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## CROSS-CULTURAL BRAND MANAGEMENT AND LANGUAGE CHOICE: RESPONSE TO THE USE OF ENGLISH IN PRODUCT ADVERTISEMENTS IN NON ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES IN WESTERN AND SOUTHERN EUROPE

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### Abstract

An important but often neglected aspect of cross-cultural brand management is language choice. Should brand managers use the local language of a country in a global campaign or can they use an international language such as English? This article examines consumers' response to the use of English, a language often used in international campaign, in product advertisements in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. Respondents were 715 young highly educated female consumers. The study shows that the use of English compared to the use of the local language in product ads does neither have impact on image and price of the product nor on attitude towards the text, but it does affect the comprehension of the text. Respondents were not able to indicate the meaning of 39% of the fragments. For that reason it seems likely that global advertising is more effective if brand managers create advertisements in the local language.

**Keywords:** Global campaigns, product advertisements, English, image, price, comprehension of English

### English in Product Ads in Europe: Frequency of Occurrence and Reasons for Use of English

An important but often neglected aspect of cross-cultural brand management is language choice. Should brand managers use the local language of a country in a global campaign or can they use an international language such as English? This article explores consumer response to advertisements in English in countries in Western and Southern Europe where English has the status of a foreign language: Belgium, France, Germany, The Netherlands and Spain.

Although many aspects of advertisements that could shape reader response have been investigated such as values (Aaker Maheswaran 1997; Aaker and Williams 1998; Hoeken et al. 2003), visual rhetoric (MCQuarrie and Mick 2003), relatively little attention has been paid to the role of language choice (Grin 1994; Holden 1987). The majority of the publications on consumer response to language choice in advertising deals with bilingual societies such as the Hispanic Community in the United States

(Koslow, Shamdanasi, and Touchstone 1994; Roslow and Nichols 1996; Luna and Peracchio 2001, 2005). There have been only few empirical studies about reader response to the use of a foreign language in advertisements, although such advertisements are common. Myers (1994), for instance, discusses the use of French, German, Russian, Maori, Dutch and Japanese in advertisements for native speakers of English, together with the use of English in advertisements for native speakers of Spanish, Dutch and German. Kelly-Holmes (2005) gives an extensive overview of the use of foreign languages in advertising in Europe. On the basis of an overview of studies on the use of foreign languages in advertising, Piller concludes that "English is the most frequently used language in advertising messages in non-English-speaking countries (besides the local language, of course)" (Piller 2003, 175).

Different studies show that a large number of the advertisements in Europe do indeed contain English. Cheshire, and Moser (1994), for instance, found that 31% of product advertisements in two Swiss weekly magazines contained English words and phrases. Gerritsen et al. (2000) show that one third of the commercials on Dutch television contain English, according to Martin (2002) 30% of the commercials in France feature some form of English, and Piller (2001) claims that 60-70% of all advertisements broadcast in 1999 on various German television networks and in two German national newspapers were multilingual and that English was the foreign language that was used most often. Gerritsen et al. (2007) studied the use of English in product advertisements in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. For each country, ads were collected in six issues of *Elle* in 2004. In total 2384 different ads were analyzed. In all countries more than 65% of those ads contained one or more English words.

The frequent use of English in advertising in Europe is partly due to the fact that such ads are part of a world-wide campaign in which in either the whole ad - or in part of the ad, for example, in the slogan - one language is used. This is done because it saves translation, adaptation and registration costs (Jain 1989; Jain 1993; Floor and Van Raaij 2002; De Mooij 1994; Walsh 1991), and because the advertisers believe that the whole world can be approached with the same concept and the same language. Levitt (1983) was one of the first who propagated global advertising because he believed in the convergence of consumers' behaviour and in the globalisation of markets. A number of researchers, however, have argued against this standardization strategy (e.g. De Mooij 1998; Kanso 1992; Zandpour et al. 1994), most notably De Mooij (2001), who shows for instance that even the young are not a homogeneous target group. It is interesting to note that these discussions about standardization or localization have focused specifically on whether different cultures can be approached with the same advertising concept; they have not been concerned with the specific language that should be used, e.g. English, French, Spanish etc. Not surprisingly, the language that advertisers choose to use in global campaigns is nearly always English. Interviews with advertising agencies responsible for making or adapting ads which were either completely or partly in English (Gerritsen et al. 2000; Alm 2003) have revealed three underlying motivations for this choice.

- Products' image. According to researchers such as Takahashi (1990), Martin (2002), Alm (2003), Piller (2003), Kelly-Holmes (2005), Ustinova and Bhatia (2005) and Shinhee Lee (2006), English is used because it enhances the image of a product. It is associated with a modern way of life all around the globe and it increases the prestige of a product (Friedrich 2002; Griffin 1997; Haarmann 1989). Piller shows that there is a strong tendency to associate the consumers that are described in partly or completely English advertisements in Germany "with all or some of the attributes of internationalism, future orientation, success and elitism, sophistication, fun, youth and maleness" (Piller 2001). In her view, English is also used in order to select the target group, along the lines of "If you read English, fine; if not, you are an outsider. Tough luck" (Piller 2001, 168). English therefore plays a quite different role than that of the other foreign languages that are used in advertising, since the primary aim in using foreign languages such as French, German, and Italian in advertising, is to associate the advertised product with the ethno-cultural stereotypes of the speakers of those languages, and therefore to associate those stereotypes with the product advertised (Piller 2003; Kelly-Holmes 2005). An ethno-cultural stereotype of Italians is for instance that they have delicious pasta, and by advertising (partly) in Italian, the advertiser hopes that the target consumer will associate that positive ethno-cultural stereotype with the pasta being advertised. Piller is brief and to the point in her discussion of difference between the image that English creates and the image created by other foreign languages: "English is thus not used to associate a product with an ethno-cultural stereotype, but with a social stereotype (...) modernity, progress, and globalization" Piller (2001, 175).
- English is an international language. English is chosen as a result of the generally held view that English is a global language (Bailey and Görlach 1986; Crystal 2003; Crystal 2004), and because advertisers believe everyone understands English anyway. In the second edition of *Advertising Worldwide*, de Mooij (1994) states, for instance, "In general, the better-educated throughout Europe, as well as the youth, can be reached with English". She advises, however, that advertisers should use relatively simple English for global advertising "with few words and no colloquialisms, relying heavily on the visual or musical aspects of the message" de Mooij (1994, 205).
- Linguistic aspects. A linguistic reason to use English is that the product is originally from the US or the UK and there is no word to describe its characteristics in the target language, or the word in the target language is much longer or more complicated than the English word (Takahashi 1990; Friedrich 2002). This holds for example for terms related to information technology such as local-bus.

Above we have shown that English is very frequently used in advertising in countries where it is not the native language and we have also indicated why English is used according to advertising agencies. They believe that the target group understands English and that English will enhance image and price of the product. The question is whether they are right. That is why we investigate in this

article whether consumers understand the message conveyed in English and what the effect of the use of English is on the product image and price associated with the product advertised, compared with that of the local language.

## **An Experimental Study of the Effect of the Use of English in Product Ads: Research Questions**

A number of researchers have questioned whether advertisements with English are indeed effective in countries where English is not an official language. Myers (1994) states for instance that one should not assume that English words have exactly the same effect when they are read in a non-English speaking country. Piller (2001) found that in German advertisements with English, the body and the factual information (contact details, declarations) are in German. According to her this signals doubt about the bilingual proficiency of the German audience. For that reason we will investigate the effect of the use of English in ads on a product's image, the consumers' attitude towards the text of the ad, and their comprehensibility of the text of the ad.

According to the literature the use of English words in an ad associates the product with modernity and enhances the prestige of the product. This led to the following research questions.

**RQ1:** To what extent are products presented in advertisements with English more associated with modernity than the same products presented in advertisements in a local language?

**RQ2:** To what extent are products presented in advertisements with English considered to be more expensive than the same products presented in advertisements in a local language?

The attitudes expressed in the literature towards the use of English in advertising in non-English-speaking countries range between two extremes. On the one hand, it is claimed that English is used because it makes the text look more attractive (De Raaij 1997). On the other hand, it is claimed that some of this English usage at least, is considered irritating (Jansen and Rümke 1997).

Experimental research has also shown that the use of English in advertising does not have as favourable an effect on the target groups in terms of attitude as is suggested. Research carried out in 1994 indicated that Dutch, German, Italian, and Spanish respondents, the majority of whom had recently graduated from university, held neither a positive nor a negative attitude towards the use of English in completely English print advertising (Gerritsen 2004). A further study into the attitude towards completely and partly English TV commercials in the Netherlands, showed a similar result (Gerritsen et al., 2000). In all such cases, however, the attitudes towards ads with English, was not compared with ads in the local language. It is therefore possible that the attitudes to the texts reported in these studies was not related to the use of English, but to other characteristics of the text, and that the same text in the local language would have been evaluated in the same way. This led to research question 3.

**RQ3:** To what extent do consumers have a more positive attitude towards advertisements with English than towards the same advertisements in a local language?

Although there is a generally held view that the comprehensibility of the English fragments should not be a problem for at least a number of target groups in Europe, it has been questioned whether the target group does in fact understand the message conveyed (Myers 1994, Piller 2001). A study carried out in 1994 in the Netherlands, Germany, France and Spain showed that there was a large discrepancy between respondents' estimated ability to translate the English used and the actual number of correct indications of the meaning they were able to give. The percentage of the young and highly educated respondents that claimed they could translate the advertisements into their native language was much higher than the percentage of correct indications of the meaning of the English used (Gerritsen 1995; Gerritsen 2004). An experiment with partly and completely English TV commercials (Gerritsen et al. 2000) revealed a similar result. This led to research questions 4 and 5.

**RQ4:** To what extent do consumers claim to be able to understand the English text of advertisements in English?

**RQ5:** To what extent are consumers able to give an accurate indication of the meaning of the English text of advertisements in English?

There are wide variations between the different European Union countries in knowledge of English, for example in reported ability to be able to hold a conversation in English (European Commission 2006, 13 and annexes D48b). For Denmark this was 86%, for the Netherlands 87%, for Germany 45%, for Belgium 59%, for France 36%, and for Spain 27%. Therefore we can expect that the impact of English in ads will vary according to the knowledge of English in a country, the higher the knowledge of English the less impact English will have. This leads to research question 6.

**RQ6:** Are there differences between the countries in the effect of English on

- a. Association with modernity of the product?
- b. Association with price of the product?
- c. Attitude towards the advertisement?
- d. Reported comprehensibility of the English fragments?
- e. Real comprehensibility of the English fragments?

## **Method**

### **Area of research and respondents**

We carried out our experiments in five countries within the European Union: Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. Since Belgium consists of a Dutch- and a French-speaking part, experiments in Belgium were performed with two groups: Dutch-speaking Belgians and French-speaking Belgians.

The respondents were 715 women living and studying in a large town or city: 120 in Dutch-speaking Belgium (Antwerp), 120 in French-speaking Belgium (Brussels), 120 in the Netherlands (Nijmegen), 120 in Spain (Barcelona), 116 in France (Paris) and 119 in Germany (Duisburg). The

number of respondents was based on a statistical power of .99, a medium effect size of 0.25 and an alpha of .05 (cf. Cohen, 1992).

None of the respondents were studying (foreign) languages. The age of the respondents ranged from 19 to 25 ( $M = 21.8$ ). These female students were used as respondents as they could be considered as representative of the target group of *Elle*, the magazine from which we took our test items, since *Elle* is a glossy magazine for higher educated women with no children, between the ages of 20 and 39 (Wikipedia). Sixty percent of the respondents said that they read *Elle* regularly.

### **Materials**

We selected three advertisements for our study that ran simultaneously across the five countries six months before we carried out our experiments: Absolut Vodka (vodka), Bulgari (perfume), and Smart forfour (car). The research team worked together to produce equivalent test items in Dutch, French, German and Spanish for the original English texts, and translation and back-translation was used to ensure as close a match as possible (Hoeken and Korzilius 2003).

### **Instrumentation**

In order to know whether the use of English in an ad has an effect on the image of the product that is advertised, as related to modernity, (RQ1) we presented respondents with a set of 3 adjectives (trendy, innovative and old fashioned) and asked them to complete a 7 point scale (1 agree completely-7 disagree completely). The answers to trendy and innovative were recoded so that 1 stands for old fashioned and 7 for modern. In order to find out whether a product advertised in English would be considered as a more expensive product than one that was advertised in the respondents' own language (RQ2), respondents had to indicate the price of the product on a 7 point scale where 1 was very cheap and 7 was very expensive.

In order to investigate the respondents' attitude towards advertisements with English compared to advertisements in their own language, we presented them with a set of 7 adjectives (functional, irritating, easy, attractive, arrogant, affected, sympathetic) and asked them to evaluate the text on a 7 point scale (1 agree completely-7 disagree completely). The answers to functional, easy, attractive and sympathetic were recoded so that all the scales ranged from 1 as the most negative rating and 7 as the most positive.

In the **comprehensibility** part of the questionnaire, the respondents that saw the original English versions were first asked to indicate on a 7 point scale (1 agree completely -7 disagree completely) whether they could understand a certain English fragment in the ad and whether they would be able to describe the meaning of the English fragment in their own words (RQ4). The answers to both questions were then recoded. The fragments concerned were:

***Bulgari***

Contemporary Italian Jewellers

The new fragrance for women

***Smart***

Eyecatcher

Open your mind

***Absolut***

This superb Vodka was distilled from grain grown in the rich fields of southern Sweden.

Our vodka has been produced at the famous old distilleries near Åhus in accordance with more than 400 years of Swedish tradition

The respondents were then asked to provide a meaning in context, but not a literal translation, for each of these six fragments (RQ5). The team of researchers then met to decide for each individual test item whether or not the translation given could be considered appropriate or not. We differentiated between correct and incorrect indications of the meaning and we took a purposefully flexible approach. If a respondent for example had described the meaning of fragrance with the word for perfume or eau de toilette in the local language we considered the description as correct, but if she had used the word for feeling or sparkling in the local language we considered it as incorrect.

**Design**

Our experiment was a between-subject design for the part that investigated the impact of English on the image of the product and attitude towards the text: half of the respondents, equally divided among the different countries, completed the questions for the English version of the advertisement, and half for the manipulated version in their own language. Only those respondents that were presented with the ads in English were asked if they thought they were able to understand the meaning of the text and whether they indeed understood the English text. This was because, previous research has revealed that respondents do not provide serious answers if they are asked to provide a meaning for text fragments given in their own language.

**Procedure**

The order of questions in the questionnaire was as follows: image, attitude, comprehensibility selfreporting, comprehensibility, and personal details. First all questions about image for all the three ads were answered, subsequently all questions about attitude and so on. The order of the ads in the questionnaire was varied to reduce any carry over effects. The questionnaire was administered to students at different universities in the countries of our research, either in classrooms or in workspaces in the corridors of the universities. The respondents completed the questionnaires individually in the presence of one of the researchers.



### Statistical analysis

For every scale where Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was at least adequate (.70 or higher), we calculated the composite means of the items. This was the case for all the three ads for image (trendy, innovative and old fashioned) and attitude (functional, irritating, easy to read, attractive, arrogant, affected, sympathetic). The two questions about selfreporting comprehensibility were also higher than .70 for all the six fragments. Therefore we calculated composite means for each of the six fragments. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for all these six fragments together was also adequate too and we therefore calculated one composite mean for selfreporting comprehensibility.

Since all the scales were interval scales, 2 (Version: ad with English or ad without English)  $\times$  6 (Country: Dutch-speaking Belgium, French-speaking Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain) Analyses of Variances were used to test whether ads with English were associated with a different image and price of the product than ads without English (RQ1 and 2), whether consumers had a more positive attitude towards ads with English than towards ads without English (RQ3) and whether there were differences between the countries in these aspects (RQ6a). Since cultures may differ in the way in which they use the extremes of a scale (Hoeken and Korzilius 2003, Herk, Poortinga, and Verhallen 2004, Johnson et al. 2005), all analyses of variance were performed with both standardized and raw data. Since there were no differences in results between the two sets of analyses, we report here the analyses of the raw data.

Finally, Chi-square tests were used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the countries in the actual understanding of the six English fragments (RQ7b). The criterion used for statistical significance was .05 for all tests.

### Results

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the answers to the questions that investigated whether the use of English in an ad has an impact on the image of the product that is advertised (RQ1), whether a product advertised in English would be considered as a more expensive product than one that was advertised in the respondents' own language (RQ2) and whether the respondents had a different attitude towards advertisements with English, compared to advertisements in their own language (RQ3).

|  | <i>Ads with English</i><br>M (SD) | <i>Ads without English</i><br>M (SD) | <i>Main effect for Version with English versus Version in the local language</i> |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b><i>Image innovative</i><sup>a</sup></b> |                                   |                                      |  |
| <i>Bulgari</i>                             | 4.00 (1.38)                       | 4.17 (1.39)                          | $F(1, 698) = 2.63, p=.10$  |
| <i>Smart</i>                               | 5.26 (1.50)                       | 5.46 (1.26)                          | $F(1, 701) = 3.69, p=.06$  |
| <i>Absolut</i>                             | 4.14 (1.40)                       | 4.21 (1.37)                          | $F < 1$  |
| <b><i>Image price</i><sup>b</sup></b>      |                                   |                                      |  |
| <i>Bulgari</i>                             | 5.24 (1.21)                       | 5.07 (1.26)                          | $F(1, 692) = 3.39, p=.07$  |
| <i>Smart</i>                               | 5.12 (1.33)                       | 5.04 (1.04)                          | $F < 1$  |
| <i>Absolut</i>                             | 4.75 (1.21)                       | 4.73 (1.15)                          | $F < 1$  |
| <b><i>Attitude</i><sup>c</sup></b>         |                                   |                                      |  |
| <i>Bulgari</i>                             | 4.52 (1.06)                       | 4.54 (1.01)                          | $F < 1$  |
| <i>Smart</i>                               | 4.25 (1.15)                       | 4.23 (1.17)                          | $F < 1$  |
| <i>Absolut</i>                             | 4.74 (1.05)                       | 4.60 (1.10)                          | $F(1, 702) = 3.23, p=.07$  |

Table 1 Use of English and image of the product and attitude towards the text of the ad

*a* 1 = old fashioned, 7 = modern

*b* 1 = cheap, 7 = expensive

*c* 1 = negative, 7 = positive

Table 1 shows that whether or not English is used in an ad does not have any significant impact on the image of the product advertised (RQ1), the price of the product (RQ2) and the attitude towards the text of the ad (RQ3). No significant differences between the countries were found (RQ6a,b and c).

All respondents claimed to understand the English fragment of the ad and said that they were able to describe the meaning of the English fragment in their own words (RQ4) ( $M = 5.94, SD = 0.88$ , where 1 indicated "do not understand at all" and 7 "understand completely"). No significant differences between the countries were found (RQ6d).

Table 2 shows the actual comprehensibility (RQ5) of the six fragments.  $\chi^2$ -tests showed that there were significant differences between the countries ( $\chi^2(5)=1.331, p < .01$ ) (RQ6e). There was a dichotomy between on the one hand France, the Netherlands, French-speaking Belgium and Spain and on the other hand Dutch-speaking Belgium and Germany. The countries in the former group comprehended the six fragments better than the countries in the latter group.

|                                | <i>Indication of the meaning given correctly</i> | <i>Indication of the meaning given incorrectly</i> |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Dutch-speaking Belgium</i>  | 189 (52%)  | 171 (48%)  |
| <i>French-speaking Belgium</i> | 238 (66%)  | 122 (34%)  |
| <i>France</i>                  | 232 (69%)  | 104 (31%)  |
| <i>Germany</i>                 | 177 (49%)  | 183 (51%)  |
| <i>The Netherlands</i>         | 238 (66%)  | 122 (34%)  |
| <i>Spain</i>                   | 233 (65%)  | 127 (35%)  |
| <i>Total</i>                   | 1307 (61%)                                       | 829 (39%)  |

Table 2 The actual comprehensibility of the six fragments

## Conclusion and Discussion

As we discussed in the introduction, previous studies have indicated that there is a generally held belief that the use of English is good for the image of a product. In order to investigate whether this really is the case, we formulated RQs 1 and 2. The findings of our research (cf. Table 1) show that there was no support for these contentions, at least for our respondent group of highly educated young women. Products advertised using English, were not viewed as more modern than products that were advertised using only the local language (RQ1). For all three ads, and across all six of the investigated areas, our highly educated female respondents viewed products advertised using English as neither modern nor old-fashioned. This would suggest that advertising agencies are being somewhat misguided, if they are only opting for English in advertisements only because they believe that consumers will view the product as being more modern. Likewise, a product that is advertised using English was also not considered to be more expensive than a product that is advertised using the local language (RQ2).

A further reason for using English that we identified in our literature survey was that respondents have a more positive attitude towards ads that include English than ads in the local language (RQ3). Our findings also did not provide any support for this research question (cf. Table 1).

The results for image and attitude indicate for all the countries in our study that there are no advantages to using English – at least for the population we studied. The findings for the investigation into comprehension point in a similar direction. The ability to comprehend the fragments, as reported by the respondents themselves, was undoubtedly high for all three ads and all six regional areas, ( $M = 5.94$ ,  $SD = .88$ ), where 1 stands “do not understand at all” and 7 “understand completely” (RQ4), but the respondents actual comprehension was much lower: in 39% of all cases, the respondents were not able to give a convincing global meaning for the English fragments (RQ5, Table 2). This discrepancy between respondents’ estimated ability to translate the English used and the actual number of correct indications of the meaning has also been found in other studies (Gerritsen 1995; Gerritsen et al. 2000; Gerritsen 2004). It provides a clear indication that brand managers must not rely on respondents’ estimated ability in the form of self reports, but that they should test whether the target group comprehends a text.

Our findings show furthermore that respondents were sometimes very far from the mark in their comprehension of the ads. Below some of the most notable examples are presented. In cases such as these it is clear that the message carried by the English text fragment has not at all been understood.

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| (1) Contemporary Italian Jeweller's | Seductive Italian jewels<br>Co-operative Italian jewelers<br>that the perfume can be seen as a timeless Italian |
| The new fragrance for women         | The new feeling for women<br>The new refresher for women  |
| Open your mind                      | Gives more insight  |

The question is to what extent the use of English results in the lack of comprehension of an ad, as ads completely in the local language are, of course, not always fully comprehended either. On the one hand, this lack of understanding might seem unimportant, since an ad aims at more than just conveying a message, for instance, it is designed to raise consumers' awareness of the product or the brand name. Furthermore, consumers will generally be unaware that they have not understood a text, particularly given their high levels of self reported comprehension. The chance is therefore small that the use of English will lead to irritation, and a negative attitude towards the ad or the product, because consumers do not feel that they misunderstand the message (McQuarrie and Mick 2003). On the other hand, the consumers' correct understanding of the message is usually a prerequisite for the advertisement to achieve the desired communicative effect (Pieters and Van Raaij 1992).

On the basis of our experiment we can conclude that the inclusion of English in advertisements does not have a positive influence on the image of the product, does not result in a positive attitude towards the ad, and increases the chances of the consumer misunderstanding the message. The reasons outlined in previous literature and by advertising agencies do not appear to have substance.

It remains of interest to investigate whether our findings can be extrapolated to other social groups, since we can assume that our respondents' English language proficiency is relatively high. It is to be expected that people with lower levels of English proficiency will be less able to give a convincing meaning of the advertising fragments. This could then affect such respondents' image of a product and their attitude to the text.

We had expected that there would be differences between the countries on the image of the product that the inclusion of English creates (RQ6a, b), the attitude towards the use of English in the text (RQ6c) and the comprehensibility of the English text in the ad (RQ6d, e). We found only a difference

in actual comprehension of the fragments. The comprehension was significantly higher in France, the Netherlands, French-speaking Belgium and Spain than in Dutch-speaking Belgium and Germany. Unfortunately, we cannot give an explanation for this partition. It is in any case not in line with the differences between European countries in knowledge and use of English that are found in other studies.

### **Implications for Cross-cultural Brand Management**

Our investigation showed no difference between the countries of our study in the effect of using English on image and price of a product advertised, in the attitudes held towards the ad and in the comprehension of the English text of the ads. For brand managers this would suggest that they can employ one strategy across all the countries in our investigation. Which strategy that should be, depends on how important one considers it to be for the consumer to understand the text. On the one hand, since the use of English has no effect on either the image of the product being advertised or on consumer attitudes towards the text, then there seems to be no reason to create an ad purposefully including English. On the other hand, since the use of English appears to have a negative effect on the consumers ability to understand the text - and if one wants to ensure that a text is well understood - then it is likely to be more effective if one creates an ad in the local language. For target consumer groups who are less educated than the highly educated young women that participated in our study, it seems even more likely that the use of the local language rather than English will increase the effectiveness of the ad. Finally, an important lesson that brand managers can learn from the results of our study is that they should test whether the English text used in an international campaign is understood indeed among representatives of the target group.

### **Biography**

**Marinel Gerritsen** holds the Christine Mohrmann chair at the Department of Business Communication Studies at the Radboud University Nijmegen. Prior to this she worked for the government and for several multinational organizations in Europe and she also held positions at a number of Dutch universities and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her business communication research is primarily focussed on the differences between cultures in communication and the impact that this has on intercultural communication, she has also published widely on the sociolinguistic in-bedding of language variation and change, the use of English as a lingua franca in business contexts, and the interface between English as an international language and the local languages in use.

**Catherine Nickerson** is an Associate Professor of Business Communication in the College of Business Sciences at Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates. She has held senior positions in India and in the Netherlands, and she has also lived and worked in the United States and the United Kingdom. She holds degrees from the Universities of Durham (BA) and Birmingham (MA) in the United Kingdom, and a Ph.D. from the Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands. In 2009 she received the Association for Business Communication's Outstanding Researcher Award. Dr Nickerson's work has been published widely and she has given numerous international conference

papers and guest lectures at institutions around the world. Her most recent book - Business Discourse – was published by Palgrave-Macmillan in 2007 and her current research interests include the use of English as an international language in business contexts, and the communication of Corporate Social Responsibility.

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