

erlands (OUNL) has played an important role in this regard in the past. I am of the opinion that the OUNL ought to continue to fulfil that role,

of course in dialogue with publishers and Dutch and Flemish experts in psychology.

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## Academic students of psychology should read textbooks written in English

Peter A. Starreveld

Do we all have to study American textbooks? No! Do we all have to study textbooks written in English? Yes! Why? I see at least two reasons for this. First, English has become the professional language in which the science of psychology progresses. Therefore, already at the start of their education, academic students should learn to accommodate the language and the specific terminology in which the communication with their future peers will be performed. Second, the first year of a higher education course in the Netherlands serves not only the purpose of introducing students to the field but also the purpose of student selection. Therefore, academic students should find out early whether a study involving lots of reading in English is suited to them.

Although Brysbart and Dumoulin (2007) acknowledge the important role of English in the science of psychology, they nevertheless present a number of arguments against using textbooks written in English. Below I will briefly address these issues in turn.

First, Brysbart and Dumoulin argue that students' proficiency in English, as they start, might be too low. Although I do not disagree, in my view this need not be very problematic. If, for example, students adopt the habit of looking up every word they do not know during their reading, they will soon find out that they will have to consult the dictionary less and less. Teachers can help students on this trajectory in various ways. For example, they could stress the importance of study habits like the one sketched above. In addition, teachers can easily boost students' L2 proficiency by providing a list of the names of important English psychological concepts, their L1 translation equivalents and a brief description of the concept in L1. If students are still unable to acquire the necessary English proficiency, this might contribute to the selection purposes of the first year of the course.

Second, Brysbart and Dumoulin (2007) discuss the detrimental role of language switching costs when students study in English and are lectured and tested in L1, and I agree that those costs exist. However, again, teachers can try to minimise those costs by providing the already mentioned list of translation equivalents and descriptions and, at the time of test, the English terms in parentheses whenever the L1 translation of English words might not be completely obvious.

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Finally, Brysbaert and Dumoulin (2007) raise a point concerning the relevance of the covered material for the situation in the motherland. Indeed, also in my view, a book that addresses local issues is to be preferred because students learn best when the relevance of the material is directly clear to them. However, this issue is, in principle, independent of the language of a book. In fact, I use precisely this relevance argument to explain to my students that they have to learn to read in English in order to perform well in the rest of their studies and in their later work, and they easily accept it.

In summary, in my view, in universities that aim to educate psychology students to become scientists or scientist practitioners, books written in English have to be preferred. Things may be different for more applied studies. When an institute's aim is to educate students to become practitioners, a book written in L1 seems most suited because, in that case, communication with future peers will mostly be performed in L1. However, for academic students who will be communicating with future peers in English, mastering the English language should be a learning objective right from the start.

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# Teaching will make the difference and fill the gaps

Frans A.J. Verstraten and Kees van den Bos

Much can be said about Brysbaert and Dumoulin's (2007) interesting contribution. Due to space limitations we can only focus on a few issues. The main point we want to make is that it is teaching that makes the difference. It is no mean task to choose one introduction book to psychology over the others. There are many textbooks on the market, some of which do not meet scientific standards. Irrespective of the choice, teaching should make up for topics that were omitted or had to be left out. Using a textbook in Dutch would be an interesting test of the hypothesis that language makes a difference as well, but nothing indicates that there are severe problems with language, at least in the Netherlands. Moreover, as already mentioned by Brysbaert and Dumoulin (2007), the number of students that can potentially be taught in Dutch does not make it likely that there will be much to choose from in terms of textbooks. At Utrecht University, both staff and students rate our book (Gazzaniga & Heatherton, 2006) highly and exam scores have gone up to the best level in a long time. For many of the observations dis-

cussed in the target paper, solving the remaining problems appears to boil down to the choice of a good textbook – which indeed covers more than just what happens in North America – and especially how lecturers teach.

## Second language

Nowadays, most textbooks are so well written that the language should not make too big a difference. Moreover, the Dutch seem to be very good in English compared with people of other nationalities. They rank among the best in the world on the TOEFL test (Test Of English as a Foreign Language). Although we admire Brysbaert and Dumoulin's effort to convince us that using a second language is not always the best way to start, there are good reasons to retain English as the textbook's language. Indeed, the international language of the scientific community is English. The sooner you start reading, if not using it, the better students are prepared when they have to find their own way in the literature. To mock a bit with a parallel example, there is convincing scientific evidence that the way Asian children learn to count (for example, eleven = ten plus 1 and twenty = two times 10) gives them a great advantage in dealing with larger numbers at an early age (Miller, Smith,

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