

English Slogans in German Advertising: Comprehensibility and Perception by Germans

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Abstract

The English language used in international advertising has increased immensely over the last decades. Although English is a *lingua franca*, not everyone is proficient enough to understand English slogans. For this paper, I surveyed ten Germans and asked them to translate English slogans used in German advertising and to express their associations with English in their local ads. The majority of the selected slogans could not be fully translated by the participants. Nevertheless, the expressed attitudes were positive by the majority of the participants. These findings have important implications for English language teaching not only in Germany but around the world. Students of English are confronted with English slogans through many different types of media. I therefore suggest that it is necessary to investigate slogans and their specific language use as part of the English language learning process.

Introduction

In recent years, the use of English in advertisements has increased around the world. In the early 1900s, slogans were mainly in local languages, but in the second half of the 1900s, English became increasingly important in countries in which English is not an official language (Androutsopoulos, 2004). Given that printed and broadcasted advertisements and brand slogans are ubiquitous and are part of daily life in the modern world, it is advisable for English language teachers to pay attention to how English is used in advertisements in the countries where they teach. This is important because students are confronted with advertisements practically everywhere, especially in this globalized world which relies on the fast distribution of information through the Internet. It is useful for them to be able to understand and make sense of the language use in these bi- or even multilingual advertisements. Furthermore, the use of English in advertisements in countries where English is not an official language reflects and sometimes even determines the attitudes the local public has towards English. These attitudes need to be considered in the language classroom to address them accordingly.

In this paper, I will examine the role of English in European, and especially German, advertisements. Informed by previous research, I will investigate the comprehensibility of English slogans by German people, as well as how they perceive the use of English in national



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advertising. I will show that Germans have noticeable difficulty in understanding English slogans but nevertheless have a positive attitude towards the use of English in their local advertisements. In light of the findings, I will discuss implications related to language teaching and learning.

English in European Advertisements

The structure of the European Union resulted in the need of a common language. As English has been the *lingua franca* in international politics and business, the logical consequence was to establish English as such in the European Union as well (Hilgendorf, 2007). As a result, English became more and more influential in Germany. Its status as a foreign language has shifted to the status of a second language over the last few decades due to its expanded use in German society (Hilgendorf, 2007). The rise of English can be seen in the educational and business sectors and especially in the media landscape, not only in Germany, but in most other European countries. Many studies show that the amount of English in German advertising increased drastically in the last 50 years. Neuendorf (2004) cited a study by Kupper (2003) in which advertisements in the magazine, *Der Spiegel*, were analyzed. In 1976, already 14.66% of the ads contained Anglicisms. In 2001, this number rose to 44.25% (p. 17). Gerritsen et al. (2007) investigated glossy magazines and their advertisements in Germany, Spain and the Netherlands in 1994 and 2003. In all three countries, the amount of English increased remarkably. In Germany, the percentage of English in magazines in 1994 was 33%, while in 2003 it was already 56%. In the Netherlands, this number rose even more, from 33% to 81%. The highest increase was seen in Spain, from 17% to 75%. These are just some examples of how the English language became more dominant and central in European and German advertisements. Androutsopoulos (2012), examining English in advertisements in Germany, suggested that headlines or slogans often appear exclusively in English, whereas the main body of the advertising text is usually in German with some use of Anglicisms.

Further, ad writers and their clients do not just use English in their advertisements because it is the EU's *lingua franca*; they make a deliberate decision to do so (Androutsopoulos, 2004). There are several reasons for relying on another language rather than the national language in advertisements. The use of English addresses certain cultural stereotypes Germans have about Great Britain or the USA. The USA especially stands for progress, innovation, individuality, modernity, success, lifestyle, pleasure, and internationality (Androutsopoulos, 2004). Androutsopoulos summed up this perception in the following two sentences. "German reminds us where we are", whereas "English reminds us where we go" (p. 231).

The ad writers and their clients consciously appeal to these perceptions that the English language evokes. Piller (2003) suggested that the cigarette industry especially tries to evoke the sense of the cowboy spirit of the USA and therefore uses English in their advertisements. The luxury car industry and chocolate factories use English to create the feeling of British class quality. Innovative fashion labels like *Nike* or *Tommy Hilfiger* who try to attract young people use English to represent rebellion, the Hip Hop culture and American youth culture (Piller, 2003). Industries or brands associate their products with a certain social and cultural stereotype to attract attention within their target audience.

Some industries seem to be more prone to use English in their advertisements than others. Androutsopoulos (2004) concluded that the technology, cigarette and fashion industries use English in their slogans comparatively often, while the nutrition and health sector, as well as politics, are dominantly in German. Media, beauty and automobile industries seem to make use of English and German equally often. Androutsopoulos' findings are underscored by Onysko's research from 2004. Onysko added sports and business to the sectors that often make use of English.

The immense increase of the English language leads to the question of whether the attributes the ad writers try to tie to the advertised products actually reach the customers. In the next section, I will give an overview of recent research about the perception and comprehension of English in European advertisements by European consumers.

European Consumers' Perceptions and Comprehension of English in Advertisements

Gerritsen et. al. (2007) surveyed highly educated women in Germany, Spain and the Netherlands regarding their perception and comprehension of English in their national advertisements. English and their national language were similarly perceived to be positive. Only in three instances, all from Spanish participants, the description "modern" was used more often in connection to English slogans. Hornikx et. al. (2010) investigated the attitudes towards English vs. Dutch in advertisements in the Netherlands. They found that the majority of participants prefer "easy English" in the slogans. Dutch, on the other hand, is on the same level of preference as "hard English."¹

Another aspect of a foreign language in national advertising relates to its comprehensibility. Gerritsen et. al. (2007) found that less than two-thirds of the interviewed Germans could translate the English slogans correctly. A study conducted by Gerritsen et. al. (2010) investigated the comprehensibility of English slogans by Belgian, French, German, Dutch and Spanish participants. The Belgians were able to translate 59% of the slogans correctly, the Spanish 65%, the Dutch 66% and the French 69%. The Germans, however, were able to only translate 49% of the slogans correctly. These results reinforce Gerritsen et. al.'s findings from 2007.²

A large-scale collaborative study was recently conducted by YouGov, a German company specializing in online market research, and Endmark GmbH, a German company specializing in strategic branding. In 2016, they surveyed about 6000 participants in Germany on their comprehension and perception of English slogans in German advertisements. The study shows that only 28% of the participants were able to translate the slogans correctly. These results draw a more drastic picture of the comprehension of English slogans by German people. The large gap between the YouGov/Endmark study, and the studies conducted by Gerritsen et al., may be explained by looking at the different target audiences. While Gerritsen et al. surveyed highly educated people, the YouGov/Endmark study drew their participants from all socioeconomic classes. Despite the low level of comprehension, the majority (90%) of the participants of the YouGov/Endmark study have a positive attitude towards English slogans. The positive attitude, however, did not have a similarly positive effect on the brand recognition. Eighty-one percent of

the participants could not assign the slogans to their respective products (YouGov/Endmark, 2016). However, it is also possible that the different approaches to evaluating the correctness of translations might also be the cause of the differing results.

In summary, the literature suggests that the use of English in German and European advertisements, particularly in slogans, has increased significantly over the last decades. Although the attitudes towards the English language are generally positive, Germans tend not to be able to translate the slogans accurately, nor assign them correctly to their product or brand.

Research Questions

Since the most essential and noticeable part of advertisements are their slogans, I will concentrate on this part of advertisements. Slogans are the main means of image construction for a brand or product and are therefore extremely important for their distribution. While the body text of the advertisement is often not fully read by people passing by billboards or flipping through a newspaper or magazine, they concentrate on the brand's logo and slogan. Slogans not only enhance the product's image, but are also the chief means to increase recognition. Inspired by the 2016 YouGov/Endmark study, this paper attempts to answer similar research questions but with new data and more qualitative analysis:

1. Is the use of English in German advertisements more common in certain sectors?
2. Does the origin of the company have an influence on the language used in their advertisements?
3. Do German people understand English slogans?
4. How do Germans perceive English slogans used in national German advertisements?
5. Does the choice of language have an influence on Germans' perception of the products advertised?

Methodology

Advertisement Data (to Address Research Questions 1 and 2)

The first two research questions aim to investigate the factors that may influence the presence of English slogans in advertisements in Germany. The literature suggests that the sectors especially prone to use English in their advertisements are fashion, beauty and technology. In contrast, advertising in the food sector is said to be dominantly German (Androutsopolous, 2004). To verify these statements, I chose to investigate the advertisements in seven sectors (Table 1). These are fashion, beauty, technology, food, drinks, automobile and television broadcasters. I chose to add the automobile sector because it is one of Germany's most important export and import industries and it is well-advertised. I chose television because they are a main distributor of advertisements themselves as well as distributors of international TV-productions and therefore in constant contact with the English language. The actual products or brands in these sectors were chosen as follows. First, I generated a list of well-advertised products by writing down brands that came to my mind as an average young urban adult German consumer. I then searched the Internet for brands that advertise frequently.

Three main sources were used to compile the list of slogans for these brands: The first source was current (2017) TV or print advertisements; the second was the products' or brands'

websites; and the third was the website *slogans.de*, which collects slogans used in German advertisements starting in the 1960s.

For each selected sector, ten brands or products were analyzed, except in the automobile category, for which twenty brands were investigated, as this sector features Germany's most renowned products. Due to the different numbers of researched brands/ products, the following analysis uses percentages instead of number values for comparison. All slogans analyzed in this paper were introduced to the German market between 2000 and 2016.

Survey Data (to Address Research Questions 3, 4, and 5)

In order to answer research questions 3-5 about German people's comprehension and attitudes toward English slogans in advertisement, a questionnaire (Appendix A) was created based on the YouGov/Endmark (2016) study. In this questionnaire, the participants of the survey were asked to translate ten English slogans into German. This will be an indicator of whether they actually understand the English slogans used in German advertisements. In addition, to address research questions 2 through 4, the questionnaire asked participants the following questions: (1) What effect does the English language have on you in this specific slogan?; (2) Would this slogan have a different effect on you if it was in German?; and (3) Which product or brand does this slogan advertise?

The ten slogans used in this questionnaire were chosen from all investigated commercial sectors mentioned above. Two slogans each were chosen from the automobile, food and science/technology sector, while one slogan each was chosen from the fashion, beauty, television broadcaster and drinks sections. These slogans were drawn from a hat for each section separately.

Ten German people living in urban Germany took part in this survey. Attention was paid to the participants' attitudes towards English. In order to reflect the average German general public, only participants who have not lived in an English-speaking country or studied English at university level were chosen. Six of the participants were aged 20-29, while the remaining four participants were between 50 and 59 years old. Three of the participants were men, seven were women.

Findings

The Presence of English Slogans Across Sectors

As shown in Tables 1 – 7 and in Figure 1, the presence of English is the highest in slogans in the *food*, *drink*, and *fashion* sectors, at 60%. While this finding confirms previous findings by Androutsopoulos (2004) regarding the fashion sector, the prevalence of English in the *food* and *drink* sectors differ from what Androutsopoulos (2004) suggested. The *beauty* sector, on the other hand, used English only in 30% of the slogans investigated, and is thus the product category that used the fewest English slogans. This finding stands in contrast to the literature that suggests an equal amount of English and German used in slogans for the beauty sector (Androutsopoulos, 2004). Finally, the categories of automobiles and television broadcasters use English in their slogans 40% and 35% of the time respectively. It is important to note that only one slogan used a mixture of German and English (*Kabell, eins, baby*). The rarity of code-mixing in the slogans might be due to the fact that it is difficult to establish the aspired image of a certain brand or

product if more than one language is used in the slogan. In short, the use of English in slogans in advertisements in Germany appears to depend on the products being advertised, which involves different consumer populations, appeals, and images.

Table 1
Slogans Used in the Automobile Sector

	Brand	Slogan	Company's Origin	Slogan's Language
1	Mercedes	Das Beste oder nichts	Germany	German
2	Audi	Vorsprung durch Technik	Germany	German
3	Porsche	N/A	Germany	N/A
4	BMW	Freude am Fahren	Germany	German
5	Renault	Drive the Change/ Passion for Life	France	English
6	Toyota	Nichts ist unmöglich	Japan	German
7	Honda	The Power of Dreams	Japan	English
8	Mitsubishi	N/A	Japan	N/A
9	Volkswagen	Das Auto	Germany	German
10	Citroen	N/A	France	N/A
11	Opel	Wir leben Autos	Germany	German
12	Ford	Eine Idee weiter	USA	German
13	Hyundai	New Thinking New Possibilities	South Korea	English
14	Kia	The Power to surprise	South Korea	English
15	Jaguar	N/A	Great Britain	N/A
16	Peugeot	Impress yourself	France	English
17	Nissan	Innovation that excites	Japan	English
18	Suzuki	Way of Life	Japan	English
19	Volvo	N/A	Sweden	N/A
20	Mazda	Drive Together	Japan	English
				English: 40%
				German: 35%
				N/A: 25%

Table 2
Slogans Used in the Drinks Sector

	Brand	Slogan	Company's Origin	Slogan's Language
1	Red Bull	Verleiht Flügel	Austria	German
2	Jägermeister	Achtung Wild!	Germany	German
3	Coca-Cola	Taste the Feeling	USA	English
4	Beck's	The Beck's Experience	Germany	English
5	Warsteiner	Der einzig wahre Warsteiner	Germany	German
6	Bacardi	Untameable	Bermuda	English
7	Vodka	Des Vodkas reine Seele Gorbatschow	Germany	German
8	Corona	This is living	Mexico	English
9	Pepsi	Live for Now	USA	English
10	Evian	Live young	France	English
				English: 60%
				German: 40%
				N/A: 0%

Table 3
Slogans used in the Television Broadcasters Sector

	Brand	Slogan	Company's Origin	Slogan's Language
1	ARD	Wir sind eins	Germany	German
2	ZDF	Mit dem Zweiten sieht man besser	Germany	German
3	RTL	Mein RTL	Luxemburg	German
4	Sat1	Powered by Emotion	Germany	English
5	Pro7	We love to entertain you	Germany	English
6	RTL II	It's fun	Luxemburg	English
7	Vox	N/A	Luxemburg	N/A
8	Kabel 1	Kabel eins, eins baby	Germany	Code-mix
9	Arte	N/A	France	N/A
10	DMAX	So läuft das hier	USA	German
				English: 30%
				German: 40%
				N/A: 20%
				Code-mix: 10%

Table 4
Slogans used in the Food Sector

	Brand	Slogan	Company's Origin	Slogan's Language
1	Haribo	Haribo macht Kinder froh und Erwachsene ebenso	Germany	Germany
2	KitKat	Have a break, have a KitKat	Switzerland	English
3	Nespresso	What else?	Switzerland	English
4	McDonalds	I'm lovin it	USA	English
5	Burger King	Have it your way	USA	English
6	Bauer Joghurt	Die Bauers, die könn's einfach	Germany	German
7	bway	Eat Fresh	USA	English
8	Skittles	Try the Rainbow, taste the Rainbow	USA	English
9	Smarties	Viele viele bunte Smarties	Switzerland	German
10	Snickers	Snickers und der Hunger ist gegessen	USA	German
				English: 60%
				German: 40%
				N/A: 0%

Table 5
Slogans Used in the Fashion Sector

	Brand	Slogan	Company's Origin	Slogan's Language
1	H&M	Mode und Qualität zum besten Preis	Sweden	German
2	Zara	N/A	Spain	N/A
3	United Colors of Benetton	Unhate	Italy	English
4	Desigual	It's not the same	Spain	English
5	Nike	Just do it	USA	English
6	Adidas	Original is never finished	Germany	English
7	C&A	Schenkt euch Freude	Belgium	German
8	Levi's	Live in Levi's	USA	English
9	Bonprix	Bonprix, it's me!	Germany	English
10	Peek& Cloppenburg	Qualität zieht an	Germany	German
				English: 60%
				German: 30%
				N/A: 10%

Table 6
Slogans Used in the Beauty Sector

	Brand	Slogan	Company's Origin	Slogan's Language
1	Douglas	Come in and find out	Germany	English
2	Maybelline	Make it happen	USA	English
3	Nivea	Pflege die berührt	Germany	German
4	L'Oreal	Das Schönheitsinstitut für ihren Körper	France	German
5	Bebe Young Care	Natürlich schöne Haut	USA	German
6	Gillette Venus	Immer die perfekte Wahl	USA	German
7	Manhattan	Express yourself	Germany	English
8	Labello	Die Nr. 1 der Lippenpflege	Germany	German
9	Chanel	N/A	France	N/A
10	Yves Rocher	Die Nr. 1 der Pflanzen Kosmetik	France	German
				English: 30%
				German: 60%
				N/A: 10%

Table 7
Slogans used in the Technology/Science Sector

	Brand	Slogan	Company's Origin	Slogan's Language
1	Nokia	Connecting People	Finland	English
2	Apple	N/A	USA	N/A
3	Samsung	Turn on tomorrow	South Korea	English
4	Siemens	Die Zukunft zieht ein	Germany	German
5	Bosch	Technik fürs Leben	Germany	German
6	Microsoft	N/A	USA	N/A
7	Vodafone	Power to you	GB/Germany	English
8	Bayer	Science for a better life	Germany	English
9	Google	N/A	USA	N/A
10	O2	O2 can do	Germany/Spain	English
				English: 50%
				German: 20%
				N/A: 30%

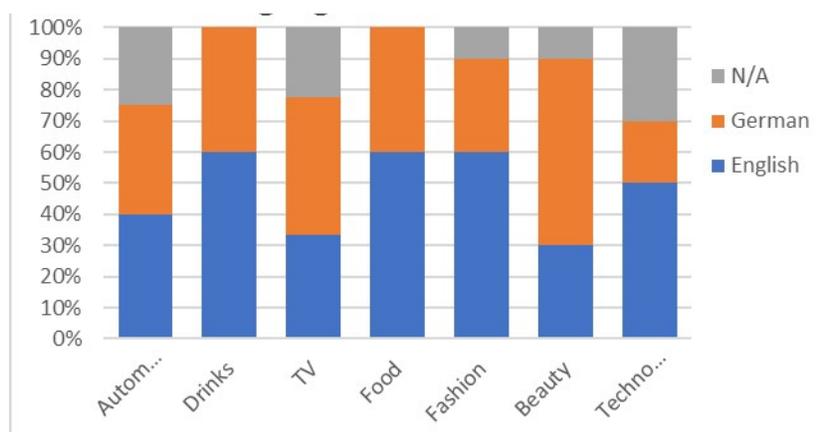


Figure 1. Language use in slogans in German advertisements by sector
 Note. “N/A” means no slogan used

English Usage in Slogans and Company Origins

Research Question 2 concerns the relationship between the use of English and the origin of the product or brand and their companies. A clear distinction can be made between the German and European versus international companies. While German and European companies each used English slogans for their products and brands 38% of the time, American companies decided to use English in their German advertisements 53% of the time, while Asian companies used English in 78% of their advertisements in Germany (see Figure 2).

Of note, English slogans are rarely used by German companies in the automobile (0), beverage (1) and food (0) sectors. This phenomenon can be explained by these sectors’ pride in the quality of their German products. The German automobile industry is internationally known for its quality and advertises with the *Made in Germany* seal. The food and beverage industry rely on a similar concept. Here it is not only based on the quality of the product itself, but also on the production process. The German *Reinheitsgebot* (German Purity Law) is an internationally well-known standard of how beer has to be specially produced. German companies often take pride in their localness and German quality standards and therefore tend to advertise their products or brands exclusively in German. This claim is supported by the content of the slogans used by German companies in these sectors, which highlight the producers as “we” or by name and emphasizes superior quality and purity. The automobile companies use slogans such as *Das Beste oder Nichts* (nothing but the best) or *Wir leben Autos* (we live for cars). *Die Bauer’s, die könnens einfach* (the Bauer’s, they know how to do it) or *Des Vodka’s reinste Seele* (Vodka’s purest soul) are examples from companies in the food and drink category. Thus, these companies use German to invoke the German quality in their advertisements.

While common belief about German product superiority drives slogans by German companies, international companies find other ways to make up for consumers’ lack of trust in the quality of their products. One of these ways is to create a certain image to successfully sell their goods in Germany. The use of English in slogans contributes to the creation of an international and modern image. In general, it has been claimed that the English language in German advertisements creates the image of modernity, progress, innovation, individuality,

success, pleasure and cosmopolitanism (Gerritsen et. al, 2007). Understanding English requires a certain level of education and often aspiration to thrive beyond the average. Therefore, international companies make use of the English language to address these groups of young, educated and wealthy people. This study supports this claim. The slogans *Innovation that excites* (Nissan), *The Power of Dreams* (Honda) and *Turn on Tomorrow* (Samsung) invokes innovation, success and progress. *Have it your way* (Burger King) appeals to the customers' sense of individuality.

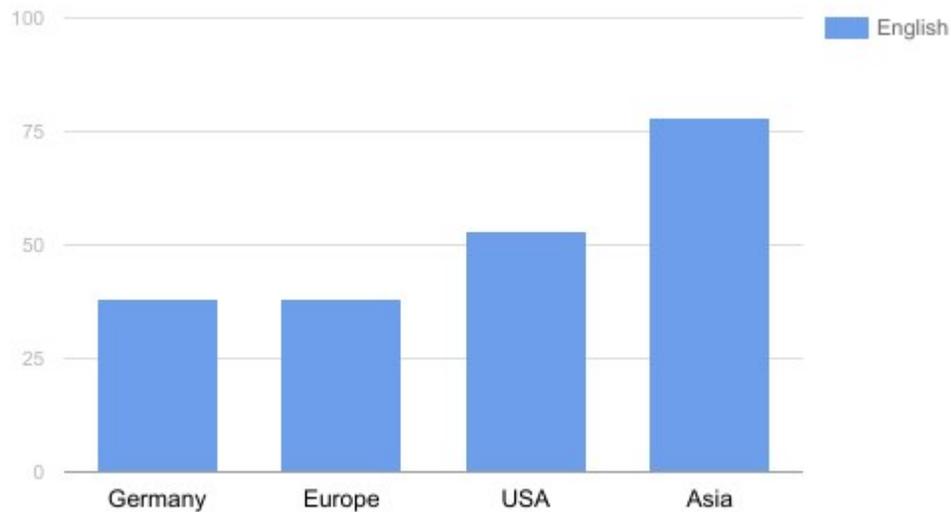


Figure 2. Use of English slogans in German advertisements by companies' origin

Comprehensibility of English Slogans in Advertisements in Germany

To gauge the comprehensibility level of English slogans by German people, ten English slogans were selected to be translated by ten German participants (Appendix B). Their ability to translate these slogans correctly will be related to their ability to understand English slogans in their local advertisements. Their translations of the slogans were compared to the explanation of the slogans by two native speakers of English and the explanations about some slogans on some products' websites. In cases where the participants got the gist of the slogan, the translation was determined as correct. In cases where one English word can be translated with several different German words that express the same meaning, different possible answers were scored as correct as long as the chosen translation did not change the meaning.

Of the 100 slogan translations, only 42% of slogans were correctly translated, which means that more than half of the slogans were not fully understood by the participants (if incorrect translation means incomplete comprehension). However, this rate is higher than those of the YouGov/Endmark study from 2016, in which only 28% of the slogans were correctly translated. This may be due to different judgement criteria or time difference. Qualitative

examination of the translations revealed that, in accordance with the YouGov/Endmark study, the meaning or gist of more than half of the English slogans were not understood correctly. Some participants got the broad impression the slogans tried to convey, but did not quite get to the heart of it.

A closer look at the results shows some interesting patterns. First, the participants' performance varied quite noticeably (Figure 3). Among the ten participants, five scored higher than the average, meaning that these participants were able to translate more than 4.2 slogans correctly. Three participants, however, scored significantly below the average and only translated 2.0 slogans correctly. That explains why the median (4.5) and the mode (5) are above the average. The highest score obtained was seven correctly translated slogans by a single participant (F).

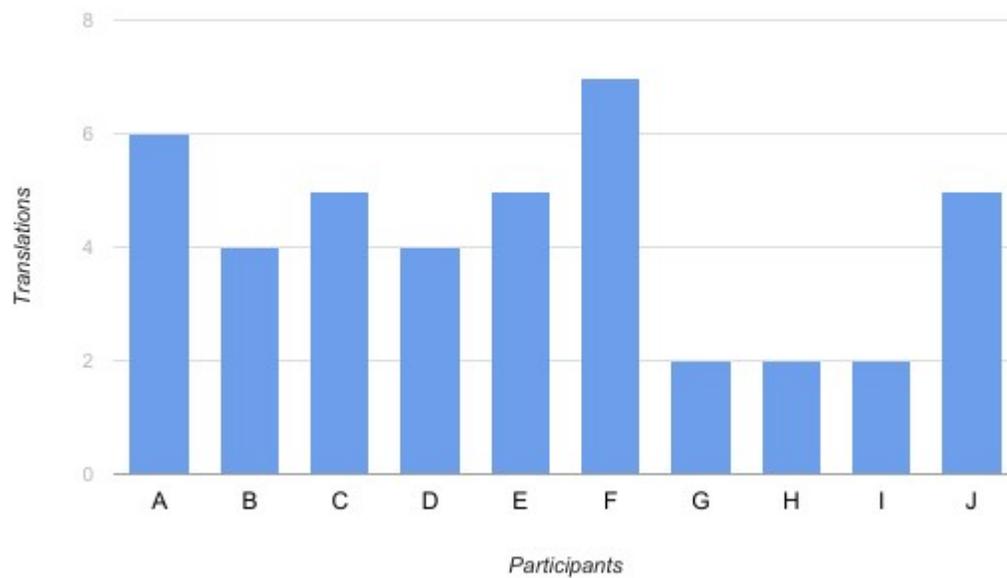


Figure 3. Correct translations by participants

Figure 4 gives an overview of how challenging the individual slogans were for the participants in terms of comprehension. The item facility (IF) for these slogans varies from 0 (*Turn on tomorrow*) to 0.9 (*Science for a better life*). The chart shows that the slogans *Turn on tomorrow* (Samsung), *Drive the change* (Renault) and *Original is never finished* (Adidas) are especially challenging, having an IF of 0, 0.1 and 0.1 respectively. This might be due to different reasons. First, these slogans contain wordplays with metaphoric and idiomatic meanings that can be obscure to second language users (Cooper, 1999). The slogan *Turn on tomorrow* might be difficult for German speakers to successfully translate because of the phrasal verb *to turn on*, which might only be familiar in the context of *to turn somebody on*. *Drive the change* poses a challenge due to the various meanings of *to drive*. In this slogan, *Renault* plays with the different meanings of *to drive*, in the sense of the physical action in a car or on a bike, and in the sense of *to advance* or *promote*. Adidas' slogan *Original is never finished* seems to be difficult due to the creative use of an adjective as a noun

and subject and the metaphoric meaning of *original* (in this case, the Original collection from Adidas) never being not trendy. The play on words here is difficult for Germans to understand and therefore translate correctly.

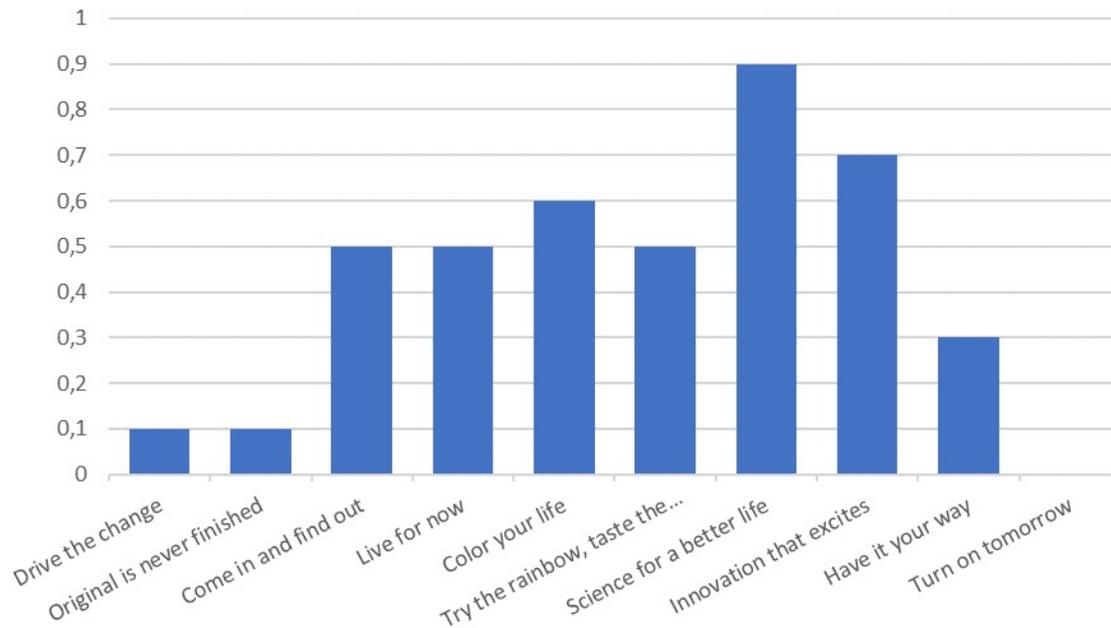


Figure 4. Item facility (IF) of the slogans

The more successfully translated slogans are often straightforward or have direct German equivalents. The slogan that was the most successfully translated for this group of participants was *Science for a better life* (Bayer). This slogan can be directly translated into German. Similarly, *Innovation that excites* (Nissan) can also be translated directly.

In conclusion, it can be said that it is overall difficult for Germans to translate English slogans correctly due to the participants' varied abilities and the slogans' natures, especially the use of puns, metaphoric meanings, and opaque phrasal verbs

Perception Toward English Slogans in Advertisements

Question 1 of the survey asked for associations the participants have towards the English language in German advertisements, which was categorized qualitatively as positive or negative based on the participants' responses. I will first describe the general perception and explore the connection between attitude and the participants' age and gender. I will also focus on the specific associations the participants have towards the English language and the attitudes towards the individual slogans.

Figure 5 displays the total rate of positive and negative perception by the participants. In general, 60% of the participants have a positive attitude towards English in German ads, while

40% have a negative attitude. The present study's findings portray a more diverse picture compared to the You/Gov and Endmark study (2016) mentioned above, which shows a more disproportional result, with 90% of the responses indicating a positive attitude toward English use in advertisements. This difference may be due to difference in sampling or difference in the time of data collection.

Regarding the age factor, a clear distinction can be made. Five out of six participants (83.3%) within the age group 20-29 have a positive attitude whereas in the age group 50-59, 75% perceive the English language as negative.

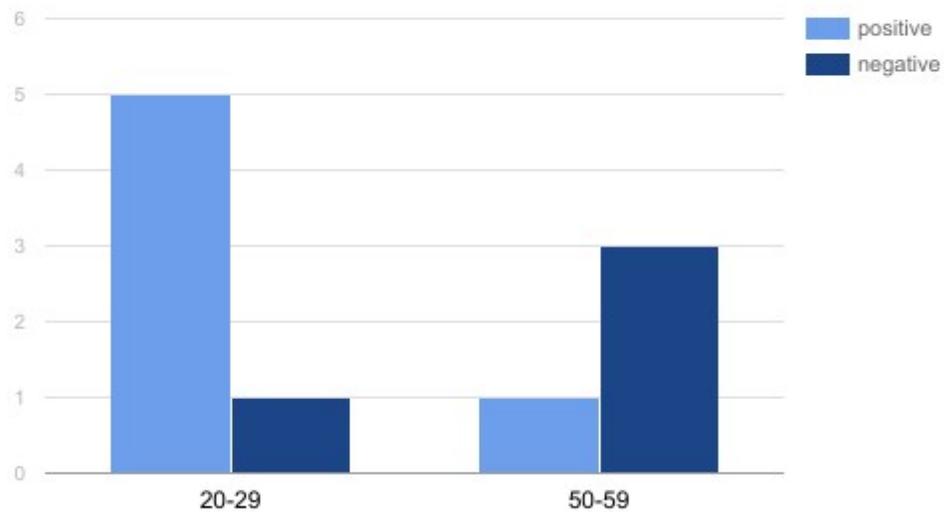


Figure 5. Perception of English slogans by age group

These results might be explained in two ways. For one, the participants in the age group 20-29 mostly grew up surrounded by English in the popular media such as television, music, advertisements, newspapers and magazines. This might result in a generally positive attitude, because they are more accustomed to seeing and hearing English. Second, this age group might be characterized by its globalized perspective and its strong pursuit of modernity.

Figure 6 illustrates the perception towards English by the participants' gender. There is no significant difference in attitudes towards English slogans in German advertisements with respect to gender. 60% of both females and males have a positive stance towards English slogans.

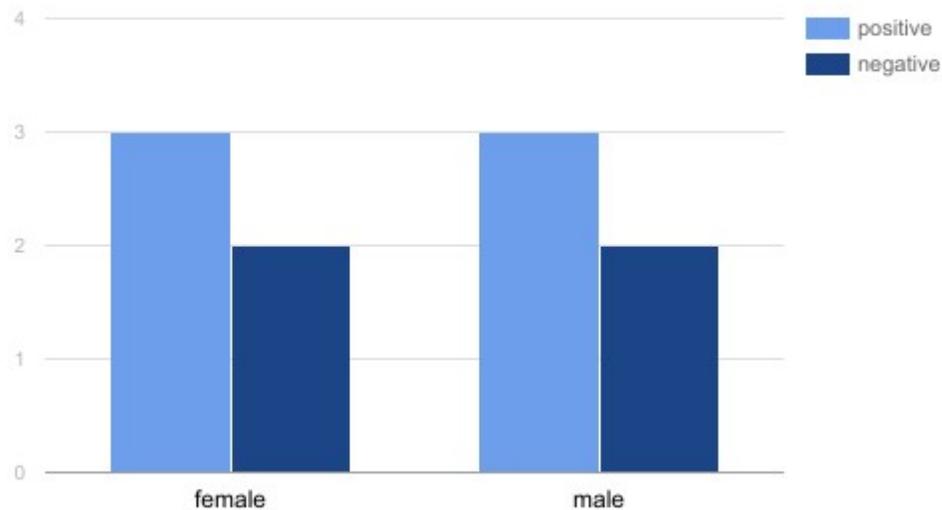


Figure 6. Perception of English slogans by gender

The participants showed mixed reactions to English slogans (Figure 7). Positive terms used by the participants to refer to English include “international” or “global” (4 respondents), “modern” or “dynamic” (4 respondents), “innovation” or “success” (1 respondent), and “sounds better” (2 respondents). However, some participants perceived English slogans to be “meaningless” or “illogical” (1 person), and “inappropriate” or “annoying” (3 respondents). The findings of this survey underscore previous findings on this topic. Further, a close examination of my data revealed that younger respondents tended to use positive terms to describe English slogans more often than older respondents, which may suggest that perception toward English has changed in German society. Due to the small sample size in this study, further research is needed to confirm this tendency.

The last question on the survey asked the participants to evaluate whether the specific slogan would portray a different image if it was in German and/or whether the same slogan would work well in German. The only slogan that seems to elicit the same image and would also work well in German is *Live for now*, used by Pepsi. All other slogans had at least one comment that favored the English version over the German translation. However, three people mentioned that the choice of language would not elicit a different image at all.

Three slogans generated numerous responses. The first one was *Drive the Change* by Renault. The comments were: “sounds absurd in German,” “doesn’t sound serious in German,” “sounds boring in German,” “doesn’t sound good (would need more explanation in German).” One comment specifically stated that this slogan should not be used for a German car, because German cars are usually advertised in German to underline the quality of German products. This is in accordance with my observation above about why English is not used for certain German products. The second slogan which elicited several comments was *Come in and find out*,

used by Douglas, a German perfumery. Participants stated that this slogan would not work well in German, because it would not sound as cool and to-the-point as it does in English; it would sound boring and old-fashioned in German, and would not convey the same sense of effortlessness in German. The third slogan which elicited several comments about the difference between English and German was *Try the Rainbow, taste the Rainbow*, used to advertise Skittles. Adjectives used to describe how it would sound in German are: “absurd,” “silly,” “strange,” “stupid.” Two people even mentioned the slogans would not make sense at all in German. One person said it sounds strange in both languages.

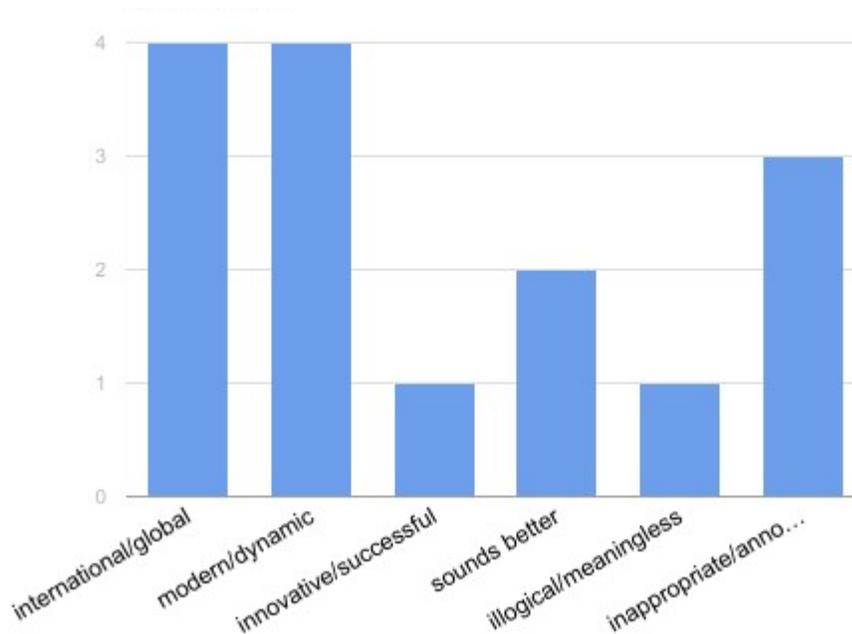


Figure 7. Associations related to English slogans in advertisements

In sum, the English language was felt by the participants to be catchier than German and to portray a more modern, innovative image. Many participants stated that the German equivalents would sound too clumsy or strange. Further, there seems to be a difference in perception depending on the subjects' age. It is also important to keep in mind that the functions associated with English are favorable in some advertising contexts and unfavorable in other advertising contexts.

Conclusion and Teaching Implications

This survey confirms the literature in showing that German people have considerable problems understanding English slogans in advertisements. Whether it is because of the use of puns, phrasal verbs or metaphors, or due to the participants' limited language abilities, 58% of the slogans in this survey were not correctly translated. The attitudes towards English in German advertisements were diverse; however, most of the participants stated that the specific slogans would not sound as catchy, precise or cool if they were in German. The overall positive

perception of English and the globalized media and business landscape will probably advance the use of English in European and German advertisements even more.

The findings of this survey have limited generalizability because of the small number of participants and the uneven distribution of participants concerning their age and gender. Furthermore, the participants were asked to translate only ten slogans. To reach a more comprehensive conclusion about their ability to understand English slogans, a larger number would have to be investigated. Finally, translation was used to gauge comprehension but the two are not the same. Translation requires not just comprehension but also the ability to mediate between two languages. Nonetheless, the findings of this survey seem to underscore and shed further light on previous research of this topic.

The findings also bear relevance for language teaching. For decades, English language teachers in Germany have been incorporating English newspaper and magazine headlines in their lessons. Their specific grammar and word choice became a recurrent topic in the classrooms. However, headlines are not the only short, attention-seeking phrases the German students are confronted with outside of class. They are also routinely confronted with English slogans in local advertisements, which they encounter daily. Therefore, English language teachers should pay attention to the growing number of English slogans in their students' lives, the students' comprehensibility and perception of these slogans, and then incorporate them in their lesson plans. Examining English slogans in the classroom gives the teachers and students the chance to work with authentic materials and prepare the students to use their English knowledge in real life. These slogans can be used to introduce puns, phrasal verbs, metaphors, as well as certain grammatical structures. In addition, English slogans in advertising can also be a starting point for discussions on the role of English in Germany and in the world and students' attitudes toward English as a global language.

Notes

- 1 The author defined "easy" and "hard" English rather loosely. By "easy English" the author meant English that the reader was able to understand without putting effort into a translation. By "hard English," on the other hand, the author meant English that needed some effort for the reader to translate.
- 2 The accuracy of the translations was evaluated case by case. Participants did not have to translate the slogans directly, but only explain the meaning in context. The research team then decided if these explanations were accurate or not.

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Appendix A Questionnaire

Diese Befragung führe ich im Rahmen meines Studiums in den USA durch. In meinem Seminar *Sociolinguistics* beschäftigen wir uns mit dem Zusammenspiel von Mensch und Sprache.

(I'm conducting this survey for my MA studies in the USA. In my seminar Sociolinguistics we focus on the connection between language on people's attitudes)

Im Folgenden habe ich 10 Slogan aufgelistet, die in verschiedenen Werbekampagnen in Deutschland verwendet werden/wurden.

(Following, I listed 10 slogans, which are currently used in advertisements in Germany.)

Bitte beantworte zunächst etwas allgemeinere Fragen über Sprachwahl in Werbeslogan und versuche dann die 10 Slogan zu übersetzen, ohne ein Wörterbuch oder das Internet zu benutzen.

(Please, answer two more general questions about the choice of language in slogans first and then try to translate the 10 slogans without using a dictionary or the internet.)

DANKE DIR :-)

Angaben zur Person:

(Information about participant)

Männlich weiblich
(male) (female)

Altersgruppe:

(Age group)

20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

Welche Wirkung hat Englische Werbung (auf dich)? Welche Assoziationen hast du/was für ein Image wird erzeugt?

(Which effect does English in advertisements have on you? Which associations do you have/ which image arises?)

Hat die Wahl der Sprach in der Werbung einen Einfluss auf dein Kaufverhalten?

(Does the choice of language in advertising has an influence on your purchase behaviour?)

Werbung <i>Slogan</i>	Übersetze den Slogan ins Deutsch <i>Translate this slogan into German</i>	Um welche Produkte oder welche Marke handelt es sich hier? <i>Which product or brand is this slogan advertising?</i>	Würde dieser Slogan ein anderes Image vermitteln wenn er auf Deutsch wäre? <i>Would this slogan convey a different image if it was in German?</i>
Drive the Change			
Original is never finished			
Come in and find out			
Live for now			
Color your life			
Try the rainbow, taste the rainbow			
Science for a better life			
Innovation that excites			
Have it your way			
Turn on tomorrow			

Appendix B

Qualitative Summaries of the Participants's Responses to Each Slogan

The participants mentioned different associations they have with the English language in German advertisements. The group of 20-29-year olds mentioned the following terms: *international* and *global*, *modern* and *dynamic*, *innovative* and *sounds better*. These, except *sounds better*, were mentioned by females and males. *Sounds better* was only mentioned by women, one of which was in the age group 50-59. The negative associations mentioned were the following: meaningless and illogical and inappropriate and annoying. The first pair was mentioned by a 20-29-year-old female, while the latter was mentioned both by female and male 50-59-year olds.

1. *Drive the Change*

This slogan was translated correctly only once (*Bewirke den Wandel*) by a female in the age group of 50-59. Other translations given by the participants are *Fahre den Wechsel/Veränderung* (7). The backwards translation would be correct, however, in German the word *fahre* means physically driving. One participant translated the slogan with *Fahre das innovative Auto* (*Drive the innovative car*), another wrote *Merke den Unterschied* (*Notice the difference*). Four participants said that the image would not change if the slogan was in German. These four participants were two men (20-29) and two females one from each age group. One participant (male, 50-59) mentioned the slogan would sound boring in German, while to female participants said, the slogan would sound strange in German. One participant (female, 20-29) said that only German cars would be advertised in German, but did not mention whether it come with a change in image.

2. *Original is never finished*

This slogan was translated correctly only once (*Original ist niemals aus der Mode*) by a male in the age group of 20-29. Eight participants translated the slogan *Original ist nie fertig*, which is a literal translation but does not represent the meaning of this slogan. Similarly, one participant translated the slogan with *Original wird nie erreicht* (*Original will never be accomplished*). One 20-29-year-old female said the slogan would sound strange in German, while one 50-59-year-old female said that the slogan sounds strange in both languages. One young male mentioned that it would be easier to understand the slogan if it was in German.

3. *Come in and find out*

This slogan was translated correctly five times (*Komm rein und finde was dich interessiert*). Correct translations were given by two females in the age group 20-29, two females in the age group 50-59 and one male in the age group 50-59. The incorrect translation is *Komm herein und finde raus* (*Come in and go out*) (5). Seven participants from both age groups and male and female said that the slogan would not be as catchy, easy going and cool in German but rather old-fashioned and boring.

4. *Live for now*

This slogan was translated correctly five times (*Lebe für das Jetzt*). The incorrect translation given is *Lebe jetzt (Live now)* (5). Five participants answered the question whether the image changes if the slogan was in German. All of them, three men and two women, said the image of this slogan would not change.

5. *Color your life*

This slogan was translated correctly six times (*Mach dein Leben bunt*). The four incorrect translations were translated *Verbessere dein Leben (Improve your life)*.

6. *Try the rainbow, taste the rainbow*

This slogan was translated correctly five times (*Probieren den Regenbogen, schmecke den Regenbogen*). Three participants translated the slogan with *Versuche den Regenbogen, probiere den Regenbogen (Try the rainbow, try the rainbow)* and one translated *Teste den Regenbogen, probiere den Regenbogen (Test the rainbow, try the rainbow)*. Seven participants gave an answer. One said that the meaning would change if it was in German (man, 20-29), three said that it would not make sense or sound awkward in German (man and women, 20-29), one woman (50-59) said that the slogan is stupid in both languages, one woman (20-29) said it sounds better in English and one man (50-59) mentioned the slogan is shorter in English but otherwise they would be similar regarding the image.

7. *Science for a better life*

This slogan was translated correctly by nine participants (*Wissenschaft für ein besseres Leben*). One male in the age group 50-59 translated it with *Wissenschaft beschert ein besseres Leben (Science brings better life)*. Six participants answered the question whether the image would change. Five participants, from all groups, said the image would not change if the slogan was in German, while one woman (20-29) mentioned it would sound old-fashioned in German.

8. *Innovation that excites*

This slogan was translated correctly seven times (*Innovation die entzückt/ verblüfft/ anregt/ begeistert*). The word to excite can be translated with various German words as listed above. Three participants, however, used the correct translation for *excites*, but did not translate the relative clause. These three were females, one 50-59 years old, two 20-29 years old. Six participants gave an answer. Two young men and two women from each age group said that the image would not change if the slogan was in German, while one man (50-59) mentioned the relative clause would sound clumsy in German and one woman (20-29) said that the slogan is clearer in English.

9. *Have it your way*

This slogan was translated correctly three times (*Mache es wie du es magst*). The slogan was translated correctly by one male (20-29) and two females, one from each age group. Incorrect translations include *Trage es wie es dir gefällt (Wear it how you want it)*, *Finde deinen Weg (Find your path)*

and *Gehe dein Leben (Live your life)*. Four participants gave an answer. One man (50-59) and one woman (20-29) said that the image would not change if the slogan was in German and in addition to that, one woman (20-29) said that the slogan sounds good in both languages. However, one man (20-29) thinks that the slogan is more memorable in English.

10. *Turn on tomorrow*

This slogan was not translated correctly by any of the participants. Translations include *Schalte morgen ein (Tune in tomorrow)*, *Verändere die Zukunft (Change the future)*, *Mache es morgen (Do it tomorrow)*. Six participants gave an answer. Two men of each age group said that the image would not change if the slogan was in English. Three women from each age group mentioned that the slogan would sound awkward and unclear in German. One man (20-29) said that the recognition value is higher in English.

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