

## An Analysis of the Usage of Probability Markers in Print Advertising of Hygiene and Cleaning Products

Putri Rindu Kinasih\*, Estri Cinta Tyas Gusti<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>English Department, Faculty of Language, Universitas Bunda Mulia,  
Tangerang 15143, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Economy and Business, Universitas Katolik Indonesia  
Atma Jaya, Jl. Jenderal Sudirman No. 51, Jakarta 12930, Indonesia  
pkinasih@bundamulia.ac.id\*; estricinta@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>

\* corresponding author

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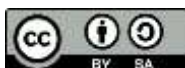
### Abstract

Language plays a role in the meaning of consumer products in numerous ways. As a result, while establishing an advertising campaign for any ethnic group, language and media are crucial concerns. Surprisingly, English is being increasingly widely used in print advertising in countries like Indonesia, where English is not the predominant language of communication. This study aims to find the effect of using English and the usage of probability markers in triggering purchase intentions towards hygiene and cleaning related products due to Covid-19. This study adopted the mixed-method approach. The researchers distributed questionnaires adapted from Hornikx et al. (2010) to 150 participants and interviewed 15 people. The results showed that the participants preferred English version ads. In addition, when making an advertisement, advertisers must not only choose the appropriate language, but also the appropriate diction. Then, the participants agree that pledges as probability markers influenced their decision to purchase hygiene and cleaning products. Lastly, while designing advertisements, related to hygiene and cleaning products, the advertiser should pay special attention to the body-copy (writings).

**Keywords:** Advertising, Hygiene and Cleaning, Pledges, Print Advertising, Probability Markers

### Introduction

According to Douglas & Craig (2007), advertisement is one form of communication within society and provides a commercially motivated means of interpreting material artifacts and the meaning consumers ascribe to them. In addition, language has many facets that relate to the meaning of consumer products (p. 419). In addition, advertisement represents the voice of the brand and is a means by which the brand can establish a dialogue and build relationships with consumers (Keller,



2007). For this reason, language and media are important factors in planning an advertising campaign for any ethnic group (Kalmane, 2012; Khairullah & Khairullah, 2015). Interestingly, the use of English in advertising becomes more common in a country where English is not the language for communication (Dwita, 2019). Even though the ability to use English for communication is very limited among Indonesian people, English is used in an advertisement in Indonesia because it can affect consumers' beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and intentions to have good impressions of the product being advertised (Dwita, 2018).

The use of English in advertising is believed capable of suggesting the advertised product is modern and a part of the globalized environment. In addition, English tends to create a high self-reference effect as it symbolizes a prestigious language. Furthermore, English is associated with a sophisticated image and universal values (Lauder, 2008; Micu & Coulter, 2010; Vettorel, 2013). Here lies the reason why a considerable amount of research has been done to investigate how the English language is used in advertisements in Indonesia.

Firstly, da Silva (2014) found out that in Indonesian printed advertisements, especially billboards, English is used more frequently than the Indonesian language. English was found in product names and categories, slogans, and descriptions. Additionally, she stated that English is considered the aspirational language: a language that creates a positive image of the brand. Thus, the choice of English was related to the audience to whom the products are marketed: products for young people and high-class society used English. The Indonesian language is used for advertising products that are for people of middle to low social class, products that are not luxurious in general.

Similarly, Engliana (2015) analyzed several differences between the international brand and Indonesian local brand advertisements, nevertheless the product offered in this case is the same. It is stated that local brands try to get brand power and position in the market through the usage of the English language (as language choice), product name, logo, and even the content message in brochures and menus. On the contrary, the international brand uses adaptation techniques to call for *Indonesianisation* of their product.

Lastly, Wahyuningsih et al. (2019) investigates the usage of English in the advertisement text of a 'melati' hotel [a budget hotel] in Jember. Firstly, the English language is used because it is considered more efficient for advertisement. Also, their research showed that English is used to establish the identity of the hotel among other competitors in Jember. It is stated that the usage of English is used to show that the promotion staff are young, creative, and modern.

On the whole, a considerable amount of research had successfully spotlighted the reason for implementing the English language in Indonesian advertisements. First, da Silva (2014) focused on the frequency of English language usage on billboards and how it is related to young people and high-class society. Then, Engliana (2015) concentrated on how the English language contributes to brand power and position in the market. Wahyuningsih et al. (2019) emphasized the proposition and reasons for using English code-mixing. All in all, the previous research determined to see the proportion of the English language used in the



advertisement and determined the effects that foreign languages in advertising have on the audience, for instance on the attitude towards foreign language use. However, none of the studies above showed the effect of using English in triggering purchase intentions. Purchase intention refers to the mental stage in the decision-making process where the consumer has developed an actual willingness to act toward an object or brand. In addition, several unanticipated situational factors may erupt to change the purchase intention, such as; functional, physical, financial, social, psychological, and time risks (Kotler & Keller, 2001).

Another important factor that has not been taken into account is the analysis of probability markers. The term probability markers refer to specific words or phrases used to signal to which degree is it likely that a given claim or argument is true (Banks & de Pelsmacker, 2012b). Vestergaard and Schroder (as cited in Banks & de Pelsmacker, 2016) stated that probability markers can indicate various levels of probable (hedges) or certain (pledges) truth, and can be used in advertising to reduce the consumers' tendencies to counter-argue the claim of the ad. Studies showed that the persuasiveness of the advertisement intervenes between the stimulus (advertisement that contains probability markers) and the response which is purchase intention (Banks & de Pelsmacker, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014, 2016).

Lastly, studies showed that there is a huge influence on the shift in consumers' purchase behavior toward Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) products due to Covid-19. There is a huge demand for hygiene and cleaning related products (Bhat & Parkhi, 2021; Kalyani, 2021; Stankiewicz, 2021). Surprisingly, even though there is a high demand for hygiene and cleaning products, consumers do not buy those products blindly only because they look highly at their health (Hidayat et al., 2021). Therefore, this research is aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What is the participants' preference between the Indonesian and English hygiene and cleaning advertisements?
2. To what extent do English probable markers in hygiene and cleaning advertisements affect the consumers' purchase intention in Indonesia?

## Method

This study adopts the mixed-method approach. Dörnyei (2007) defined a mixed-method study as "the collection and the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study with some attempts to integrate the two approaches at one or more stages of the research process" (p.163). He also stated that the purposes of mixed-methods are to gain a more comprehensive understanding, validate findings from a different perspective, and to reach multiple audiences (Dörnyei, 2007). In other words, this method combines quantitative and qualitative designs. This study applied sequential designs, in which the qualitative data is used to inform a subsequent quantitative dataset, as well as to explain and provide more insight into quantitative conclusions (Guest et al., 2013). All in all, qualitative research methods are best for addressing many of *why* questions that researchers have in mind (Given, 2008, p. xxix).



## Research Procedures

The research was started by creating advertisement samples of hygiene and cleaning products. The type of advertisement which is used in this research is printed advertisement because it is considered more effective in influencing purchase intention. Moreover, printed advertisement is used for changing consumer buying behavior because it creates brand image awareness in the mind of consumers (Chaudhry et al., 2017; Sama, 2019). On top of that, consumers rely on cognitive processes when making a purchase decision, that they will pay attention to an ad, and will carefully think about the information conveyed. The approach works finely in print ads because consumers take the time to read the claim or findings presented in the advertisement (Clow & Baack, 2018).

According to Kotler & Keller (2016), the picture, headline, and copy in print ads matter in that order. The picture must draw attention. The headline must reinforce the picture and lead the person to read the copy. The copy must be engaging and the brand's logo prominent (p. 612). Here lies the reason why the printed advertisement samples are carefully created with the help of a team consisting of a professional copywriter and designers who are currently working for creative agencies in Jakarta. Also, during the process of creating both Indonesian and English versions of printed advertisement samples, the writers are helped by a professional translator who is currently working for a translation company in Jakarta. The translator has spent a significant amount of time on various translating/interpreting projects.

To find out the audience's preference between English and Indonesian advertisement, the writers give open-ended questions, which were adopted from Hornikx et al. (2010) questionnaire on the ad's preference. The questionnaire consists of five pairs of ads, each pair containing the English advertisement and the same advertisement with equivalent Indonesian content. In addition, each advertisement consists of one *pledge* as the probability marker (for an example, see Figure 1). Despite the downside, pledges are chosen in this research because they are used more often compared to hedges in advertisements (Banks & de Pelsmacker, 2016). In addition, pledges attract consumers to products that are based on warranties and safety (Banks & de Pelsmacker, 2013). Pledges are also used for advertisements that are less customized or person-specific. Consequently, it is easier to evaluate the product objectively because pledges signal the strength of the advertisers' convictions (Banks & de Pelsmacker, 2012a, 2014). The advertisement samples were kept simple and as uniform across hygiene and cleaning products as possible, to avoid any confounding bias.





Figure 1. The example of advertisement

Each version of the main questionnaire started with a welcome screen, on which the participants are greeted, quickly briefed about the study, and instructed on how to proceed with filling out the questionnaire. The participants are allowed to proceed through the questionnaire at their own pace to simulate, as much as possible, natural advertisement processing. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview was done to find more opinions and deeper insights into preferred advertisements. The interviewees were chosen based on random sampling. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. After that, the transcription was analyzed to support whether the perceptions went along with the result of the questionnaire.

### Participants

In all, there are 150 participants in this research. Convenient sampling is employed for practical reasons, and descriptive statistical analysis is used for the questionnaires. In this research, the writers applied *nested* sampling for the interview session. In other words, the writers selected a subset of a larger sample to infer data (Guest et al., 2013). Kriyantono (2006) stated that the number of interviewed participants does not determine the quality of the research (p. 322). Thus, the writer arranged to interview 10% of the participants (15 people).

### Data collection procedure

The questionnaire is distributed by utilizing *Google Form*. Then, the semi-structured interview is done to find more opinions and deeper insights by using a recorded *Zoom Meeting session*.

### Data Analysis Procedure

The result of the questionnaire was analyzed by using SPSS Statistical Package for Social Science) 26.0. Firstly, the writers analyzed the *mode* for each poster shown





to the participants. In addition, the writers analyzed the *mode* for the questions about English probable markers.

### Findings and Discussion

Firstly, from Table 1, it can be seen that the participants preferred Poster A which fully used the English language.

Table 1: Participants' preferences of printed ads

Between-Subjects Factors			
		Value Label	N
Poster 1	1	Poster A	101
Toothpaste	2	Poster B	49
Poster 2 Body	1	Poster A	83
Soap	2	Poster B	67
Poster 3 Hand	1	Poster A	79
Sanitizer	2	Poster B	71
Poster 4	1	Poster A	79
Shampoo	2	Poster B	71
Poster 5	1	Poster A	97
Disinfectant	2	Poster B	53

From Table 1, it is shown that Poster A is most favored. There are 101 participants who chose Poster A for Poster 1 Toothpaste, 83 participants chose Poster A for Poster 2 Body Soap, 79 participants chose Poster A for Poster 3 Hand Sanitizer, 79 participants chose Poster A for Poster 4 Shampoo, and 97 participants chose Poster A for Poster 5 Disinfectant. This result above is aligned with the previous research which stated that Indonesian people prefer English printed ads compared to the Indonesian language printed ads (da Silva, 2014; Engliana, 2015; Wahyuningsih et al., 2019). An interesting result was found when the writers examined further participants' reasons on why they preferred the English version of toothpaste printed ads.

Table 2: Participants' reasons for choosing the English toothpaste poster

Participants' Reasons for Choosing English Version of Toothpaste Poster					
Valid		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Easy To Read	10	9.9	9.9	9.9
	Sophisticated	21	20.8	20.8	30.7
	Personal Preference	9	8.9	8.9	39.6
	Convincing	17	16.8	16.8	56.4



Appealing	16	15.8	15.8	72.3
Familiarity	9	8.9	8.9	81.2
Accepted Globally	19	18.8	18.8	100.0
Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Of 101 participants who chose Toothpaste Poster A, more than 20% of the participants thought that English sounds more sophisticated. Then, more than 18% of the participants believed that by using English, the advertisement would be accepted globally as it reaches more people. Then, more than 16% of the participants stated that English sounds more convincing. In addition, 15,8% of the participants stated that the English version of the printed advertisement is more appealing. Interestingly, more than 9% of the participants thought that the English version is easier to read. Moreover, more than 8% of the participants thought that they are more familiar with the English vocabulary written on the poster. While the last 8.9% of the participants chose the English version due to their personal preference. The reasons stated by the participants above are aligned with the previous research which believed that not only does English represent a prestigious language, but also is connected with a refined image as well as universal values (Lauder, 2008; Micu & Coulter, 2010; Vettorel, 2013).



Figure 2: The Indonesian version of toothpaste poster

Based on the interview, Participant B stated that as he saw the poster (as seen in Figure 1), he felt that the word ‘modal’ written on the poster was not suitable with the product.

*Misalnya untuk odol, dengan kata “modal utama” itu agak aneh. Kata modal itu, kayak bisnis, menjual, kayak korporasi mau bikin bisnis. Pikiran orang kalau dengar*



*kata 'modal' pikirannya ke uang, bukan ke produk kayak gitu (Participants B, personal communication, September 19, 2021).*

For example, on the toothpaste poster, there is the phrase 'modal utama', which is a bit odd. The word 'modal' (capital) links with business. It's like a corporate plan to build a business. In our mind, when we hear the word 'modal' (capital) we think of money, not about product (Participants B, personal communication, September 19, 2021).

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that Participant B felt that the word 'modal' in the Indonesian language does not look good on the poster. For him, the word 'modal' was associated with business more than hygiene and cleaning-related products. Therefore, instead of convincing him that the toothpaste is boosting his confidence, the word 'modal' reminded him of money.

Secondly, the writers also noted that even though English version posters are preferable to the participants, it should be noted that they also have a crucial issue which is diction. In persuading people to buy a product, one should pay extra attention to the diction (Widyahening, 2015). The answer of Participant E below is an example of how the usage of the English language can be problematic.

*Nah, itu soalnya kalau yang bahasa inggris itu vocabnya terlalu ribet menurutku. Ya misalnya, proven relief, proven itu kan... bahasa verb ketiga, eh, ya kan? Maksudnya... misalnya kayak clean your scalp, scalp itu apa juga orang jarang dengar. Orang lebih susah memahami [posternya], nggak umum lah vocab-nya (Participants E, personal communication, September 19, 2021).*

So, the case is, I think in the English version the vocabulary used in posters is too complicated. Yeah, for example, proven relief, proven is... past participle, right? I mean... for example, clean your scalp, what is scalp? We rarely hear that word. It is harder for us to understand [the poster], the vocabulary is not common (Participant E, personal communication, September 19, 2021).

The excerpt above consists of Participant E's opinion towards the English version poster of shampoo. From the excerpt above, it can be seen that Participant E thought that the English poster contained difficult words, such as proven and scalp. The word 'proven' which is used in the poster can be classified as the past participle of the word 'prove'. According to Participant E, most Indonesian people are not accustomed to the word 'proven'. Similarly, the word 'scalp' is not commonly used in Indonesia.

Therefore, from this point, it can be concluded that in creating an advertisement one must not stop choosing the language, but also choosing the right diction. That the choice of language in advertising is an important factor as it aims to attract and influence people (Kalmane, 2012). When the audience watches or reads the display advertisement, it is important to make sure that the words we chose do not result in complications and ambiguity (Widyahening, 2015). For example, Participant J





highlighted the word ‘mental’ used in the Indonesian version of the shampoo poster. The word ‘mental’ in the Indonesian language can be classified as homographs since they have the same spelling but different meanings and pronunciations as well. According to Participant J, as a customer, it took a while before he finally got the real intended meaning of the word ‘mental’ in the poster. He also added that before he knew it, as he was busy thinking about the meaning, he had forgotten the product which was being advertised.

### Participants’ Perception on English Probable Markers

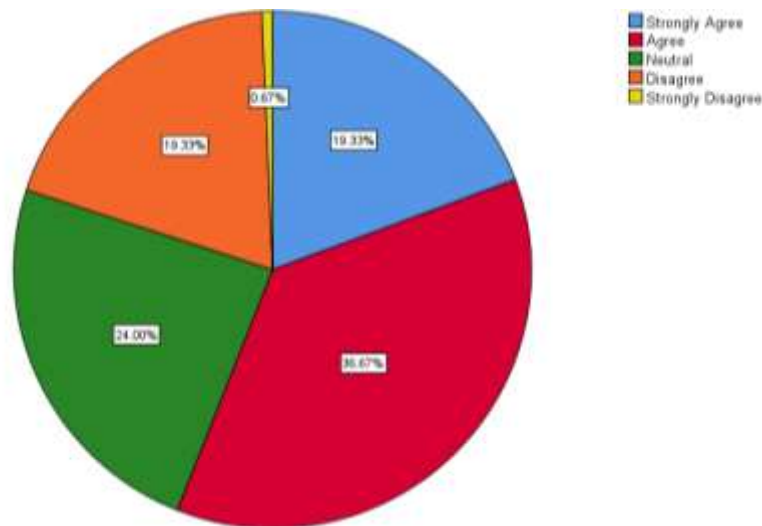


Figure 3: Participants’ perception of English probable markers in hygiene and cleaning advertisements

Thirdly, from the figure above it can be seen that 56% of the participants agree that the English probable markers played a significant role in influencing them to buy hygiene and cleaning products. This research used pledges by creating advertisement samples.

*Yup, kata-kata 'ultimate' sama 'seratus persen' itu bisa mempengaruhi gue saat beli something. Karena kalo suatu brand atau produk memberikan garansi atau klaim di iklan mereka, pasti gue akan mempertimbangkan. Jadi, menurut gue kalo hanya dilihat dari segi bahasa, kayak misalnya Bahasa Inggris doang, buat gue nggak berpengaruh ya. Makanya, di questioner gue jawabnya setuju bukan sangat setuju. Kalo sangat setuju, berarti setiap ada kata 'Guaranteed' gue langsung interest. Nah, gue nggak begitu ke sana. (Participant L, personal communication, September 29, 2021).*

Yes, the words like ‘ultimate’ and 100% can influence me when I am buying something. Because, when a brand or a product give guarantee or claim on their advertisements, I will consider it for sure. So, for me, it is not about Indonesian or English. For me, language is not the case. That is why I did not choose ‘strongly agree’. If I chose ‘strongly agree’ it means whenever I saw the word

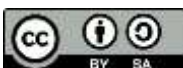


'Guaranteed' then I will automatically be interested. No, it doesn't work that way for me (Participant L, personal communication, September 29, 2021).

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that Participant L stated that the words such as *ultimate* or 100% can influence him whenever he is buying something. For him, when a product is brave enough to guarantee and to make a claim, then he will give a thought to buying the product. The finding above is aligned with the previous research which stated that pledges are indicating the advertiser's belief in the proposition offered. As a result, the acceptance claims generated from deductive reasoning are increased when pledges are presented (Areni, 2002; Berney-Reddish & Areni, 2005). However, he added that whether the pledges are written in Indonesian language or English does not matter. Similar to Participant L, Participant B also stated since she is not fluent enough in English, then clarity and familiarity became very important.

A phrase like *guaranteed 99%* on the hand sanitizer poster evokes her curiosity because she is familiar with the word *guaranteed*. Therefore, from this research, it can be noted that the participants do agree that the usage of pledges is important. The pledges influence them in having the intention to buy hygiene and cleaning products. However, whether the pledges are written in English or Indonesian language is not significant. The finding above is aligned with the theory which believed that people read advertisements when their attention is caught by an arresting picture or message. Consequently, it is very crucial to keep the message simple and readable. One might argue about the number of words that can be present, but what counts is whether or not the message can capture people's attention and be easily understood (Vilanilam & Varghese, 2004, p. 78). Thus, pledges written in the Indonesian language are also able to evoke the intention to buy hygiene and cleaning products because customers can grasp the information offered when it is presented in their native language (Dwita, 2018, p. 136).

Lastly, additional results were also found in this research. According to Kotler & Keller (2016) in print adverts, the picture, headline, and writing are important in that order. Thus, writers tried to see which component matters most according to the participants.



### Most Influencing Component Towards Printed

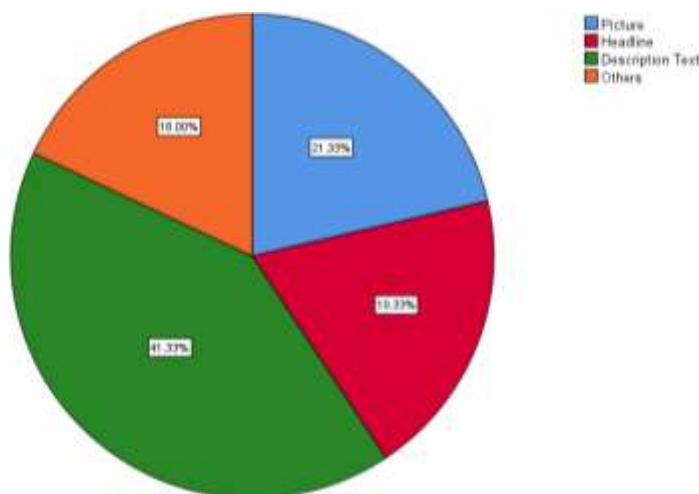


Figure 4: The most influencing component of printed advertisement

From the figure above, it can be seen that more than 41% of the participants agree that description text (writings) became the most influencing component of printed adverts. While 18% of the participants see there are other factors influencing components towards printed adverts.

*Aku kalau lihat suatu iklan produk yang berhubungan sama badan mesti lebih detail aku baca bagian diskripsi produknya. Apalagi kalau ada ditulis komposisinya disitu. Soalnya, aku lebih tertarik saat [me]lihat ada elemen yang unik; kayak 'charcoal' itu. Nah terus aku 'tu harus baca diskripsi karena ya takut kalau sampe ada zat atau komposisi dalam produk yang malah buat tubuhku kenapa-napa. (Participant G, personal communication, September 20, 2021).*

If I see a product advertisement that is associated with the body, I need to read the product's descriptions in more detail. Especially if the composition is written there. You see, I'm more interested when I found unique elements; like charcoal in the toothpaste. Besides that, I have to read the description because I'm afraid that there will be a substance or other composition in the product that will cause harm to my body. (Participant G, personal communication, September 20, 2021).

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that Participant G explained further why description text (writings) becomes the most influencing component of printed adverts. For her, when she decides to buy a product related to skin, she will think to read the product's descriptions cautiously. In her opinion, reading descriptions of hygiene and cleaning products can prevent her from any substance or other



composition in the product that will cause harm to her body. Additionally, reading the composition of the products was amusing for her, like finding out unique ingredients such as charcoal in toothpaste. As a result, while creating an advertisement, especially one that relates to hygiene and cleaning products, the advertiser needs to pay extra attention to body-copy (writings). The text or body copy contains important details regarding the product, such as facts and figures, test findings, testimonials, or assurances of satisfaction. As a result, the text or body-copy not only explains the content of the advertisement but also influences people to like and choose the product (Gupta & Nasa, 2021, p. 105).

### Conclusion

From here, it can be concluded that the participants favored Poster A, which was written entirely in English. The participants' reasons for preferring the English version are consistent with prior research, which believed that English is associated with a sophisticated image as well as universal values, in addition to being a prestigious language. Second, when making an advertisement, advertisers must not only choose the appropriate language, but also the appropriate diction. It is critical to ensure that the words used do not cause difficulties or misunderstanding when the audience reads the display advertisement. Third, the participants agree that pledges as probability markers influenced their decision to purchase hygiene and cleaning products. However, whether the pledges are written in English or Indonesian is not significant as long as the content is maintained straightforward and understandable. Lastly, while designing advertisements, related to hygiene and cleaning products, the advertiser should pay special attention to the body-copy (writings). The body-copy section has the potential to educate, persuade, remind, and impact target clients.

As a recommendation for further research, studying the effect of using hedges and pledges in different sectors (beauty, food, beverages, etc) is suggested. Finally, putting other variables such as demography into account might also affect the result of further research.

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