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The effects of accounts and language on the  
persuasiveness of requests in corporate settings

An experimental study

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## Abstract

Due to globalisation over the last years, there are more and more multicultural companies, as a result of which many companies have implemented English as their common corporate language, as it is in the Netherlands. This creates difficulties in terms of communication for non-native speakers. Language, however, is not the only thing that creates challenges in the workplace. On the work floor, a superior often makes a request to a subordinate, but it may also be done by someone with the same hierarchical position within a company. The requests are not always well received by the employee, since they impose something and therefore are face threatening. Especially when it concerns an illegitimate task request. What is very important in multicultural companies is that the communication on the work floor runs smoothly, and this gave rise to the following two research questions: 1. *“What is the effect of accounts (present vs. absent) on the persuasiveness of a request?”* and 2. *“What is the effect of a language (foreign vs. native) in which the request is provided on the persuasiveness of the request?”*.

In order to answer these research questions and contribute to a better working environment where face threat at work is managed, an experiment was conducted with a between-subjects design. The results of this experiment showed that there was no significant effect of language and account on the persuasiveness of a request. This means that it does not affect the recipient's attitude towards the request nor the intention to comply when one receives a request in Dutch or English, with or without an account to it. What may give different results in follow-up studies is the use of other languages, additional information on the distance and the weight of the imposition, and the use of a different or multiple accounts.

## Introduction

Over the last years, a process called globalisation has taken place in the world. Globalisation has been defined by Held, et al. (1999) as the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life. This increase in connectedness facilitated immigration and freedom of movement, which in turn led to an increase of multicultural enterprises, and additionally the ever-growing multilingualism among the organizational workforce. The latter appears to be a difficult challenge (Lauring & Selmer, 2012).

Considering that language enables the sharing of knowledge, either through spoken or written text, an individual quickly encounters at least two languages in a multilingual workplace: the native language (L1) and a foreign language (L2). The dominant foreign language in business is English, as it is in the Netherlands (Gerritsen and Nickerson 2004; Seidlhofer et al., 2006). Many companies have implemented this particular common corporate language (CCL), since English is undisputedly seen as the global *lingua franca* and serves as the communication tool of many intercultural encounters (Tietze, 2004). This is supported by Seidlhofer (2005), who regards English as a contact language that people from different first-language backgrounds use to communicate. Implementing this CCL facilitates internal communication between the headquarters and foreign subsidiaries when entering new markets, moreover it also counteracts many language barriers (Fredriksson et al., 2006). However, forcing workers into adapting to a foreign language, which is what the CCL is for many, can affect the communication in the workplace actively. In multinational environments, communication frequently takes place between speakers whose fluency in English often varies and who may use one or more languages alongside English (Nickerson, 2005). This implies that the mere introduction of English as the CCL does not immediately lead to its adoption, nor to this language being 'shared' throughout the whole organisation. It is therefore not unusual for corporate encounters to deviate from the imposed corporate language (e.g., two Dutch colleagues of an international company where the business language is English, briefly switch to Dutch in their conversation).

Processing multiple languages at work can be problematic for non-native speakers. The reason for this is that second-language processing differs from native-language processing in several ways (Frenck-Mestre & Pynte, 1997). This is demonstrated, inter alia, by the study of Pavlenko (2005). This study revealed that people react differently to message

exposure in L1 than to the message in L2. The foreign language to which the individual is exposed seems to cause the individual to experience more emotional detachment towards messages in L2 compared to the same messages in L1, as it is less embedded in the emotional system than the native language. The foreign language is emotionally less anchored because the native language is acquired in familiar contexts, in an emotionally charged environment that encompasses a whole range of human emotions. On the other side, the foreign language is learned in experiential settings and largely conditions one to a more emotionally neutral if not restrained attitude (Ivaz, Costa, & Duñabeitia, 2016). Other studies that demonstrate that second-language processing differs from native-language processing, are the studies of Puntoni et al. (2009) and Keysar et al. (2012). In the study of Puntoni et al. (2009), participants needed to make a choice in a decision-making task, based on several options. It was concluded that the language in which options are described, can have a significant influence on product choice, since the choice outcomes were experienced more emotionally when described in L1 than in L2. In addition, a message in a foreign language reduces decision-making biases (Keysar, Hayakawa, & Gyu An, 2012). A bias is a systematic error in decision-making and thinking, which affects the decisions and judgments one makes. When being exposed to a foreign language, one makes more daring choices because of the reduced fear conditioning (García-Palacios et al., 2018).

Apart from the language issue at the multicultural work floor, there are regular social acts that need to be performed that can cause complications as well, e.g., requests. In workplace communication, requests are a frequently encountered speech act (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996). Requests are an attempt to enlist a recipient to perform a practical action (Baranova & Dingemans, 2016). They are thought to be delicate social acts, also referred to as face threatening acts. The reason they are also called face-threatening acts, is that a request involves imposition and is therefore threatening to the requester's and requestee's face. Face is someone's public image, and one attempts to maintain that face. (Goffman, 1955). There are two types of face, positive face and negative face. Positive face is the desire to be seen as competent and desire to have our face accepted, while negative face is a desire for autonomy and to preserve the status quo (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

For these face-threatening acts there is the politeness theory, which is concerned with the mitigation of face-threatening acts. The theory explains how social agents deal with threats to the face in their social encounters. The politeness theory states that there are three determinants of the level of face threat: power (hierarchy), distance (familiarity), and imposition (to the face). The determinant 'power' implies that subordinates tend to be more

polite towards superiors than the other way around. The determinant 'distance' concerns the social distance of familiarity between participants. One tends to be more polite towards strangers. Lastly, there is the determinant 'imposition', which concerns the weight of the request (Brown & Levinson, 1978). The determinant 'power' seems to be especially important on the work floor. Previous studies on requests focused mostly on requests where the requester has more power (i.e. a superior) and the requestee has less power (i.e. subordinate). However, little research has been done on requests where the hierarchical position is the same, i.e. from employee to employee.

According to Baranova & Dingemans (2016), the politeness theory predicts that a request will be followed with a reason when it is highly threatening to the face. This is the case when it imposes a large burden or when the social asymmetry between participants is high, e.g., the distance between supervisor and employee. Supervisors commonly make requests that fall beyond the scope of the communicated role of an employee (Eatough et al., 2016). Such requests are called illegitimate-task requests and can provoke anger, resentment, and revenge-seeking behaviour in employees (Minei et al., 2018). Illegitimate task requests are even more face threatening than regular legitimate requests. That is why there is a need for some sort of strategy to overcome that face threat, especially when the task is degrading and therefore embarrassing (Minei et al., 2018). This means, in this case, that the task request may infringe on the public image that a person has. Execution of the illegitimate task request can then in turn potentially detract from the individual's self-perception of their positive social value (Hastings & Castle-Bell, 2018).

The current study will focus on accounts as a politeness strategy to diminish the face threat when a request is made. The study by Baranova and Dingemans (2016) stated that providing a reason with a request can ensure that no friction arises between the requester and requestee and the request is granted. An account is a subtype of a reason used in the context of a delicate action. This distinction between a reason and account was proposed in the study by Baranova and Dingemans (2016). According to Scott and Lyman (1986), who propose the traditional definition, accounts are verbal statements made by one social actor to another to explain behaviours that are unanticipated or deviant. Research suggests that accounts can decrease employees' negative reactions and increase favourable impressions of communicators (Tata, 2002). This could be due to the fact that reasons make requests more comprehensible (Baranova & Dingemans, 2016).

As mentioned before, it has been shown that an illegitimate task request can provoke employee anger, resentment, and revenge-seeking behaviour (Minei et al., 2018). The study of

Tata (2002) has stated that managers can use accounts to minimise the threat and protect the employee's self-image, thus minimising the employee's negative reactions. Little is known about how an illegitimate task request is perceived by an employee, either with or without an account, when this request is made by someone with little to no hierarchical difference, i.e., power distance. In addition, request and accounts are important in a work setting, and due to the increase in multicultural companies, requests and accounts at a workplace now sometimes need to be in another language. A foreign language evokes less emotion than the native language (Puntoni, de Langhe, & van Osselaer, 2009). This has been shown particularly in studies that used material message exposure as a stimulus. Despite these previous studies, no research has been done on how accounts for requests are processed in a multilingual business context. When looking at employees with no power distance between them, the question remains to what extent the language and/or the presence or absence of an account influence the persuasiveness of the request. Thus, the recipient's attitude towards the request as well as the intention to imply the request. In other words, to what extent is the recipient persuaded when language and/or account are considered when making the request.

The results of this study will contribute to the literature on this subject and thereby fill the research gap that existed before. With this knowledge, the aim of this study is to answer the following research questions: 1. *What is the effect of accounts (present vs. absent) on the persuasiveness of a request?* and 2. *What is the effect of a language (foreign vs. native) in which the request is provided on the persuasiveness of the request?* Furthermore, the following two hypotheses were formulated:

*H1: The group that receives an account for a request will score the request as more persuasive than the request without an account.*

*H2: The group that is exposed to the English request will score the request as less persuasive, than the group that is exposed to the Dutch request.*

The rationale behind the second hypothesis is that reasoning in a foreign language is less affected by emotional concerns, to the extent that using a foreign language reduces emotional reactivity (Hayakawa et al., 2016). As a result, it is likely that the recipient is less impressed by the account to a request when asked in a foreign language as opposed to the native language.

Illegitimate task requests might involve anger and negative emotions. These have a higher face threat because they have a higher imposition. By examining the extent to which an account with a request affects the intention to comply and attitude towards the message, and thus persuasiveness, this study will contribute to a better working environment where face threat at work is managed and fill the research gaps that existed before.

## **Method**

### *Materials*

The independent variables defined for this study were language and presence of an account. For language, the levels are the native language Dutch, and the foreign language English. The independent variable *account* concerns the presence or absence of an account for a request in a written text. The request used in this study is as follows: “Can you pick up my package from the PostNL point by 4 p.m.?” with as account: ”I don’t have time to run this errand myself.”

There were four groups and four texts. Each participant has been exposed to only one text. Text 1 was in Dutch, containing a request without an account. Text 2 was in Dutch, containing the same request with an account. Text 3 was in English containing the same request without an account, and Text 4 was in English containing the same request with an account. The texts and requests contained the same information for all four conditions. Only in terms of language and provision of an account, there was a difference in the texts. The text and the request that the participant received were either both in English or in Dutch. The same applied to the account for the request. This was the same in both conditions where the account was present, but the difference was in the language in which the account was offered, English or Dutch.

The subjects were asked to imagine that they were working in a multinational organisation in the Netherlands as an administrative assistant. In addition, they had to imagine that a colleague with the same function and experience in the company asked them in writing to perform a task. The subjects were then asked to read the message from this colleague, and if assigned, the account of the request.

The text, message and account used were based on the study by Minei et al. (2018). In this study a similar text, request and account were used which can be found in Appendix A. However, the illegitimate task request used in the study: “Can you pick up my clothes from dry-cleaning today by 4 p.m.?” was not suitable for the Dutch work culture, where dry-

cleaning is not as frequently used as in the American setting. A task request is illegitimate at the point when it violates the norms about what can reasonably be expected of someone. In this case, when the requested task is outside the range of one's occupation (Minei et al., 2018; Semmer et al., 2010).

In order to make the request suitable for a situation that may arise at a multinational organisation in the Netherlands, the following request has been used in this study: “*Can you pick up my package from the PostNL point by 4 p.m.?*”. For the two groups assigned to the condition with account presence, the same account was shown as used in the study by Minei et al. (2018), which is as follows: “*I don't have time to run this errand myself*”. The full text and message that the participants got to see are provided in Appendix B.

### *Subjects*

This study employed the convenience sampling technique. Individuals were approached through various social media platforms, giving the individuals the choice to voluntarily participate in the study. The requirements for participation in the study were that participants had to be over 18 years of age and had at least one year of work experience within a corporate firm, internships excluded. The reason why these individuals were excluded from the study is because the situation takes place in a corporate setting and therefore work experience is needed to be able to imagine the situation properly.

In total, there were 245 participants in the survey. Of these 245 participants, 71 were incomplete and for this reason removed. In addition, there were 12 individuals whose native language was not Dutch and 3 individuals who did not have any work experience. This resulted in a total of 159 valid responses. This total consisted of 76 male participants, 80 female participants and 3 individuals that did not identify themselves as male or female, ranging from age 18-61 years old ( $M = 24.31$ ,  $SD = 8.55$ ). A percentage of 37.7% had indicated as highest completed educational level VWO, followed by 20.8% who indicated WO and 17.6% HBO. The work experience of the participants ranged between 0.08 and 41 years ( $M = 25.26$ ,  $SD = 135.65$ ). In addition, the participants were asked to determine their self-assessed English proficiency ( $M = 5.58$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ), as well as their command of the language skills: reading ( $M = 5.83$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ), writing ( $M = 5.33$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ), speaking ( $M = 5.40$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ), and listening ( $M = 5.74$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ), based on Krishna & Ahluwalia (2008), using a semantic differential scale with the two poles 1 = “*poor*”, and 7 = “*excellent*”.



Participants whose first language was not Dutch and people who self-assessed their English proficiency as poor were also excluded from the study.

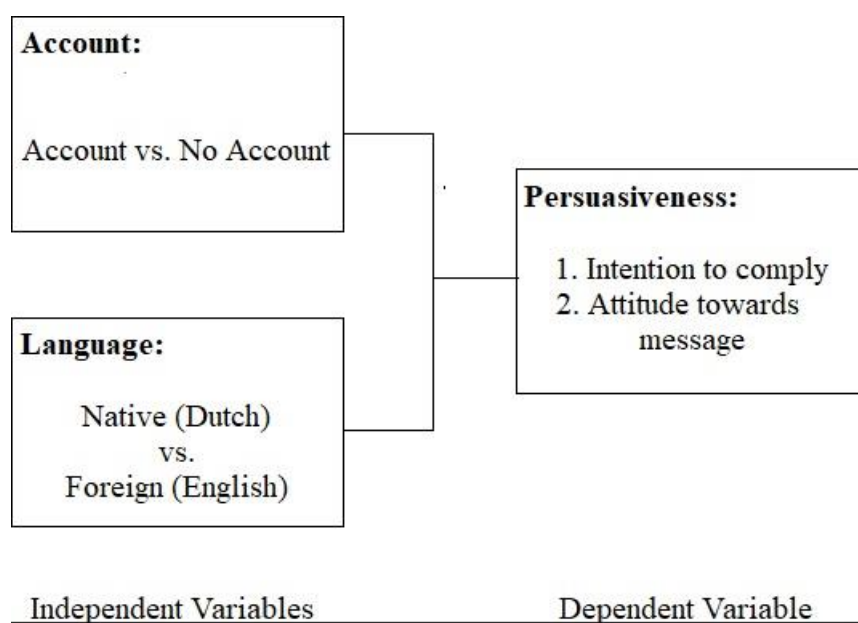
In order to compare the distribution of the participants over the four conditions, a Chi-square test was used. The Chi-square test showed that gender ( $\chi^2(6) = 7.18, p = .304$ ), educational level ( $\chi^2(18) = 20.97, p = .281$ ), and total years of work experience ( $\chi^2(120) = 120.24, p = .48$ ) were equally distributed among all conditions. In addition, age ( $F(3, 155) = 1.39, p = .247$ ) and self-assessed level of English proficiency ( $F(3, 155) = 1.18, p = .319$ ) were also equally distributed among the four conditions, and this was revealed by performing a one way analysis of variance.

### *Design*

The study had a 2x2 between-subjects design, with language (native e.g. Dutch/foreign e.g. English) and account (present/absent) as independent variables. The group that served as control group had been exposed to the Dutch request without account.

### **Figure 1**

#### *Analytical model of the present research*



## *Instruments*

The dependent variable of this study was persuasiveness of the request. In order to measure the persuasiveness of the request, it was divided into two scales, namely intention to comply and attitude towards the message. These variables and thus the persuasiveness have been measured by means of an online questionnaire in Qualtrics. The participants evaluated the displayed request, which allowed the measurement of the intention to comply and attitude towards the message.

‘Intention to comply’ were measured by four 7-point Likert scale questions based on the study by Fishbein and Azjen (2010): “*I intend to pick up the package at the PostNL point by 4 p.m.*”, “*I will pick up the package at the PostNL point by 4 p.m.*”, “*I am willing to pick up the package at the PostNL point by 4 a.m.*”, and “*I plan to pick up the package at the PostNL point by 4 p.m.*”. The 7-point Likert scale ranged from 1 = “*completely disagree*” to 7 = “*completely agree*”. In order to calculate the reliability of the scales, Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  has been calculated. The reliability of ‘intention to comply’ comprising four items was good:  $\alpha = .92$ .

‘Attitude towards the message’ was measured by using five 7-point semantic differential scales for answering the following statement: “*Me picking up the package at the PostNL point by 4 p.m. is:*” The five scales that have been used are based on Fishbein and Azjen (2010) and as follows: 1. “*bad - good*”, 2. “*unpleasant – pleasant*”, 3. “*harmful – beneficial*”, 4. “*boring – interesting*”, and 5. “*unwise – wise*”. The reliability of ‘attitude towards message’ comprising five items was poor:  $\alpha = .63$ . To make the scales of ‘Attitude towards message’ acceptable, the item ‘boring-interesting’ was removed, which resulted in an acceptable reliability:  $\alpha = .75$ .

Since the dependent variable 'persuasiveness' was divided into the above two scales, a reliability test was also carried out for persuasiveness. To calculate this reliability, the items of ‘intention to comply’, and ‘attitude towards the message’ were used, except for the unreliable item. The reliability of ‘persuasiveness’ comprising eight items was good:  $\alpha = .89$ .

## *Procedure*

With an online questionnaire in Qualtrics, around 250 individuals were addressed via various social media platforms to participate in this study. Once they opened the attached link, they were taken to a page where they could find information about the study. This information

included the following: background information, the expectations of the participant, emphasis on voluntary participation, procedure regarding data, contact details in case of questions, and finally a (controlling) overview of what they had to comply with before proceeding with the questionnaire.

Once the participants had completed the before mentioned and could proceed with the experiment, they were asked to fill in their demographics e.g.: age, gender, native tongue, work experience, highest level of education, self-assessed English proficiency, and their experience with the English language. Hereafter, they were randomly assigned to a condition and shown the corresponding text. After reading all the information, they were asked to indicate to which extent they agreed with the statements related to intention to imply and then indicate how they felt about the statement used to measure attitude towards the message. At the end, the participants were thanked for their participation. The mean duration of the survey was  $M = 215.14$  ( $SD=8,91$ ) seconds, where the shortest duration was 53 seconds, and the longest duration was 661 seconds. The participants did not receive any reward.

### *Statistical treatment*

With the experiment that was conducted for this study, there were four groups. Each participant was assigned to one condition. In addition, there were two independent variables (language and account) that were examined to see if they had an influence on the persuasiveness of the request. For these reasons, two one-way ANOVA's were conducted.

## **Results**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of accounts (present vs. absent) and language (foreign vs. native) on the persuasiveness of a request. In order to examine these possible effects, two one-way ANOVA's were performed.

The first one-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether there was an effect of accounts (present vs. absent) on the persuasiveness of a request. The one-way ANOVA

revealed that there was no statistically significant effect of account on persuasiveness of the request ( $F(1,157) = 1.48, p > 0.05$ ).

The second one-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether there was an effect of language (foreign vs. native) on the persuasiveness of a request. The one-way ANOVA revealed that there was no statistically significant effect of language on persuasiveness of the request ( $F(1,157) = .63, p > 0.05$ ).

## Conclusion and discussion

The aim of this study was to extend the scientific and practical knowledge about the effects of accounts and language on a request made in a work setting by an employee to another employee, where there is no power distance. This was done by means of the following two research questions: 1. *“What is the effect of accounts (present vs. absent) on the persuasiveness of a request?”*, and 2. *“What is the effect of a language (foreign vs. native) on the persuasiveness of a request?”*. Furthermore, the following two hypotheses were tested: 1. *“The group that receives an account for a request will score the request as more persuasive than the request without an account”*, and 2. *“The group that is exposed to the English request will score the request as less persuasive, than the group that is exposed to the Dutch request”*.

The results of the experiment showed that the use of an account had no effect on the persuasiveness of the request, thus answering the first research question. Moreover, language also had no effect on the persuasiveness of the request, thus answering the second research question. In addition, because language (foreign vs. native) and accent (present vs. absent) both had no effect on the persuasiveness of a request, both hypotheses are rejected.

### *Effect of language*

That language has no effect on the persuasiveness of the request is not in line with previous research. The native language (L1) and the foreign language (L2) are processed differently by individuals, and so the language in which information is shared should influence the

recipient's perception (Frenck-Mestre & Pynte, 1997). Moreover, the study of Pavlenko (2005) revealed that people react differently to message exposure in L1 than to the message in L2. Exposure to a L2 evokes less emotion than the L1 and this in turn reduces decision-making biases (Puntoni, de Langhe, & van Osselaer, 2009; Keysar, Hayakawa, & Gyu An, 2012). For these reasons, it was expected that exposure to the request in Dutch would show a more positive attitude towards the request and more intention to comply from the recipient. This means that the persuasiveness of the request would then be greater than the request in English. When an individual takes emotion more into consideration when making a decision, one will be more inclined to help the other person out, as opposed to when this emotion is less present and the decision is made rationally.

One reason for the insignificant result for language could be that the participants had a reasonably high proficiency in the English language. This is reflected in the result of the self-assessed proficiency, where the average of self-assessed proficiency of the participants in the experiment was fairly far above the scale mean. Next to that, in the Netherlands, children are taught English from the fifth grade onwards, which may have meant that the English stimulus material in the study was too simple for the participants to process, and no significant difference was found in language (Vinjé, 1994).

Another reason for the non-significant result may be that the incorrect responses that were removed<sup>5</sup> created an uneven distribution for the independent variable language, as can be found in the result section. This may have caused the results to be not completely accurate.

### *Effect of account*

Contrary to expectations, accounts also had no effect on the persuasiveness of the request, which is not in line with the results of previous studies on accounts. Illegitimate task requests have a much higher imposition and therefore a greater face threat than normal requests. Requests with an account are more comprehensible and better received by the recipient (Baranova & Dingemanse, 2016; Minei et al., 2018). For these reasons, the requests are more likely to be granted, or increase favourable impressions of communicators (Baranova & Dingemanse, 2016; Tata, 2002). It would therefore have been logical if there had been a significant effect of the variable account.

One explanation for this result may be that the experiment did not provide explicit information about the determinants ‘distance’ and ‘weight of the imposition’ which are identified in the politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1978). This information was left out, since the focus in this study was not on these two determinants. The only thing the participant was aware of, was the absence of power distance between the requester and requestee, since they had the same function and tasks. Perhaps the experiment should have provided explicit information about the nature of the relationship between the requester and requestee i.e., ‘distance’, and more information to assess the ‘imposition’ e.g., whether it was a big package, if the post office was far away, or if it was during the working hours. For follow-up studies, it could therefore be an interesting addition to focus also on ‘distance’ and ‘weight of the imposition’.

The account used in this study: *“I don’t have time to run this errand myself”*, could also be a possible reason for the insignificant result. It might have been an appropriate account in the study of Minei et al. (2018), but it might not provide sufficient information when the requester is of the same hierarchical level as the requestee. For these reasons, the participant may not be convinced by the account. The use of various accounts is therefore something that could be taken up in any subsequent studies.

### *Limitations, recommendations and implications*

Firstly, the participants in the experiment were reasonably proficient in the English language, which may have influenced the processing of this language. This raises the question of what the results of the experiment would be if other languages were used. These results would be very useful in the multicultural business world.

Second, the stimulus material lacks a lot of crucial information, such as the weight of the imposition and the distance between the requester and requestee. In this study, the focus was only on the determinant ‘power’, since there was little or no research on requests made between employees with the same job and tasks. With this additional information, the intention to impose and attitude towards the message could be judged differently by the participant.

Third, using a different or multiple accounts, and perhaps additional information, could give different results. In this study, only one account was used, but no real reason was

given why the requester did not have time. In addition, it can never be wrong to test more than one account, since the theoretical knowledge about accounts can be expanded.

Finally, in this study, the variable 'language' proved to be unevenly distributed. This was because some participants stopped the experiment prematurely. The most reliable results remain those where each variable is equally distributed. For this reason, it is not unwise to remove responses at the end, but to do this earlier so that individuals can still be assigned to the odd-numbered variables.

Language and account thus have no influence on the intention to imply and attitude towards the message i.e., persuasiveness of a request, when this request is made by an employee with no power distance between the receiver. Since there is an increasing number of multicultural companies due to globalisation, these results contribute to the practical and scientific knowledge about accounts for requests in a multicultural work setting. Future researchers who wish to expand this knowledge even further, are recommended to avoid the above-mentioned limitations and addressing the recommendations listed. It is likely that this knowledge will be used in future encounters in corporate settings to improve communication in the workplace.

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## Appendix A

*Pretested text, request and account used in the study by Minei et al. (2018):*

S.J. works as an administrative assistant. S.J. has 10 years' experience on this job and is proud of the hard work that is put into the job every day. S.J.'s primary work tasks involve preparing documents, reports, and letters, answering, and directing phone calls, attending meetings, and taking minutes, greeting visitors, and deciding if they should gain access to specific individuals, bookkeeping, and performing general office work. Today, one of the executives that S.J. works for requests S.J. to pick up the clothes of the executive from dry-cleaning by 4 p.m. The account given was "I don't have time to run this errand myself".

## Appendix B

*English text, request, and account used in this study:*

Imagine that you are working in a multinational organisation in the Netherlands as an administrative assistant. You are an administrative assistant with 10 years' experience on this job and are proud of the hard work that is put into the job every day. Your work tasks involve preparing documents, reports, and letters, answering, and directing phone calls, attending meetings and taking minutes, greeting visitors and deciding if they should gain access to specific individuals, bookkeeping, and performing general office work. Your colleague with the same job and experience makes the following request: "I don't have time to run this errand myself. Can you pick up my package from the PostNL point by 4 p.m.?"

*Dutch text, request, and account used in this study:*

Beeld u in dat u als administratief assistent werkt in een multinationale organisatie in Nederland. U heeft 10 jaar ervaring in deze functie en bent trots op het harde werk dat u iedere dag levert. Uw werkzaamheden betreffen het voorbereiden van documenten, rapporten, en brieven; het beantwoorden en doorverbinden van telefoongesprekken; het bijwonen van vergaderingen, het notuleren van vergaderingen, het begroeten van bezoekers en bepalen of zij toegang krijgen tot bepaalde personen; het bijhouden van de boekhouding; en het verrichten van algemene kantoorwerkzaamheden. Uw collega met dezelfde functie en ervaring als u benadert u met de volgende vraag: "Kun je mijn pakketje ophalen bij het PostNL afhaalpunt voor 16:00? Ik heb geen tijd om dit klusje zelf te doen."

## Appendix C

### *Questionnaire example*

#### **Condition 1: English with an account**

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Start of Block: Block 1 - EN

Dear participant,

We are a group of students, currently studying International Business Communication at Radboud University in Nijmegen. We would like to invite you to participate in an experiment we conduct for our Bachelor Thesis. The goal for this experiment is to study interactions in workplace settings. You will be asked to read a short description of a work situation, followed by a few questions about this situation. Taking part in this study will approximately take 3 minutes of your time.

Your participation in this experiment is voluntary, and you are able to stop your participation at all times during the experiment. All your answers will be stored confidentially and anonymously. This means your answers will not be traced back to you. The collected research data will be stored according to guidelines set by Radboud University. If you have any questions or remarks, please contact us via [alessio.dibinoudis@ru.nl](mailto:alessio.dibinoudis@ru.nl)



I have read and understood the above information

Yes

No

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I agree to participate in this study

Yes

No

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I am 18 years or older

Yes

No

**End of Block: Block 1 - EN**

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**Start of Block: Block 2 - EN**

Before starting, we would like to ask you some general questions.

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What is your native language/mother tongue?

Dutch

Other

**End of Block: Block 2 - EN**

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**Start of Block: Block 3 - EN**

Before starting, we would like to ask you some general questions.

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What is your work experience (part-time or full-time) in years?

(Please provide your answer in numbers. If you had several (side)jobs for 1 year, then your answer here is 1. If you had 1 or more (side)jobs for 1 month, then your answer here is 1/12.)

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**End of Block: Block 3 - EN**

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**Start of Block: Block 4 - EN**

Before starting, we would like to ask you some general questions.

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What is your gender?

- Male
  - Female
  - Other
  - Prefer not to say
- 



What is your age?

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What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Vmbo
- Havo
- Vwo
- Mbo
- Hbo
- Wo
- Other

Please indicate your English proficiency on the following aspects:

	Extremely bad	Very bad	Bad	Neither good nor bad	Good	Very good	Excellent
Speaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 4 - EN



**Start of Block: Block 5 - EN account**

Below, a work situation is presented to you. Please read it carefully, you will have to answer some questions about the situation.

Imagine that you are working in a multinational organisation in the Netherlands as an administrative assistant. You have 10 years of experience in this job and are proud of the hard work that you put into your job every day. Your work tasks involve preparing documents, reports, and letters, answering and directing phone calls, attending meetings, taking notes during meetings, greeting visitors and deciding if they should gain access to specific individuals, bookkeeping, and performing general office work.

Your colleague with the same job and experience approaches you with the following question. "Can you pick up my package from the PostNL point by 16:00? I don't have time to run this errand myself."

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Below, you see some questions regarding this situation.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I intend to pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am willing to pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan to pick up the colleague's package from the PostNL point.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Me picking up the colleague's package at the PostNL point is:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Bad
Unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pleasant
Harmful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Beneficial
Interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Boring
Wise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unwise

End of Block: Block 5 - EN account

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Start of Block: comment?EN

Do you have any comments or remarks about the questionnaire? If not, you can skip this question.

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End of Block: comment?EN