you are not just working there, but you are also appreciated that you are there at your work, they appreciate it, so I like it.

I: What do you think is the best way in creating satisfaction in terms of gratitude for you personally?

R: Let me think... I don't know, to be honest. 'Thank you' is enough for me at the moment.

I: Alright but if you think in perspective?

R: Ughm...

I: Is it something like you want to receive an email like '...name... has done a good job', a dinner with the team as an appreciation, is it something that should be shown with a smile, is it something to say?

R: In this order, maybe a little bit appreciation, maybe a nice email would be suitable or a small gift (e.g. free drinks when you are hanging with your friends at your work place) or any other branch of the hotel. Yes, maybe that is nice.

I: And do you remember the last time your manager expressed their gratitude towards you?

R: Ughm... It was before the last he worked before his vacation.

I: Alright, and what did he do?

SPOKEN AND WRITTEN GRATITUDE INTERVENTIONS AT WORK

R: He just said ‘Thank you for being here today and see you again after the holiday’ as he was on a vacation. But 2 days ago, or something, the supervisor said to me: ‘Thank you for your help today’.

I: What is more frequent in your opinion at your workplace – verbal or non-verbal forms of gratitude.

R: Verbal, I like it when the manager or supervisor or even the other people you work with say ‘Thank you’. Because then you know that you are being appreciated or you know that you are doing a good job.

I: So, you said your manager lets you know when you are doing a great job.

R: Yes, something like that.

I: Alright. And would you like to get more gratitude from you manager or supervisor?

R: Ughm... Maybe from some people that do not appreciate my efforts. However, for now I am alright with the manager and the supervisors because I think that if you always hear thank you all the time, sometimes you don’t know if it is real thank you or they say it just to be nice.

I: So, could this have a cultural part of it?

R: Yes, yes, definitely.

I: So, you have to be polite because maybe that’s what people usually do.

R: Yes, yes, yeah, yeah, yeah, true.

I: And how often do you give compliments or show gratitude towards other people?

R: Not often, but I try to compliment or to show my gratitude who help me and even to people that work in the same day with me because it’s nice to have somebody else happy when you work with them the entire shift.

I: Is it a disappointment for you if you do a good job and they show you gratitude?

R: For me personally, no. Sometimes if the supervisors or the manager keep saying thank you or show the gratitude everyday – it might not come across as genuine. For now, I am good. Yeah. No disappointment

SPOKEN AND WRITTEN GRATITUDE INTERVENTIONS AT WORK

I: Technically, it doesn't have to occur all the time, but do you think then showing gratitude is an important part for your job satisfaction that you want to stay with the company for a long time?

R: Yeah, I think so.

I: Could you elaborate, please?

R: Even if you do small thing, even if you are new at your workplace, I think it is still very nice to compliment your employee a little bit, so, that they know that they are doing a good job. I think it is just nice if somebody came to you and they appreciated what you do even though you do a lot of mistakes. It is always nice if people give you the positive attitude about how you work and how you are there and they appreciate that you are there.

I: Alright, so you say that it is very important for your satisfaction that the management shows their gratitude.

R: Yes, yes.

I: Having the current situation, would you keep working there or would you like to quit, e.g.

R: Yes, for now, I am pretty satisfied, I am still planning to work for a few more months ahead.

I: Alright, and the last question I would have for you would be, if you were to choose a workplace, what kind of a workplace would you choose – a job that shows gratitude on every milestone and constantly, a job that shows gratitude occasionally on some milestones or a job that pays well but no gratitude at all?

R: I think the second one – because it is not too much, but also not too fake, I don't know how to say it properly.

I: Could you elaborate, please?

R: I think it is nice if you work at a place where your bosses appreciate your work not too often, you know, because for me personally I don't want to hear the gratitude every single day because it's a bit too much, you know.

I: Yes, I understand that. Thank you very much, this is the end of our interview thank you very much for your participation.

R: No worries, you are welcome!

Appendix B – Gratitude text for spoken and written groups:

“Thank you very much for your participation, you really helped us a lot!”

Appendix C – Questionnaire

Radboud University



Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project about cognitive mechanisms of perception in a working environment for which you are asked to complete a cognitive task and follow-up questionnaire. This research project only requires participants working or that have worked in the Netherlands and is being conducted by International Business Communication students from Radboud University. Completing this questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes.

The data collected during this study is anonymous and cannot be traced back to you. Such data will be used as part of datasets, articles and presentations exclusively for the purposes of this research.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You can withdraw your participation and consent at any time without giving a reason, and all of the collected data from you will be permanently deleted.

Should you want more information about this research, or in case you have any questions / complaints, please send an email to l.bottcher@student.ru.nl.

Note: If you do not meet the following criteria, we kindly ask to quit the survey.

Radboud University



I am at least 18 years old.

Yes

No





I am currently working or have worked in the Netherlands.

Yes

No



I have read the information text and give consent to participate.

Yes

No





In the following part, you will complete a task, in which you will be asked to match countries with their corresponding flags. You will be presented with a country / continent name and 4 possible answer options. Please indicate which flag fits the country / continent.



Brazil





Antarctica



South Africa





Spain



China





USA



New Zealand





Kenya



Qatar



Turkey



Thailand

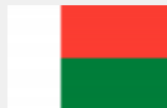




Romania

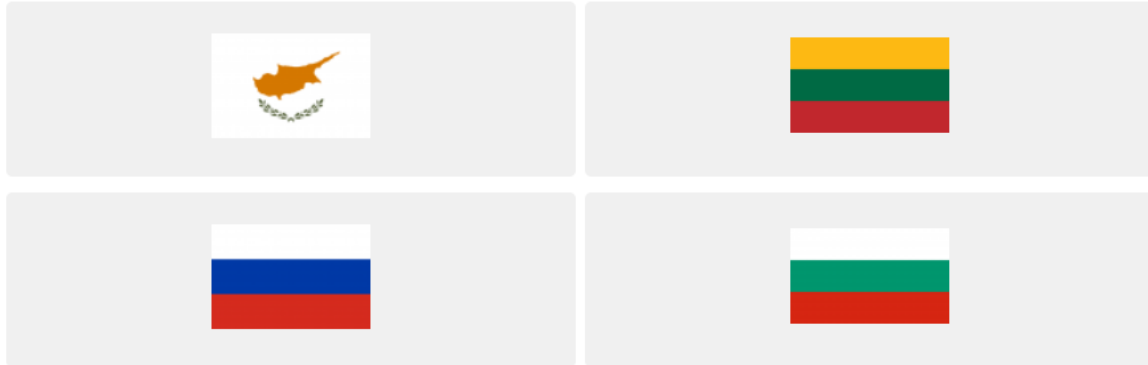


Tanzania

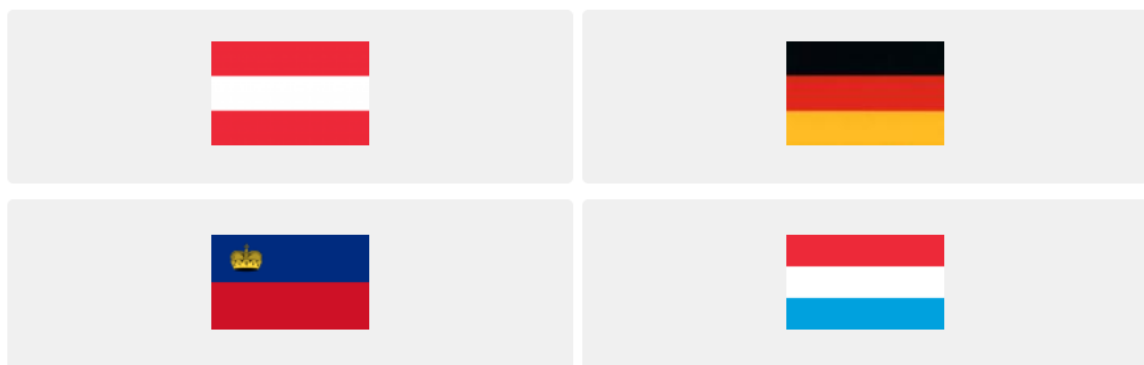




Bulgaria



Germany

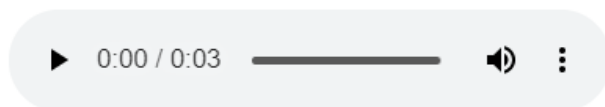


Spoken gratitude

Radboud University



Please make sure your audio is ON to hear the following recording.



Please now continue with the follow-up questionnaire.

Were you able to hear the message?

Yes

No



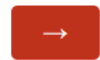
Written gratitude

Radboud University



Thank you very much for your participation!

Please now continue with the follow-up questionnaire.



Radboud University



In my opinion, the experiment was...

Very
unenjoyable

Unenjoyable

Somewhat
unenjoyable

Neutral

Somewhat
enjoyable

Enjoyable

Very
enjoyable





My gender is:

Male

Female

Other



My age is:



My nationality is:





My highest education degree is:

Less than high school degree

High school degree

Associate degree (2-year)

Bachelor's degree HBO & WO (3- or 4-year)

Master's degree HBO & WO

Doctoral degree



How religious do you consider yourself to be?

Not religious

Neutral

Religious

