The influence of language on the attitudes of Spanish-speaking people towards advertisements in English versus Spanish, and the role of the self-assessed proficiency in the second language

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Abstract

In this study, the attitudes of Spanish-speaking participants towards advertisements in their L1 (Spanish) and their L2 (English) were measured in terms of attitude towards the advertisements, attitude towards the product, and intention to buy the product. Another variable that was considered was the influence self-assessed proficiency, and also whether this had an influence on the perceived emotionality of the language. A two factorial (language of the ad: English or Spanish, level of proficiency: low or high) was used. Participants were divided between the two languages of the advertisements and were asked questions regarding their attitudes, but also their self-assessed proficiency and the perceived emotionality of Spanish in comparison to English. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in the perceptions of Spanish versus English advertisements, that proficiency did not have an influence on these perceptions and that proficiency also did not influence the perceived emotionality. The L1 was found to be perceived as more emotional than the L2. In further research, the perceived emotionality of the advertisements could also be measured, which was a limitation of the present study.

Theoretical framework

Within research on marketing, a substantial amount of investigations have already been conducted on the use of English or the first language in advertising. Within this area of study, advertisements using the second language (English) (L2) were evaluated differently than advertisements using the first language (L1) depending on general attitudes towards the language, perception of the language, and perceived comprehension of the language (Hornikx et al., 2010; van Hooft et al., 2017; van Hooft et al., 2021). Another factor that may influence the processing of advertisements in the L2 in comparison with advertisements in the L1 is the perceived emotionality of the language. Generally, the L1 is perceived as more emotional due to the speakers having more earlier associations with words in that language (Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn, 2016). An influence on perceived emotionality may be (self-assessed) proficiency, as in lower proficiency languages reduced emotionality is found (Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn, 2016). Proficiency may also have an impact on attitudes towards advertisements as it is related to processing fluency, and this in turn results in a more positive attitude towards the advertisement (Briñol et al., 2006; Lin et al. ,2018). This study will focus on the influence of language (English versus Spanish) on attitudes towards advertisements and whether (self-assessed) proficiency plays a role.

A vast amount of research has already been conducted on the different perceptions of advertisements of people in their first language (L1) and in a second language (L2) (van Hooft et al., 2017; Nederstigt & Hilberink-Schulpen, 2018). A variety of languages have been investigated, mainly in combination with English as a second language (Hornikx et al., 2010). When foreign languages in advertising are used, they are usually utilized in a congruent manner with the product, so that there is a (perceived) match between the product and the language (and thus the country) (Nederstigt & Hilberink-Schulpen, 2018). Specifically regarding the use of English as a foreign language in advertising, as this seems to evoke associations of globalness, with its dimensions internationalness, modernity and success (Hornikx & Van Meurs, 2020, p.99).

Additionally, there are already prior studies on the effectiveness of the use of English or the local language in advertising. In a paper by Hornikx et al. (2010) it was found that English slogans in the Netherlands were judged in a more positive manner when the participants felt that they could understand it, and that, in the same manner, advertisements were judged more positively when the slogan was easier to understand. Additionally, in this country the English version of the advertisement was preferred when easy to understand, and the participants did not indicate a difference in attitude between the two versions when the slogan was difficult to understand (Hornikx et al., 2010). Another variable measured in this study was the effect of the perceived and actual comprehension of the language on the perception of the slogan, where it was discovered that the effect of the perceived comprehension was even more noticeable than the actual proficiency (Hornikx et al., 2010).

English is also used in advertising in Spanish-speaking countries. A study by Baumgardner (2008) was conducted on the English use in Mexican newspapers and magazines. Here it was found that both English borrowings and English language display are utilized. In this context, borrowings entail that they are words from another language adapted to the grammatical system of the language that borrows the word, in this case Spanish, while English language display takes words or sentences directly from the language with as a goal to evoke the representations of the language, or its ‘ethnosymbolic value’ (Gumperz, 1982; Haarmann, 1986). English is also used in advertising in Spain. In a study by Gerritsen et al. (2010), a corpus study of a magazine in Spain indicated that 77 per cent of the studied advertisements contained English.

Following the studies by Baumgardner (2008) and Gerritsen et al. (2010) it can be established that English is used in advertising in Spanish-speaking countries. Similar to the

study by Hornikx et al. (2010) concerning the attitudes towards English slogans in the Netherlands, there have also been studies on the effectiveness of English in advertising in Spanish-speaking countries (Alonso García et al., 2013; Alvarez et al., 2017; van Hooft et al., 2021; van Hooft et al., 2017). A paper by Van Hooft et al. (2017) covered the expected differences between US Hispanic and Spanish consumers in their response to advertisements in English and in Spanish. These expected differences were related the difference in status of English in both countries, where in Spain English is a (minority) foreign language and in the USA it is the majority language. The conclusions of this study were that the US Hispanics did use more English in their daily lives and that their self-assessed proficiency in English was higher than that of Spanish participants. However, the Spanish people evaluated English in general as more positive, which was explained by that English could possibly have more status as it is a world language (van Hooft et al., 2017). However, these differences in general attitudes did not influence the attitudes towards the advertisements as these were the same for both groups (van Hooft et al., 2017).

Another paper by van Hooft et al. (2021) investigated the effects of general use and proficiency in English and Spanish of Chilean and Mexican participants on advertisements in both languages. For the Spanish advertisements, general language use and perception of the language influenced the response towards the advertisements. Self-assessed proficiency, the attitude towards the language and the perceived international importance did not have an influence (van Hooft et al., 2021). For the English advertisements, none of the predictors had a significant influence on the evaluation of the advertisements (van Hooft et al., 2021). Therefore, from this study it can be concluded that only the general language use and perception of Spanish had an influence on the attitude towards an advertisement, and that there was no effect in English.

In a paper by Alvarez et al. (2017), research was conducted about the attitudes of Latin American bilinguals towards the use of English or Spanish, or code-switching between the two, in advertising. With code-switching is meant using different languages together (Hornikx & Van Meurs, 2020, p.30). From the research by Alvarez et al. (2017) it can be concluded that the attitude towards a language depends on the vitality of that language and that people who only speak Spanish have a social disadvantage compared to bilinguals, as English is institutionalized in many Latin American countries and is connected to achievement of progress and economic power. Language vitality concerns the demographic, social and institutional status of the language in a country. Another influence on the attitude

towards a language are the stereotypes about code-switchers, such that when code-switching is viewed as more common, the advertisements using English are also perceived as more positive.

A study which was conducted by Alonso García et al. (2013) assessed the effects of language in advertising among Mexican people. From this study it can be inferred that the use of English in an advertisement for a traditional Mexican product generates a less positive attitude towards the advertisement, and that advertisements in Spanish were judged more positively whether the brand was Mexican or American, even though for the American brand English use was accepted (Alonso García et al., 2013). This entails that the first language was preferred, and also aligns with the proposed theory by Nederstigt & Hilberink-Schulpen (2018) where was encountered that language is used mostly in a congruent manner with the product and its heritage.

Besides language, another influence on people's attitude towards an advertisement could be (perceived) emotionality. In research conducted by Caldwell-Harris and Aycicegi-Dinn (2016) emotionality differences in bilinguals were investigated. They found that the first language was perceived as more emotional as this language is learnt from a young age, and thus there are more associations with the L1. When concepts are experienced more in the second language, then they were rated as emotionally stronger than in the L1 (Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn, 2016). Therefore, usually the L1 is experienced as more emotional than the L2 as there are more experiences and context associated with words in this language. Another study on emotionality focusses on the influence of language on the perceived emotionality within advertisements. From this study by Puntoni et al. (2009), it can be concluded that the perceived emotionality depends on the frequency of the language use, in a way that when the language is used more, it is perceived as more emotional. Based on this, it can be established that the L1 is perceived as more emotional than the L2, also in advertising.

The emotionality of the language is also found to be dependent on proficiency in the language, as in lower proficiency languages reduced emotionality is found (Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn, 2016). According to Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn (2016), a reason for this reduction of emotionality in a second language is the associative memory, namely that in the second language bilingual speakers are less influenced by emotionality as there are fewer connections between this language and former experiences.

Proficiency may also have an influence on attitudes towards advertisements. This is related to the fluency of processing of a language. According to the notion of processing-fluency, the easier it is to process an incentive, the more positive the attitude towards that stimulus will be (Briñol et al., 2006). Furthermore, Lin et al. (2018) have investigated the role of various factors on fluency. They encountered that higher proficiency (in the L2) improves fluency, as it reduces interruptions or disfluency in the processing of the language. Therefore, from these two studies it can be concluded that a higher proficiency enhances the processing fluency, which in turn can lead to a more positive attitude towards a stimulus.

Even though ample research already has been done on the associations of Spanish-speaking people on English use in advertisements, this has not yet been combined with measurement of the level of proficiency, and with perceived general emotionality of the language as a background variable. The current study will thus focus on the attitudes of people from Spanish-speaking countries towards advertisements in their L1 and L2, and it fills a research gap as it also adds language proficiency as a variable in the investigation, and relates this to perceived general emotionality of the language as the proficiency was found to be connected towards the emotionality in earlier studies (Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn, 2016).

Research has already been done similar to the current study, but solely focused on proficiency and in the Netherlands (Hornikx et al., 2010), and this study will be looking at the attitudes of participants in a different country (Spanish-speaking countries), and also at the role of proficiency of Spanish speakers and the connection of this with general perceived emotionality of the language (Hornikx et al., 2010). It is relevant to investigate Spanish-speaking participants, as their background characteristics are likely to be different than those of participants from the Netherlands, where the former study focused on proficiency was conducted (Hornikx et al., 2010). This difference in proficiency can be illustrated using the EF English Proficiency Index, where people in the Netherlands are ranked as having very high proficiency, whereas Spain is classified as having moderate proficiency (*EF EPI | EF English Proficiency Index | EF Global Site (English)*, n.d.). Apart from Spain, research also indicates that the English proficiency in Latin America is relatively low (Cronquist et al., 2017). Therefore, due to these already established differences, the expectations are that the attitudes towards English advertisements will also be different, as in the study by Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn (2016) it was found that lower proficiency languages are experienced as also being less emotional.

The aim of this study is to find out whether responses of native Spanish speakers differ towards advertisements in their own language and in English, and whether (self-assessed) language proficiency in English plays a role, taking general perceived emotionality as a background variable as perceived proficiency also seems to be an influence on the perceived emotionality of a language (Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn, 2016). Hence, the research questions will be:

RQ1: How do Spanish-speaking people perceive advertisements in their first language and in English, in terms of attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the product and purchase intention?

To find out whether (self-assessed) proficiency is reflected in the attitudes of people from Spanish-speaking countries, the following research question is created:

RQ2: To what extent is there a difference in the way Spanish-speaking people with high and low proficiency in English perceive advertisements in English, in terms of attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the product and purchase intention?

And lastly, to test whether the general perceived emotionality of a language depends on the level of proficiency, this research question is created:

RQ3: To what extent is there a difference in the way Spanish-speaking people with high and low proficiency in English perceive the general emotionality of Spanish in comparison to English?

Based on a study by Alonso Garcia et al. (2013), where Mexican people preferred the Spanish advertisement over the English one, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: Spanish-speaking people perceive advertisements in their native language as more positive than advertisements in English.

An investigation by Briñol et al. (2006) indicated that the fluency of processing has an influence on the attitude towards a stimulus, in the way that when it is processed in a more fluent manner that the attitudes towards that stimulus are more positive. Furthermore, Lin et al. (2018) found that proficiency is a determinator of the processing fluency, in a way that when a person is more proficient in a language, the processing fluency also increases. Therefore, is expected that:

H2: People with a higher proficiency in the language perceive the advertisement in that language as more positive than people with a lower proficiency.

In a study by Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn (2016) is found that a higher proficiency in a language correlates with the perception of that language being more emotional. Based on this, the next hypothesis was created:

H3: People having a high proficiency in a language experience a higher perceived general emotionality of that language than people with a low proficiency.

In terms of scientific relevance, in a paper by van Hooft et al. (2021) on the evaluation of English and Spanish advertisements by participants from Chile and Mexico, it is mentioned that the measurement of the general perceived emotionality was not incorporated in their study. However, they mentioned that future studies should implement explicit measures of this (van Hooft et al., 2021). Therefore, in this study this will be considered to fill this research gap. The present study will also add to the research already done on the attitudes of Spanish-speaking people towards advertisements in the L1 versus the L2, in the way that it also tests Spanish participants with Spanish and English stimuli. This has already been done before, but without incorporating the level of proficiency of the participants (Alonso García et al., 2013; Alvarez et al., 2017; van Hooft et al,. 2017). Another major research gap that the present study will fill is investigating the relation between (self-assessed) proficiency and attitudes towards an advertisement, also taking perceived general emotionality of a language into consideration, as in the study by Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn (2016) it was found that lower proficiency languages are experienced as also being less emotional.

The practical relevance of this study can be found in new opportunities for marketers Spanish-speaking countries in terms of how they utilize Spanish and English, or a combination, in their advertisements. The current research can also contribute to the extent to which marketers take the proficiency in English of Spanish-speaking people into account.

Method

This study examined whether Spanish speakers' attitudes differ regarding advertisements in their first language (L1) and in English (L2) and whether level of proficiency influences these attitudes. As part of their general attitudes, it also measured perceived emotionality of the language.

Materials

In terms of materials, two advertisements were created, one for shoes and one for cereal. Both of the advertisements had an English and a Spanish version. Fictitious brands, as well as fictitious slogans, were used to avoid confounding variables such as previous associations with the brand (Lin & Wang, 2016). The slogans were created in English using a random generator on the internet. From the options that were created, the ones were chosen that could be translated well in Spanish while still maintaining their significance. For the shoes, the slogan in English was 'Step into your own world' which in Spanish translated into '*Pisa en tu propio mundo'.* For the cereal, the English version was 'Have breakfast your way', and the Spanish one was '*Desayuna en tu manera'*.

The two product used, cereal and shoes, can be categorized according to the Rossiter-Percy grid (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). This schema categorizes products according to two dimensions: high vs low involvement and informational vs transformational. On the one hand, cereal can be classified as a low involvement, as the brand choice for this product is usually observed as low perceived risk, and as transformational. On the other hand, shoes can be categorized as informational and high involvement, as usually the brand choice with this product involves deep information processing, and also as transformational. Furthermore, the two products can be differentiated as shoes fall into the category relatively expensive, and cereal as relatively cheap. Since the two products used in the created advertisements have differences regarding the type of product they belong to, the results can be generalized more. The advertisements can be found in Appendix 3.

Participants

Participants were collected through acquaintances of the researcher and also distribution on social media, and from there asking respondents to share the questionnaire further.

In total, 68 people started the questionnaire. Eight people indicated that they had a different nationality of whom three were not from a Spanish-speaking country, so these answers were removed. Furthermore, fourteen people did not complete all questions, so they

were also removed. The IP-addresses of three participants were equal, so two of those were also deleted, as well as three more participants who were under 18. After these answers were discarded, there were 45 responses left. The Spanish advertisements were seen by 25 participants, while 20 participants saw the English advertisements.

Of these participants, 18 (38%) identified as masculine, 29 (60%) as feminine, and one (2%) as non-binary. A Chi-square test did not show a significant relation between gender and language of the advertisement (χ^2 (2) = 1.76, p = .414). This means that the distribution of gender was equal.

In terms of nationality, 30 (67%) respondents were Spanish, eight (18%) were Mexican and seven (15%) indicated other, who were Bolivian, Dominican, Peruvian, Argentinian, Ecuadorian, Venezuelan and European. The most frequent highest or current education level was bachelor (*licenciatura*) with 26 participants and ranged from high school to PhD level. A Chi-square test did not show a significant relation between education level and language of the advertisement (χ^2 (4) = 1.61, p = .806), and from this test it can be concluded that the distribution of education level is equal between the conditions.

The self assessed proficiency in Spanish had a mean of 6.7 (*SD* = 1.1), and the self-assessed proficiency in English had a mean of 5.6 (*SD* = 1.5). To create two levels of English proficiency, a median split was executed. The median was at 5.8, every score under this was grouped as 'low proficiency', and every score above this as 'high proficiency'. The low proficiency group consisted of 24 participants (*M* = 4.6, *SD* = 1.4), the high proficiency group consisted of 21 participants (*M* = 6.7, *SD* = 0.4). An independent samples *t*-test on self-assessed English proficiency, with level of proficiency (low or high) as a between subject factor, showed a difference between participants with low or high proficiency. This difference, -2.1, 95% CI [-2.72, -1.43], was significant (*t* (27.14) = -6.89, p <.001), and represented a strong effect *d* = -1.94. The high proficiency group (*M* = 6.7, *SD* = 0.4) was shown to have a higher proficiency level than the low proficiency group (*M* = 4.6, *SD* = 1.4). A Chi-square test did not show a significant relation between proficiency level (low or high) and language of the advertisement (χ^2 (1) = 2.57, p = .109), and from this it can be concluded that the distribution of the proficiency groups is equal between the conditions.

The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 62 (*M* = 30, *SD* = 25. A two-way analysis of variance with language of the ad and proficiency level English (low or high) as factors did not show a significant main effect of language of the ad on age (*F* (1, 40) < 1).

Proficiency level was not found to have a significant main effect on age (F (1, 40) < 1). The interaction between language of the ad and level of proficiency was also not significant (F (1, 40) < 1). From this can be concluded that age was distributed equally between the two versions of the advertisements and between the two groups of proficiency.

Another two-way analysis of variance with language of the ad and proficiency level in English (low or high) as factors did not show a significant main effect of language of the ad on social status (F (1, 41) < 1). Proficiency level was not found to have a significant main effect on social status (F (1, 41 < 1). The interaction between language of the ad and level of English proficiency was also not significant (F (1, 41 < 1). From this can be concluded that social status was distributed equally between the two versions of the advertisements and between the two groups of proficiency.

A Chi-square test did not show a significant relation between education level and proficiency level (low or high) (χ^2 (4) = 4.02, p = .404), and from this it can be concluded that the distribution of education level is equal between the conditions.

A Chi-square test did not show a significant relation between gender and proficiency level (low or high) (χ^2 (2) = 3.21, p = .201), and from this it can be concluded that the distribution of gender is equal between the conditions.

The mean of the perceived emotionality of Spanish in comparison to English was 5.5 (SD=1.6). A one-way analysis of variance did not show a significant effect of language of the advertisement on perceived emotionality (F (1, 43) = 3.34, p = .075, η^2 = .07), and therefore the distribution of emotionality was equal.

A paired samples t-test showed a difference between self-assessed Spanish proficiency and self-assessed English proficiency. This difference, -1.1, 95% CI [-1.52, -5.64] was significant, t (44) = -5.64, p < .001 and represented a large effect, d =-.84. Spanish proficiency (M = 6.7 , SD = 1.1) was shown to be higher than English proficiency (M = 5.6, SD = 1.5).

Design

A two factorial (language of the advertisement: English or Spanish, proficiency: low or high) between-subjects experimental design was be used to measure attitude towards the advertisement, perceived emotionality of the language, attitude towards and intention to buy the product.

Instruments

In this study, the main focus was the attitudes of Spanish-speaking people towards advertisements in their L1 and in English (L2). Furthermore, the perceived emotionality of both languages and the self-assessed proficiency of the participants was measured. The scale for measurement was the 7-point Likert scale.

The purchase intention regarding the product was measured with scales stating: *This product is something for me, I would buy this product,* and *I would recommend to someone else.* These scales were adapted from Nederstigt & Hilberink-Schulpen (2018). These items were measured with a scale ranging from completely disagree to completely agree. The attitude towards the product was measured with scales stating*: The product is: bad-good, low quality-high quality, unnecessary-necessary, useless-useful, not appealing-appealing* (Nederstigt & Hilberink-Schulpen, 2018). The attitude towards the advertisement was measured with: *bad-good, unpleasant-pleasant, unfavorable-favorable, unlikable-likable, uninteresting-interesting, hard to understand-easy to understand, unclear-very clear,* scales adapted from Lutz & MacKenzie (1989) and Philips (2000). In the final questionnaire in Spanish, *unpleasant-pleasant* and *unlikable-likable* were combined into one item as the translations were almost the same.

After the questions with the advertisements, the general perceived emotionality of the L1 versus the L2 was be measured partly using the RER-LX scale by Toivo et al. (2024). These items were also measured with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being *completely disagree* to 7 being *completely agree.* This scale, consisting of 15 items, can be found in Appendix 1. In the final version, the items *I feel less emotional when using my LX than when using my L1, When I'm really angry, I tend to use my L1 more than my LX, Saying the equivalent of 'I love you' has more weight in my L1 than in my LX,* and *I emotionally connect with my conversation partner better and faster than in my LX* were used.

After general perceived emotionality, self-assessed proficiency was measured using the scale created by van Hooft et al. (2019): *Please indicate your English proficiency for the following: speaking, writing, reading, listening,.* In the final questionnaire, listening was stated as '*comprensión'*, which literally translates more to understanding than listening. This was asked for both English and Spanish.

Lastly, demographic questions were asked concerning age (open question), gender (male/female, non-binary, prefer not to say), current/highest education level (elementary

school, high school, undergraduate degree, master's degree, other), nationality (Spanish, Mexican, other) and social status (semantic differential scale, 1=low status, 7=high status). The actual used questionnaire in Spanish can be found in Appendix 2.

Per variable group (attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the product, intention to buy, emotionality, English proficiency, and Spanish proficiency), the reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha (α). The two languages were grouped together for these analyses. The reliability of attitude towards the advertisement was good: α = .89 , consisting of 24 items. For the purchase intention, comprising twelve items, the reliability was good: α = .83. The Cronbach's alpha for attitude towards the product was excellent, consisting of twenty items, α = .92. The questions regarding the perceived emotionality, with four items, had an acceptable reliability of α = .76. Queries on self-assessed proficiency, comprising of 4 items per language, had an excellent reliability for both languages, for English α =.96 and for Spanish α =.98. Since all analyses were reliable, the following compound variables were created:

- Attitude towards the advertisement combined
- Intention to buy combined
- Attitude towards the product combined
- Spanish proficiency combined
- English proficiency combined
- Emotionality combined

These compound variables were used in the further analyses.

Procedure

The questionnaire used to measure the outcomes of the experiment was administered using Qualtrics. The message that people received to invite them to take part included that it took approximately 5 minutes (based on the pretest of the Dutch version), it concerned attitudes towards advertisements, if they would send it to other people and that it was only meant for people from Spanish-speaking countries. It was an individual questionnaire, and beforehand participants were only told that the study had questions about their attitudes towards advertisements and demographic questions. Upon starting with the questionnaire, the participants received a consent form in which the terms and conditions were stated, that the study was voluntary, and they could stop at any moment. The advertisements were randomly assigned to the participants, in a way that the English and the Spanish versions were

distributed equally, even though after removing invalid answers the division was not completely equal (25 participants saw Spanish, 20 saw English). Filling in the questionnaire took approximately 7 minutes (*SD* = 398.88 sec), but there were some outliers where it took more than 12 minutes, and the longest took more than 44 hours, which therefore may be faulty. The modes were 3 minutes and 28 seconds, 5 minutes and 30 seconds, and 7 minutes and 13 seconds.

Statistical treatment

Two-way ANOVAs were used to measure the attitude of Spanish-speaking people towards advertisements in their L1 and L2, attitude towards and intention to buy the product, with language of the ad and proficiency in English as factors. To measure the perceived emotionality of Spanish compared to English, a two-way ANOVA was conducted with level of proficiency in English and language of the advertisement as factors. Lastly, to find out whether Spanish was perceived as more emotional than English in general, a one sample t-test with emotionality as a factor was administered.

Results

The current study investigated how Spanish-speaking participants perceive advertisements in their first language and English in terms of attitude towards advertisements, intention to buy the product, and attitude towards the product. Furthermore, it examined whether the level of English proficiency (low or high) had an influence on these factors. Lastly, it explored whether the level of proficiency had an influence on the perceived emotionality of Spanish in comparison to English.

A two-way analysis of variance with language of the ad (English or Spanish) and proficiency level (high or low) as factors did not show a significant main effect of language of the advertisement on attitude towards the advertisement (F (1, 41) < 1). Proficiency level was also not found to have a significant main effect on attitude towards the advertisement (F (1, 41) < 1). The interaction between language of the ad and proficiency level was not statistically significant (F (1, 41) < 1).

A two-way analysis of variance with language of the ad (English or Spanish) and proficiency level (high or low) as factors did not show a significant main effect of language of the advertisement on intention to buy the product (F (1, 41) < 1). Proficiency level was also not found to have a significant main effect on purchase intention (F (1, 41) = 3.60, p = .065). The interaction between language of the ad and proficiency level was not statistically significant (F (1, 41) < 1).

A two-way analysis of variance with language of the ad (English or Spanish) and proficiency level (high or low) as factors did not show a significant main effect of language of the advertisement on attitude towards the product (F (1, 41) < 1). Proficiency level was also not found to have a significant main effect on attitude towards the product (F (1, 41) = 1.65, p = .206). The interaction between language of the ad and proficiency level was not statistically significant (F (1, 41) < 1). The descriptives for all three ANOVA's can be seen in Table 1.

From these analyses, it can be concluded that the attitude towards the advertisement, intention to buy the product, and attitude towards the product do not differ significantly between the English or Spanish versions of the advertisements. Furthermore, whether the participants had a low or high level of English proficiency also did not influence their perceptions on the advertisements and products.

Table 1

Means (and Standard Deviations) for perceptions of advertisements per Language and Proficiency Level (1 = *Very Negative Perception*, 7 = *Very Positive Perception*)

	English		Spanish	
	Low Proficiency (N = 8)	High proficiency (N = 12)	Low Proficiency (N = 16)	High Proficiency (N = 9)
Dependent variable	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Attitude towards the ad	4.3 (1.7)	4.6 (0.9)	5.0 (1.2)	4.5 (1.0)
Intention to buy the product	3.3 (1.6)	2.7 (1.4)	3.6 (1.4)	2.6 (1.0)
Attitude towards the product	4.0 (1.6)	3.6 (1.4)	4.2 (1.2)	3.6 (1.3)

A two-way analysis of variance with language of the advertisement and proficiency level in English as factors was conducted. This analysis showed a significant main effect of language of the advertisement on perceived emotionality of Spanish in comparison to English ($F(1, 41) = 4.12$, $p = .049$, $\eta^2 = .09$). English proficiency level was not found to have a significant main effect on perceived emotionality ($F(1, 41) = 1.13$, $p = .293$). The interaction between language of the advertisement and English proficiency was not statistically significant (F (1, 41) <1). Participants who saw the English versions of the advertisements perceived Spanish as more emotional (low proficiency (n = 8): $M = 6.1$, $SD = 0.7$; high proficiency (n = 12): M = 5.8, SD = 1.3) than people who saw the Spanish advertisements (low proficiency (n = 16): M = 5.3, SD = 1.8; high proficiency (n = 9): $M = 4.6$, SD = 1.8). From this analysis can be inferred that proficiency level did not influence the perceived emotionality, but that language of the advertisement did have an impact on this.

A one sample t-test showed that the score on perceived emotionality of Spanish compared to English was significantly higher ($M = 5.5$, SD = 1.6) than the midpoint of the

scale (4), ($t(44) = 6.17$, $p < .001$). This shows that Spanish was perceived as more emotional than English.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the attitudes of people from Spanish speaking countries towards advertising, and what role self-assessed proficiency played in this. Furthermore, it also included perceived emotionality of the language as a background variable, since (self-assessed) proficiency may also have an influence on this (Caldwell-Harris & Aycicegi-Dinn, 2016).

Research question 1 concerned the attitude towards the product, intention to buy and attitude towards the advertisements of Spanish-speaking people for advertisements in their first language and in English. The results of the study indicate that these dependent variables did not differ significantly between the English and the Spanish advertisements.

Research question 2 focused on the influence of self-assessed proficiency (high or low) on the attitudes towards advertisements, intention to buy the product, and attitudes towards products. From the analyses done it can be concluded that self-assessed proficiency did not influence the perceptions of Spanish-speaking people regarding advertisements in Spanish and in English.

Research question 3 addressed whether Spanish-speaking people with low and high proficiency differed in their perception of the emotionality of Spanish compared to English. It was found that Spanish was experienced as significantly more emotional than English. Language of the advertisement did have an influence on this, as participants who saw the English ads perceived Spanish as more emotional than participants who saw the Spanish ads. There was no significant effect of proficiency in English on the perceived emotionality of Spanish.

Discussion

In the present study, no evidence was found that people have a different attitude towards advertisements in their L1 compared to their L2. In this case, participants did not evaluate advertisements differently in Spanish than in English. Therefore, H1, which stated that Spanish-speaking people perceive advertisements in their first language as more positive than ones in English, can be refuted.

This also implies that the answer to RQ1, which addressed the attitude towards the ad, intention to buy, and attitude towards the product, is that there is no significant difference in how they perceive advertisements in Spanish and advertisements in English. These findings also contradict the findings from Alonso García et al. (2013), who found that Chilean and Mexican participants had a more positive attitude towards advertisements in Spanish than in English. A possible explanation for this difference in findings could be that the sample size was rather small, and therefore not entirely representative of the population as bigger sample size is often connected to higher levels of generalizability (Ercikan, 2009). However, van Hooft et al. (2017) also did not find a difference in the attitudes of US Hispanics and people from Spain towards advertisements in English or in Spanish, which is thus confirmed by the current study.

Furthermore, proficiency did not have an effect on attitudes towards advertisements. This answers RQ2, which concerned whether there is a difference in the way Spanish-speaking people with low and high proficiency perceive advertisements in English. This finding also refutes H2, which stated that people with higher proficiency in English perceive advertisements in that language as more positive than people with lower proficiency.

The results of this study support findings by van Hooft et al., (2021), who also found that self-assessed proficiency was not encountered to have an influence on the response to advertisements. In this paper, the reasoning they gave for the lack of effect was that proficiency may not be impacting the processing fluency directly enough. Lin et al. (2018) found that higher proficiency improved fluency, and in line with that Briñol et al. (2006) concluded from their study that the easier it is to process a stimulus, the more positive the attitude towards that stimulus would be. Therefore, it could be the case that in the current study (self-assessed) proficiency was not found to be of influence on the perceptions of advertisements in English because the measure may not be direct enough.

Another study that addresses the inadequacy of proficiency as a measure was about attitudes towards English slogans in the Netherlands, by Hornikx et al. (2010). The difference between this study, the present study and the one by van Hooft et al. (2021) is that it did find that perceived comprehension had an effect on attitude towards the advertisement, in a way that when the slogan was perceived as more comprehensible the attitude towards that slogan became more positive. However, Hornikx et al. (2010) also found that the influence of perceived comprehension was more apparent than that of actual proficiency. This could relate to the conclusion of the current study and the one by van Hooft et al. (2021) namely that the measurement for (self-assessed) proficiency may not be direct enough to have an effect on attitudes towards advertisements.

With regard to the perceived emotionality of a language, this study confirms findings of Caldwell-Harris and Aycicegi-Dinn (2016), as it also found that the first language is perceived as more emotional than the second language. However, in that study they also found that the emotionality of a language is dependent on the proficiency, and this was not confirmed in the current study. Hence, H3 which stated that people with higher proficiency in a language experience a higher perceived emotionality of that language than people with lower proficiency can be rejected.

This leads to the answer to RQ3, which asked to what extent there is a difference in the way Spanish-speaking people with high and low proficiency in English perceive the general emotionality of English versus Spanish, which is that no significant difference was found. This could be explained due to the fact that the overall proficiency in English of the participants was rather high ($M = 5.6$, $SD = 1.5$), and therefore the different proficiency groups did not perceive the emotionality in a different manner. This is in line with the findings of Caldwell-Harris (2016), who observed that in lower proficiency languages reduced emotionality was found. This implies that when the (self-assessed) proficiency is higher, the perceived emotionality is also higher. Therefore, it could be that due to that the proficiency in both languages is relatively high, no effect of proficiency is found on perceived emotionality. A surprising finding regarding the topic of emotionality is that the participants who saw the English advertisements rated Spanish as more emotional than participants who saw the Spanish version of the advertisements. A clear explanation for this result is difficult to determine.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

The present study had a number of limitations. The first was the difficulty to find respondents, which had as an effect that the central limit theorem posed by Field (2018, p. 372), which signifies a minimum of 30 per condition, was not reached. According to the theory, this could mean that the sampling distribution is not normal, and therefore the test value and *p*-value may not be accurate. Furthermore, it seems to be difficult to generalize the findings since the population of Spanish-speaking people is large, when for example comparing with the population of a single Spanish-speaking country. Because of this, future research could replicate this study with more participants. This also improves the generalizability, as it is mentioned by Ercikan (2009) that higher sample size enhances this.

Another limitation was that there were some issues with participants not understanding the questions in the questionnaire due to literal translations, which was found out because of feedback from participants. Additionally, for the measurement of the language proficiency no labels were added to the scale, what could have caused this section to be more unclear. These two limitations were most likely caused by the fact that only a Dutch version of the questionnaire was pretested, and these probably caused ambiguity for the participants. Because of this, future research should administer a pre-test to avoid mistakes like these.

Furthermore, in the questionnaire did not include a question accompanying the advertisement about its perceived emotionality, therefore only the general perceived emotionality of the languages was tested. Hence, the perceived emotionality of the advertisement was not measured and conclusion regarding this part of emotionality cannot be drawn. Thus, further investigations could include a question on perceived emotionality of the advertisement, as also suggested by van Hooft et al. (2019).

Lastly, in the analyses the two types of products used (shoes and cereal) were combined into one variable of measurement per category (attitude towards the ad/product, intention to buy). Therefore, the difference between the perception of the distinct products was not measured, and a conclusion cannot be drawn regarding the difference in attitude and intention to buy for the different product categories. For research on this topic in the future, in the questionnaire measurements to compare whether there is a difference between the different product categories could be included to test whether the categories are perceived in a different manner. Furthermore, this study can be repeated using different product categories.

In short, the present study confirms already established findings that the second language is perceived as less emotional than the first language (Caldwell-Harris and Aycicegi-Dinn, 2016; Puntoni et al., 2009). Furthermore, while the present study did not yield more statistically significant results regarding the research on the attitudes of Spanish-speaking people towards advertisements in Spanish versus in English, possibly due to the small sample size, it does provide a foundation for future research.

The current research yields a number of practical applications for the field of advertising. Firstly, it confirms that the first language (Spanish) is perceived as more emotional than the second language (English). Therefore, advertisers in Spanish-speaking countries who would like to appeal to emotionality should use the first language instead of the second language in their marketing. Additionally, it did not indicate a significant difference between the English and Spanish advertisements for attitude towards the advertisement, intention to buy the product, and attitude towards the product. A former study by Alonso Garcia et al. (2013) did find preferences for Spanish, however van Hooft et al. (2017) also did not find differences in the attitudes towards advertisements in English and Spanish for US Hispanics and people from Spain. Due to these conflicting findings, marketers should be cautious when opting for either Spanish or English in their advertisements.

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Appendix 1: RER-LX scale

Original ID	Final ID	Item
Q1	Q1	I feel less emotional when using my LX than when using my L1
Q4	Q2	When I'm really angry, I tend to use my L1 more than my LX
Q5	Q3	Swear words affect me more in my L1 than in my LX
Q7 (R)	Q4 (R)	I find it easier to talk about sex in my L1 than in my LX
Q10	Q5	Being criticised feels more unpleasant in my L1 than in my LX
Q12	Q6	Saying the equivalent of "I love you" has more weight in my L1 than in my LX
Q14	Q7	Compared to L1, I feel like there is more of an emotional distance when I use my LX
Q15	Q8	Insults feel more hurtful in my L1 than in my LX
Q16	Q9	I prefer my L1 over my LX when reading for pleasure
Q17	Q10	A sad film is more likely to make me cry when I watch it in my L1 rather than my LX
Q18	Q11	When I want swear words to have real weight, I use my L1 rather than my LX
Q19	Q12	Poetry in my LX has less of an effect on me than poetry in my L1
Q20	Q13	I emotionally connect with my conversation partner better and faster in my L1 than in my LX
Q21	Q14	I have a better sense of what my conversation partner is thinking or feeling when using my L1 than my LX
Q22	Q15	Romantic songs feel more intense in my L1 than in my LX

Toivo et al. (2024)

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Consent

INFORMACIÓN Y CONSENTIMIENTO

Se le invita a participar en un estudio de investigación de la Universidad Radboud, Países Bajos. Su participación en el estudio es voluntaria y anónima.

Resumen y objetivo del estudio de investigación

Esta investigación consiste en medir actitudes hacía anuncios. Se puede utilizar esta investigación para fines en el sector de la mercadotecnia y en el base de estudios sobre actitudes hacía anuncios.

¿Quién dirige el estudio de investigación?

Esta investigación está dirigida por Pascalle Slikkerveer y Julia Westdijk para su trabajo de bachelor, supervisado por el dr. Frank van Meurs.

¿En qué consiste la participación en el estudio?

En este estudio rellenará una encuesta en línea. Las preguntas se refieren a características demográficas y a sus actitudes hacía dos anuncios. Rellenar la encuesta le llevará aproximadamente 5 minutos.

Participación voluntaria

Su participación en esta investigación es voluntaria. Esto significa que puede interrumpir su participación y retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento del estudio, sin dar ninguna razón.

¿Qué datos recogemos y cómo los tratamos?

En este estudio recogemos datos de investigación. Se utilizarán con fines científicos. Los datos de la investigación se anonimizarán. Sus datos de investigación pueden ser de interés para otras investigaciones científicas. Por lo tanto, los datos de investigación anonimizados estarán a disposición de otros científicos durante al menos 10 años. Dado que los datos de la investigación están anonimizados, no es posible rastrearlos hasta usted.

Todos los datos de investigación se almacenan de forma segura siguiendo las directrices de la

Universidad de Radboud.

Acceso con fines de control

Algunas personas necesitan tener acceso a sus datos de investigación. Esto es necesario para comprobar si los datos se han almacenado de acuerdo con las normas. Las personas que llevan a cabo este control son, por ejemplo, el responsable de datos y el personal designado para la gestión de datos de la Universidad de Radboud. Ellos mantendrán la confidencialidad de sus datos.

Su consentimiento

Sus datos sólo podrán ser utilizados para nuestro estudio si usted lo autoriza. Dado que los datos se anonimizan inmediatamente, no es posible eliminar sus datos de investigación una vez finalizado el experimento.

¿Tiene alguna pregunta?

Si tiene alguna pregunta o desea más información sobre el estudio de investigación, póngase en contacto con Julia Westdijk (julia.westdijk@ru.nl). Para otras preguntas sobre este estudio (por ejemplo, tratamiento de datos), póngase en contacto con privacy@let.ru.nl.

Evaluación ética y reclamaciones

Este estudio de investigación ha sido aprobado por el Comité de Evaluación Ética de Humanidades de la Universidad de Radboud. Si tiene alguna queja sobre esta investigación, póngase en contacto con el investigador. También puede presentar una queja ante la secretaria del Comité de Evaluación Ética de Humanidades de la Universidad de Radboud (etc-gw@ru.nl).

CONSENTIMIENTO:

Al hacer clic en el botón 'Acepto' que aparece a continuación indica que:

- ha leído la información anterior
- da su consentimiento para participar en el estudio de investigación tal como se describe en la información anterior
- acepta voluntariamente participar
- entiende que los datos de la investigación estarán disponibles durante al menos 10 años para su revisión y reutilización en futuras investigaciones científicas.

● usted acepta que el responsable de datos y el personal designado de gestión de datos de la Universidad Radboud puedan ver sus datos.
● tiene al menos 16 años de edad.

Si no desea participar en el estudio de investigación, decline su participación haciendo clic en el botón «No deseo participar».

¿Deseas participar en este estudio?

- Deseo participar
- No deseo participar

Attitude towards the advertisement

Por favor, indica cómo calificarías el anuncio según las siguientes escalas: (con una escala de Likert de siete puntos)

- Malo – bueno
- Desfavorable – favorable
- Desagradable – agradable
- Poco interesante – interesante
- Difícil de entender – fácil de entender
- Poco claro – muy claro

Intention to buy the product

¿Cómo calificas este producto en las siguientes escalas? (escala: 1= completamente en desacuerdo, 7= completamente de acuerdo)

- Este producto es algo para mi
- Compraría este producto
- Recomendaría este producto a otra persona

Attitude towards the product

El producto es…

- Malo – bueno
- Baja calidad – alta calidad
- Innecesario – necesario

- Inútil – útil
- Poco atractivo – atractivo

Emotionality of the language

¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre las siguientes frases?

- Me siento menos emocional cuando utilizo el inglés que cuando utilizo el español
- Cuando estoy muy enfadado, tiendo a usar más el español que el inglés
- Decir el equivalente a 'te amo' tiene más peso en español que en inglés
- Conecto emocionalmente con mi interlocutor mejor y más rápido en español que en inglés

Self-assessed proficiency

Por favor, indique tu domino del español para lo siguiente

- Expresión oral
- Expresión escrita
- Lectura
- Comprensión

Por favor, indique tu domino del inglés para lo siguiente

- Expresión oral
- Expresión escrita
- Lectura
- Comprensión

Demographic information

¿Cuántos años tienes?

¿Cómo te identificas?

- Femenino
- Masculino
- No binario
- Prefiero no decir

¿Cuál es tu nivel de educación?
Si todavía estás estudiando, indica tu nivel actual

- Primaria
- Secundaria
- Licenciatura
- Máster
- Doctorado
- Otro…

¿Qué es tu nacionalidad?

- Español
- Mexicano
- Otro…

En una escala del 1 al 7, ¿cómo calificarías tu estatus social general en tu comunidad, como respeto, influencia y reconocimiento? (1= estatus bajo, 7= estatus alto)

Appendix 3: Materials

TREVIK

Have breakfast your way

TREVIK

Desayuna en tu manera

ZEYO

Step into your own world

ZEYO

Pisa en tu propio mundo