

# *De ongezouten waarheid*

## **An empirical investigation of white lies in Dutch**

Master thesis Linguistics: Language and Communication

Margot A.W. van Dijk

First reader: Prof. Dr. M. Terkourafi

Second reader: Dr. R.J.U. Boogaart

Leiden University

29-06-2018

### **Abstract**

This thesis provides an exploratory account of white lies in Dutch. There is no literature explicitly dedicated to white lies in the Dutch language. This gap provides the starting point for this exploratory study which aims to contribute to a wider research agenda investigating the definition of lying and how different types of lies may be distinguished in different contexts and cultures. The main research question of this thesis is: How are white lies used by native speakers of Dutch? A two-part investigation, consisting of a questionnaire and a role-play, shows that native speakers of Dutch use white lies in everyday conversations. White lies are used to benefit both the speaker and the hearer, but they are also used to avoid undesirable scenarios.

**Keywords:** white lies, Dutch, lying, empirical investigation

## Contents

1 Introduction	p. 3
2 Theoretical framework	p. 3
2.1 Lying	p. 4
2.1.1 Lying in different theories	p. 5
2.1.2 Deception	p. 9
2.1.3 Manipulation	p. 10
2.1.4 Cultural aspects	p. 11
2.1.5 Hiding one's lies	p. 11
2.2 White lies	p. 12
2.2.1 White or prosocial?	p. 14
2.2.2 Working definition	p. 14
2.2.3 Place in theories	p. 15
2.2.4 Why do people use white lies?	p. 16
3 Method	p. 17
3.1 Questionnaire	p. 17
3.2 Role-play	p. 18
4 Results	p. 19
4.1 Questionnaire	p. 20
4.1.1 Quantitative	p. 20
4.1.2 Qualitative	p. 27
4.2 Role-play	p. 36
4.2.1 Lies said	p. 37
4.2.2 Motivations	p. 39
4.2.3 Recognition of lies	p. 42
4.3 Combined results	p. 46
5 Discussion	p. 48
6 Limitations	p. 48
7 Conclusion	p. 50
8 References	p. 51
9 Appendix	p. 54
A Situations questionnaire	p. 54
A1 Original version	p. 54
A2 English translation	p. 55
B Scenarios role-play	p. 58
B1 Original version	p. 58
B2 English translation	p. 62

## **1 Introduction**

Dutch people are generally seen as very direct and straightforward; whatever they are thinking, they will say, even though it can come across as unkind or even rude. It therefore might come as a slight surprise that, even in Dutch, white lies are used, which are a typical example of polite language use (Terkourafi, forthcoming: 3). When taking into account that, according to DePaulo & Kashy (1998: 63), people lie a lot in everyday life, this might make more sense. Even though all aspects of language use can be culturally bound, this does not mean that white lies do not exist at all in Dutch. There is, however, no literature explicitly regarding white lies in the Dutch language. This gap provides the starting point for this exploratory study which aims to contribute to a wider research agenda investigating the definition of lying and how different types of lies may be distinguished in different contexts and cultures.

The main research question addressed in this thesis is: How are white lies used by native speakers of Dutch? To answer this question, four sub-questions will be discussed elaborately and will be answered in the conclusion. These are: To what extent do native speakers of Dutch use white lies? How do native speakers of Dutch define white lies? When do native speakers of Dutch use white lies and why? Do native speakers of Dutch use white lies in the way they think they do?

In this thesis, a distinction is made between three words that all relate to lying, with these being 'lie', 'white lie' and 'full-fledged lie'. With 'lie', both white lies and full-fledged lies are meant.

First, the overall theory of lying and the specified theory of white lies will be discussed in the theoretical framework. Then, the method for the questionnaire and the role-play will be explained. Subsequently, the results of the questionnaire and the role-play are considered, which will afterwards be compared. In the discussion the results are related to the theoretical framework. The limitations section discusses some limitations of this thesis and finally in the conclusion a short summary will be given and the main research question and the four sub-questions are answered.

## **2 Theoretical framework**

This theoretical framework consists of two parts. In the first part, lying in general is discussed. In the second part, the focus is on white lies.

## 2.1 Lying

Lying has been the topic of many articles, books, and papers in the recent history of linguistics (e.g. Coleman & Kay 1981; DePaulo, Lindsay, Malone, Muhlenbruck, Charlton & Cooper 2003; Fallis 2009; Saul 2012). Over the years, different definitions of lying have been proposed. There still is no general consensus over what a definition of lying should consist of. In this thesis, I will use a definition which is used in most relevant literature and takes into account many pros and cons that have come into play in the past. This definition is the one that Saul (2012) proposes:

“If the speaker is not the victim of linguistic error/malapropism or using metaphor, or irony, then they lie iff (1) they say that P; (2) they believe P to be false; (3) they take themselves to be in a warranting context.” (29)

To understand the different parts this definition contains, it is necessary to look into the history of how lying is defined. One of the first articles about lying that made an impact on how we look at this type of utterance is by Coleman & Kay (1981). The goal of their research was to come up with the meaning of the word *lie* considering prototype semantics. According to prototype semantics “the word meaning attempts to account for the obvious pretheoretical intuition that semantic categories frequently have blurry edges and allow degrees of membership” (Coleman & Kay 1981: 27). They therefore come up with the definition of a prototypical lie which, in the best case, answers to all characteristics. Their definition holds that a prototypical lie “is characterized by (a) falsehood, which is (b) deliberate and (c) intended to deceive” (Coleman & Kay 1981: 28). However, since this is a definition that is based on prototype theory, an utterance can still be classified as a lie when not all these characteristics are met. This has been regarded as a problem by Meibauer (2014: 107), because utterances that are not meant as lies by the speaker can still be perceived as a lie if this definition is followed. Part (c) of the definition, “intended to deceive”, has been criticized the most because it is also possible to lie without the intention to deceive. This is the case, for example, with bald-faced lies, which are lies of which both the speaker and the hearer know that it is a lie (Meibauer 2014: 107). I agree with these concerns, which is why I choose to follow the definition by Saul (2012: 29) as mentioned above.

In Saul’s (2012: 29) definition, a few difficulties are avoided by explicitly mentioning them as not being a lie, for example in the case of irony. Secondly, in the definition it is stated that a lie can only be a lie if a speaker says a lie. ‘Saying’ in this case refers to the unique

production of a sentence in context in any way, shape, or form, including written language; therefore, written scenarios will be used to gauge participants' reactions to fictional conversation. An important factor in lying in this definition is that the speaker believes their utterance to be false. If you do not know that you are saying something false, for instance by repeating a lie that someone else told you and you believe to be the truth, then you are not lying (Galasinski 2000: 23). The last part of the definition is about a 'warranting context'. This means that when you are, for instance, an actor in a play, you are not lying when you are reciting your lines. You simply are not in a context in which anything you say will be warranted; therefore, you are not lying. This definition of lying thus gives a complete and solid base for what will be regarded as full-fledged lies in this thesis.

### **2.1.1 Lying in different theories**

There are a number of theories in linguistics that have set the tone for how utterances are classified. These theories can also be used to define lying. The theories that will be looked at in this thesis are three of the theories that constitute the basis of lying.

First, lying in terms of Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory will be considered. After that, lying will be defined in terms of Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle. Lastly, lying will be considered in the light of Brown & Levinson's (1978) Politeness Theory.

#### *2.1.1.1 Speech Act Theory*

According to Searle (1969: 16), speech acts, also called illocutionary acts, are the basic units of language. With every communicative utterance, a speech act is performed. These speech acts are rule-governed, which means that there are rules according to which people talk (Searle 1969: 22). However, not all speech acts have to comply with the same rules. That is why Searle (1979: 147) came up with a taxonomy of speech acts. This taxonomy consists of five classes of speech acts, namely assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. The class of speech acts that can be lied with is the class of assertives. This is because assertives are about a 'words to the world' view, which means that the words describe the world as is. Lying is the case when the felicity conditions are not met or, in other words, when the speech act is infelicitous. The rules that speech acts need to comply with in order to be felicitous are different for each speech act. For assertives, Searle (1969) proposed the following definition:

“Propositional content rule	What is to be expressed is any proposition p.
First preparatory rule	S has evidence (reasons etc.) for the truth of p.
Second preparatory rule	It is not obvious to both S and H that H knows (does not need to be reminded of, etc.) p.
Sincerity rule	S believes p.
Constitutive rule	Counts as an undertaking to the effect that p represents an actual state of affairs.” (Meibauer 2014: 67)

The taxonomy of the speech acts and their properties can be found in Figure 1.

Classes of Speech Acts	<i>Illocutionary point</i>	<i>Direction of Fit</i>	<i>Psychological State</i>	<i>Propositional content</i>
<i>Assertives</i> (stating, suggesting, boasting, complaining, claiming, reporting, ...)	assertive	words-to-world	belief	variable
<i>Directives</i> (ordering, commanding, requesting, recommending, advising, ...)	directive	world-to-words	want	future action of H
<i>Commissives</i> (promising, vowing, offering, ...)	commissive	world-to-words	intention	future action of S
<i>Expressives</i> (thanking, congratulating, pardoning, blaming, praising, ...)	expressive	-	variable	property (/action) of S or H
<i>Declaratives</i> (naming, appointing, sentencing, ...)	declarative	words-to-world & world-to-words	belief+intention	variable

Figure 1: Searle’s (1979) classification of speech acts

According to Reboul (1994: 297), there is a paradox of lies in Speech Act Theory. Speech acts are illocutionary acts according to Searle (1969: 16), but Reboul (1994: 297) argues that lies cannot be illocutionary acts, because for a lie to be successful, the perlocutionary act of lying should be successful. If that is the case, the illocutionary act of assertion cannot be successful. Reboul (1994: 297) therefore argues that lies are perlocutionary acts and therefore cannot be described by Speech Act Theory in the way that Searle (1969: 16) intends his theory to work.

### 2.1.1.2 Grice

According to Grice (1989: 26), a conversation should be guided by certain assumptions. These assumptions arise from a principle which he calls the Cooperative Principle. His explanation of this principle is as follows: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice 1989: 26). These assumptions are worked out into four conversational maxims, which make up the rules for daily conversation. The main idea of Grice’s cooperative principle is that the hearer is able to interpret what the speaker says because the speaker is assumed to be following this principle: the speaker is cooperative and following the maxims. This means that what is implicated can be understood, even when it is not explicitly said (Lumsden 2008: 1897). Grice’s four maxims are:

1. “Quantity:  
Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).  
Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
2. Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true.  
Do not say what you believe to be false.  
Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
3. Relation: Be relevant.
4. Manner: Be perspicuous.
  1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
  2. Avoid ambiguity.
  3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
  4. Be orderly.” (Grice 1989: 26)

When engaging in conversation, the speaker must be careful to follow these maxims in order for the hearer to interpret the speaker correctly (Grice 1989: 31). When the speaker does not follow any or all of these maxims, they are not obeying the Cooperative Principle and therefore uncooperative conversational partners. Not following a maxim is called ‘flouting’ that maxim (Grice 1989: 31).

Grice’s second maxim of Quality is often associated with lying and misleading. When a speaker flouts this maxim, they are either saying something that they believe to be false or that they lack adequate evidence for. For example, when a speaker points to a tree and says

'Look, it's a boat', the speaker is saying something that is obviously not true. They have flouted the maxim of Quality. The flouting of a maxim is supposed to be intended by the speaker and recognized by the hearer. Therefore, lying cannot be part of speakers meaning in the sense of Grice, since it is not meant to be recognized as a lie by the hearer (Meibauer 2014: 162).

### *2.1.1.3 Politeness*

Politeness theory is most notably proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). This theory is about constituting face, both of the speaker and the hearer. There are two types of face, negative face and positive face. Negative face is about politeness as leaving others alone, while positive face is about politeness as including others (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62). Face is about a dyad, because it is both about the speaker and the hearer. It is not possible to have face in an empty room, because an observer is required. In Brown and Levinson's theory, it is never possible to enhance someone's face; it is only possible to negatively affect someone's face. That is why speech acts in the framework of Brown and Levinson (1978: 65) are all considered Face Threatening Acts (FTAs).

When FTAs are inevitable, politeness strategies come into play. They can save the speaker's or hearer's positive or negative face. Brown and Levinson (1978: 91) have outlined four main types of politeness strategies: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record.

When politeness gets linked to lying, white lies are the type of lies that are the prime example (Terkourafi, forthcoming: 3). According to Coleman & Kay (1981: 29), "almost any situation in which politeness requires some sort of remark may produce a social lie". White lies can thus be seen as polite, because they concern other-benefiting deception (Argo & Shiv 2012: 1094). I think that even though white lies are often said to be polite and to benefit the hearer, this is not always the case. White lies can also be said to benefit the speaker themselves, for example when you decline an invitation to a party of a vague acquaintance because you do not feel like going. Even though you also benefit the other and protect the other's face, you also benefit yourself: by saying a white lie, you do not have to go to a party you do not want to go to. When it comes to white lies that only benefit the speaker themselves and protect the speaker's face, these may also exist. Whether these types of lies are seen as white lies could however depend on the context, which will be elaborated on in paragraph 2.2.



### 2.1.2 Deception

DePaulo et al. (2003: 74) define deception “as a deliberate attempt to mislead others”. This means that in order to deceive, the speaker must be trying to mislead the hearer. This is also reported by Galasinski (2000: 21), who says that the essence of deception is “to affect the target in such a way that his behaviour/action is an instrument of attaining the goals of the manipulator, who acts without using force but in such a way that the target does not know the goal of the manipulator’s action”. This means that not only the speaker must be trying to mislead the hearer, but also that it must be done carefully (“without using force”) and without giving away the goal of the action to the hearer. Deception therefore can only be successful when all these criteria are met, according to Galasinski (2000: 21).

However, this does not mean that all deception has to have negative consequences for the hearer. Oswald (2010: 98) argues that deception can be good, bad and everything in between. He speaks in particular about the motives that lie behind deception. This idea is backed up by Levine & Schweitzer (2015: 89), who demonstrate that “some forms of deception increase trust”. Here, they refer to prosocial lies. These types of lies, which will be discussed elaborately in paragraph 2.2.1, can, according to Levine & Schweitzer (2015: 89), increase interpersonal trust. This means that deception in the form of prosocial lies is seen as deception with good intentions.

Lying, however, is not the same as deception. Meibauer (2014: 25) discusses two main differences between lying and deceiving. First, deceiving can be non-verbal, whereas lying can only be verbal. Second, if deceiving is verbal, it is not bound to assertions. Recall that in paragraph 2.1.1.1 the claim was made that only assertions can be lies. This claim still holds, because a distinction is made between lying and deceiving. This means that even though lying is bound to assertions, deceiving is not. An example of deception is if someone utters *What time will John be here?* when they know that John was not invited to come over. If the hearer thought that John was invited, it is deceptive. It also is infelicitous, because the speaker is asking about something they already know. Furthermore, Meibauer (2014: 8) argues that lying can include deception and deception does not have to include lying. This gets explained by the example that one can pretend to be asleep and in this way deceives someone. Because lying tends to be seen as a verbal act, Meibauer (2014: 8) argues that this is not a lie; for this to be a lie, the speaker would have had to utter that they were asleep.

### **2.1.3 Manipulation**

Manipulation is described by Oswald (2010: 123) as an utterance that is “intentionally used as a means to attain a perlocutionary goal the speaker is covertly pursuing”. Breaking down this definition, this means that an utterance must have some sort of manipulative intention. This intention is driven by the goal a speaker is pursuing without the hearer knowing so. This particular goal must be perlocutionary, which means that it is about what the speaker will do with the utterance. Therefore, what Oswald means with this definition is that the hearer will be manipulated by the utterance if they do not figure out that the speaker is trying to get them to do or believe something. This ‘something’ has to be something that “twists the vision of the world in the mind of the addressee” (Oswald 2010: 104).

It has long been believed that manipulation can only be done in a way that is in the disadvantage of the hearer: something negative has to be disguised as something positive (Oswald 2010: 104). However, Oswald (2010: 112) questions this view. He asks the question whether or not it is “possible to manipulate people to their own advantage”. This means that manipulation does not necessarily have to be a bad thing or something with a bad intention; it can also be something with a good intention, for example when someone gets tricked into a treatment for the deathly illness they are suffering from, while they are very scared of needles and this treatment is injection-based. In the end, the hearer gets manipulated, but it is for their own good and with good intentions (Oswald 2010: 112).

This is similar to the notion of deception that has just been discussed. This leads me to conclude that deception and manipulation can be done with both good and bad intentions. It would be logical that this also goes for lying, because deception and manipulation can be elements of lying. This is also exactly what can be done with white lies. The topic of white lies will be elaborated on in the second part of this theoretical framework (see paragraph 2.2).

### **2.1.4 Cultural aspects**

Like many other phenomena in language, lying might be culturally bound. Moral norms differ from one culture to another (Oswald 2010: 33). These moral norms play a big part in how accepted lying is in a culture. When the moral norm in a culture is that it is impolite in a certain situation to tell the truth, lying would probably be done more frequently than in a culture where the moral norm is that it is impolite not to tell the truth. Therefore, to figure out which place lying takes in a society, it is important to acknowledge that this might be embedded in the moral norms of this society. However, since this study does not have the space for an elaborate investigation into the moral norms of the Dutch culture, the moral

norms will not be looked at thoroughly. Instead, a small part of the research will focus on how often and with whom lies are used to get a peek into the lying habits of the participants, which might give a little insight in what the moral norms of the Dutch culture are with regards to lying.

### **2.1.5 Hiding one's lies**

Something that is important while telling a lie is keeping that fact hidden from the recipient. If the hearer finds out that you lied to them, the lie will not hold and your efforts are worthless. To be able to keep a lie secret, you must be judged as truthful by the hearer, otherwise everything you say might be questioned. According to Bond & DePaulo (2008: 487), "people show a bias toward judging others as truthful." When telling a lie, the hearer has a tendency to perceive you as truthful. In other words, even when you are telling a lie, people will automatically assume that what you say is the truth, because that is what they will automatically assume most of the time. This is called the "truth bias", which means that truthful statements are correctly being identified as true more often than lies are being identified as false (Fish, Rothermich & Pell 2017: 148). This truth bias is part of Grice's (1989: 26) Cooperation Principle and explains why deliberate flouts of the maxim of Quality can generate metaphors, ironies, et cetera, but not lies.

Hiding lies does not only have to do with how good people are at detecting deception. According to Bond & DePaulo (2008: 486) it even is the case that people do not differ in their ability to detect deception; everyone is equally good or bad at it. What makes the difference between getting caught or not getting caught is how good the liar is at lying. To hide a lie, speakers often act the way they think they should act and, more importantly, try to avoid acting like how they think a liar acts (DePaulo et al. 2003: 78). Liars tend to control their behaviour in the way they think a normal person telling a story behaves. This means that when telling a lie, the speaker is mainly focusing on their facial and verbal behaviour and not paying attention to the activity of their limbs (Ekman, O'Sullivan, Friesen & Scherer 1991: 134). The higher the stakes, the more behaviour people will try to control. The problem with this strategy is that their ideas about how liars act might be wrong. They then continue to behave in a way that seems abnormal to the hearer, which makes it easier for the speaker to get caught in the act of lying (DePaulo et al. 2003: 78). Whether or not lies are recognized by the hearer as such also depends on the lie itself. When a lie is based on a script or a familiar story, the liar is less likely to make mistakes and contradict themselves than when a new story is made up (DePaulo et al. 2003: 79).

To find out whether or not someone is lying, the hearer can pay attention to cues the speaker may give. DePaulo et al. (2003: 74) separate cues into two types, leakage cues and deception cues. How someone really feels can be revealed through leakage cues – what the speaker is trying to hide is leaking in through their behaviour. This can give the hearer a clue what the speaker is lying about. Deception cues on the other hand give the hearer a clue that some kind of deception is going on, but what exactly is concealed is not clear (DePaulo et al. 2003: 75). It is however always better to be an impartial observer; according to Fish et al. (2017: 156) impartial observers are better at detecting lies than the people who are personally interacting with the speaker.

## **2.2 White lies**

Lies that cause some discussion are white lies. This discussion is about whether or not white lies are to be considered as lies. Terkourafi (forthcoming: 7) explains that their status depends on the definition of lying that is followed. She says that white lies can be considered lies if the definition of lying “ties lying to what is said by the speaker’s utterance and not necessarily the intention behind it” (Terkourafi forthcoming: 7). This intention is what is important. According to Terkourafi “it is precisely in how they handle this second ‘lying’ intention that white lies differ from real lies: in real lies, this intention must not be recognized or it fails; but in white lies, it is permissible for it to be recognized and, in fact, the politeness of the speaker’s utterance may be strengthened if it is” (forthcoming: 8). White lies can thus be used in a way that the hearer is not necessarily deceived, which is required with full-fledged lies. Note that ‘necessarily’ is an important word here: it is still possible to deceive the hearer when saying a white lie. According to Argo & Shiv (2012: 1094), white lies are “other-benefiting deception”. This means that the deception that is caused by the white lie is in favour of the hearer. This can present itself in different ways. Fish et al. (2017: 148) sum up that white lies can be used to get closer to the other and get respect, to avoid hurting feelings, to prevent harm to the other’s face, and as a social lubricant by expressing insincere opinions, which makes the speaker get closer to the hearer.

What these functions have in common is that the hearer gets closer to the speaker, benefits from it, or does not disadvantage from it. In other words, white lies benefit the hearer, even though the hearer can be deceived at the same time. There exists an acceptable range of dishonesty, which means that when the white lie falls inside this range, the effects are seen as acceptable (Argo & Shiv 2012: 1093). Therefore honesty is sometimes seen as less appropriate than a white lie, because a white lie can maintain the harmony that exists between

people (Terkourafi forthcoming: 3). When saying a white lie, the true feelings or evaluations of the speaker are kept hidden (Rothermich & Pell 2015: 4).

White lies serve an important role in maintaining social relationships according to Rothermich & Pell (2015: 4). Even though someone is being lied to, the white lie is not being perceived equally as grave as a full-fledged lie would be, because someone is lying to maintain a relationship or to not hurt someone's feelings. White lies can therefore be seen as accepted by society. According to Terkourafi (forthcoming: 7) "white lies are more acceptable in contexts where informativity expectations are low". Argo & Shiv (2012: 1093) describe this as an "acceptable range of dishonesty". This also means that the impact a white lie may have on the hearer depends on the context and the range it falls in. What is a white lie in one setting may be a full-fledged lie in another setting (Terkourafi forthcoming: 7). According to Camden, Motley & Wilson (1984: 321), people are quick to justify their white lies. This may be because white lies are considered to be without any serious consequences for the hearer (Hardin 2010: 3201). White lies are also seen as polite, which is learned at a young age (Levine & Schweitzer 2015: 89). This means that white lies quite likely are embedded in daily communication and individuals might not even realise when they are saying them.

### **2.2.1 White or prosocial?**

So far, the term 'white lie' has been used. This cannot be done without explaining why. It namely is the case that in the literature about these types of lies, two terms are used: prosocial lies and white lies. Sometimes a distinction is made between the meaning of these types of lies, for example by Levine & Schweitzer (2015: 89), who see prosocial lies as lies that can have "large stakes" and white lies as lies that can have "small stakes". Prosocial lies are "false statements made with the intention of misleading and benefitting a target" (Levine & Schweitzer 2014: 108). White lies are "false statements made with the intention of misleading a target about something trivial" (Levine & Schweitzer 2014: 108). Prosocial lies can have consequences, while white lies cannot have consequences.

Meibauer (2014: 152) also uses the term prosocial lies, but not in the same way as Levine & Schweitzer (2014; 2015) do. He uses the term prosocial lies as meaning the same as white lies. He prefers this term because it "fits better to the basic assumption that there is a difference between antisocial and prosocial lying" (Meibauer 2014: 152).

In this thesis, Meibauer is followed and the term 'white lies' is used. No distinction is made between white lies and prosocial lies, because among the examples used in this thesis

there simply are not enough resources to make this distinction, which makes it a logical choice to not apply this.

### **2.2.2 Working definition**

A working definition of white lies is needed, because this will form the basis for the research. Bok (1978: 58) gives a definition which is generally accepted to be the definition of white lies, namely that white lies are falsehoods “not meant to injure anyone and of little moral import” (Bok 1978: 58). This however is not a definition that is easily applied. That is why the definition of Saul (2012: 29) which was already mentioned in paragraph 2.1 is cited once more:

“If the speaker is not the victim of linguistic error/malapropism or using metaphor, or irony, then they lie iff (1) they say that P; (2) they believe P to be false; (3) they take themselves to be in a warranting context.”

According to Terkourafi (forthcoming: 6), in order “to capture the ‘lie’ in white lie, what we need is a definition that makes lying a matter of what one says rather than what one means. Saul’s definition offers precisely that.” What makes this definition suitable for lies as well as white lies is that there is no notion of wanting or intending to deceive the hearer. Because deception is not necessary for a white lie to emerge, as is described in paragraph 2.2, this definition seems sufficient to describe both full-fledged lies and white lies. However, this definition does not distinguish full-fledged lies from white lies. To be able to make this distinction, it is necessary to add to this definition. According to Terkourafi, the difference between full-fledged lies is that the intention of white lies is permissible to be recognized while in full-fledged lies, this is not the case (forthcoming: 8). Therefore, the addition to Saul’s (2012: 29) definition will be: “the intention is permissible to be recognized”, which makes the entire definition:

If the speaker is not the victim of linguistic error/malapropism or using metaphor, or irony, then they use a white lie iff (1) they say that P; (2) they believe P to be false; (3) they take themselves to be in a warranting context; (4) the intention is permissible to be recognized.

With this addition, if and only if the intention is permissible to be recognized, the utterance can be a white lie. This definition thus only applies to white lies and not to full-fledged lies. This can also be seen by the change of 'lie' to 'white lie'. The adjusted version of Saul's definition is the working definition of this thesis.

### **2.2.3 Place in theories**

The theories about lying that are discussed in paragraph 2.1.2 are linked to both full-fledged lies and white lies. The findings are repeated in this paragraph to make for an easier association with white lies.

In Speech Act Theory a speech act can be seen as a white lie when this speech act is infelicitous. According to Grice, lying cannot be part of speaker's meaning. However, with the addition of clause 4 to the working definition (see paragraph 2.2.2), lying can be part of speaker's meaning. Since this definition only applies to white lies, only white lies can be part of speaker's meaning. Politeness is the theory that gets linked most to white lies, because white lies are seen as a form of politeness. In order to describe why white lies are used, it can be assumed that politeness has at least some part. In the following paragraph, the reasons why people tell white lies are discussed.

### **2.2.4 Why do people tell white lies?**

When in a conflict, people tend to behave in a way that benefits others the most, even though they have the option to behave in a way that benefits themselves the most because this is considered to be the right thing to do. This type of behaviour is called prosocial behaviour (Biziou-van-Pol, Haenen, Novaro, Liberman & Capraro 2015: 538). This explains why people justify lying in certain situations, such as avoiding embarrassment and conflict (Camden et al. 1984: 309). Within lying, white lies seem to be the only type of lies that are seen as socially acceptable. As such, they occur very often in the social interactions people have in everyday life (Camden et al. 1984: 310). White lies are seen as lies of little consequence, which means that people do not tend to worry about possibly getting caught in the act (DePaulo et al. 2003: 76).

There have been a few empirical studies about white lies in English. In a study by Camden et al. (1984), a self-report methodology was used. 20 participants (9 male, 11 female) were asked to write down white lies they said over a period of two weeks. They were also asked to write down to whom they said the lie and what the anticipated reward from telling the lie was (Camden et al. 1984: 312). In another study, DePaulo et al. (2003) collected 158

cues to deception<sup>1</sup> out of 116 different reports. These 158 cues to deception were categorized into five categories. The goal of this research was to determine whether a lie could be caught by looking at certain cues. More recent studies have used still other methodologies. In a recent experimental study, Fish et al. (2017) had five females produce aural stimuli in the form of short conversations. These stimuli were rated by thirty participants (15 male, 15 female) on their sincerity. The rating was done on a 5-point scale; the participants therefore were not asked to give motivations for their answers. Levine & Schweitzer (2015) on the other hand performed four sets of studies to challenge the claim that deception harms trust. The first set of studies was held to see what the effect of altruistic lies would be on trust. The second and third set of studies were held to examine the relation between trust and different types of lies. Finally, the fourth set of studies was aimed specifically at prosocial lies and how these types of lies influence different types of trust.

As regards reasons for lying, Camden et al. (1984: 315) found that white lies are mainly used to benefit others. According to Levine & Schweitzer (2015: 89), white lies can be used to protect others and provide “interpersonal support”. They also mention that white lies can have self-serving motives, such as self-protection and self-benefit. Fish et al. (2017: 148) mention that white lies in the form of insincere compliments “may serve to reduce social distance and strengthen interpersonal solidarity for females”.<sup>2</sup> According to Levine & Schweitzer (2015: 90), white lies can increase trust when they are compared to telling the truth. DePaulo et al. (2003: 81) have a different perception on this and say that people who use white lies “may be less often trusted when honest feedback really is desired”.

Although many people seem to use white lies in everyday life for various reasons, it appears that they are not as harmless to the speaker as one might think. DePaulo et al. (2003: 76) report that these white lies “do leave a smudge”. People who told white lies in their everyday conversations reported that they felt more uncomfortable while telling these lies and immediately after telling these lies than they had felt before lying. The social interactions in which these white lies were told were also described as “more superficial and less pleasant” than those in which no white lies were told (DePaulo et al. 2003: 76). So even though people

---

<sup>1</sup> In the study of DePaulo et al. (2003), lying and deception are seen as the same concept. As explained in paragraph 2.1.2, in this thesis lying and deception are two different concepts. Because deception in the study of DePaulo et al. (2003) has the same properties as lying, I am able to compare the results of this thesis with the results of their study.

<sup>2</sup> Because the study of Fish et al. (2017) is not an empirical study, it does not tell us anything about motivations for lying. The results will be used in this thesis, but note that these results need to be tested further to determine whether they are in line with actual motivations given for why a white lie is said.



“are more willing to lie when the benefits of doing so are shared with others”, this does not mean that people who tell these white lies also benefit from it themselves (Biziou-van-Pol et al. 2015: 539).

### **3 Method**

The goal of this thesis is to get a definition of white lies by native speakers of Dutch, understand what they see as white lies, what they do not see as white lies and why, and to test to what extent their metalinguistic comments correspond to actual behaviour. In order to do this, the study is executed in two parts with the first part being a questionnaire investigating people’s views about white lies and the second part being a role-play testing to what extent these views are reflected in their behaviour.

#### **3.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is made up of three parts. The first part is aimed at acquiring personal information about the participant so that the results can be compared to different factors such as age and gender. The second part of the questionnaire asks the participant for their definition of white lies and asks several other questions, such as whether or not they use white lies, why they think people use white lies, and with whom they would use white lies. The possible answers for as to why people use white lies are based on the theoretical framework and in particular on the reasons mentioned by Argo & Shiv (2012: 1094), Camden et al. (1984: 309; 310; 315), Fish et al. (2017: 148), Levine & Schweitzer (2015: 89), and Terkourafi (forthcoming: 3). The third and final part of the questionnaire consists of situations in which no lie, a white lie or a full-fledged lie is used. The participant has to fill in what they think has happened and motivate why they think that. The situations are based on the theoretical framework discussed in section 2. The situations included in the questionnaire are set up in a way that a distinction between them can be made. This distinction is not only based on whether it is seen as a full-fledged lie, a white lie, or no lie, but also on the type of relationship that is portrayed. Participants are asked early on in the questionnaire to define with whom they use white lies. These same groups of people (for example friends, family, and professionals) are integrated into the situations. This way, a comparison can be made

between the answers to the ‘with whom’-question, which refers to the type of relation,<sup>3</sup> and the motivations of the situations.

The full-fledged lies and white lies that are used in the questionnaire are normed, which means that whether or not they are considered full-fledged lies and white lies by multiple people is checked. This is necessary because if the opinions about these full-fledged lies and white lies differ too much, the results of the questionnaire will not be reliable.

The participants in the questionnaire were recruited through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and personal contacts of the author. Each participant filled in the questionnaire on their own. In total, 80 participants filled out the questionnaire. Of these participants, 8 are excluded from the research because they did not fill out all questions completely, which means that there is no insight into why they filled in what they filled in. This means that in total, 72 questionnaires are analysed and taken into account for the results of this thesis.

The questionnaire was created and administered through Google Forms.

### **3.2 Role-play**

In the role-play participants act out a situation in which full-fledged lies and/or white lies can be said. These situations are based on the outcome of the questionnaire; all the situations that are considered to contain a white lie by a significant number of participants are rewritten into two new situations which the participants have not seen before.<sup>4</sup> These situations are rewritten in the form of paper instructions, which the participants receive. These instructions are made up of two roles, role 1 and role 2. The participants do not get to see the instructions for their opposing role. It is always the case that with regard to the situation it is most likely for the person acting out role 1 to say a white lie. The paper instructions can be found in Appendix B.

The participants are paired by gender to be able to see if there are differences in lying between genders. There are three pairs of male participants, three pairs of female participants, and two pairs of mixed gender participants. The pairs of participants all act out two situations because both participants then each act out role 1 one time and therefore both have the opportunity, however in a different situation, to say a white lie. After the pair of participants has enacted both situations, they fill out exit-interviews to determine whether they think they

---

<sup>3</sup> In the questionnaire a question was asked regarding with whom the participant uses white lies. A possible answer to this question was “boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife”. In this thesis, the term “partner” will be used to refer to this type of relation, thus one of romantic partners.

<sup>4</sup> To be able to account for different results, the threshold for significance was set at 43%. This percentage is based on the results of the questionnaire to ensure that a sufficient number of situations could be included in the role-play.

and/or the other have used a full-fledged lie, white lie or no lie. This is necessary because in order to analyze the video-taped data, I must know what the participants thought they did and said. It is not possible to judge reliably whether or not someone said a lie based only on the conversation. The research activities take place in Leiden, Amsterdam and Weesp. The conversations are video-taped.

The video-taped data is analyzed by looking at the choice the participants made in saying or not saying a lie, which will be apparent from the exit-interviews. Non-verbal aspects of the utterances will also be looked at, using Rothermich & Pell (2015) as a guideline.

Six participants of the role play were recruited through the questionnaire; every respondent got the option to fill in their e-mail address if they wanted to participate in the second part of the research. Because this did not produce enough participants the remaining six participants were recruited by a second selection. These participants did not fill in the questionnaire.

In total, fourteen situations were enacted. Because there are eight pairs two situations were enacted twice.

## **4 Results**

Both components of the research will be described separately. The first part expands on the results of the questionnaire and the second part outlines the results of the role-play.

### **4.1 Questionnaire**

The analysis of the questionnaire is done in two ways: quantitatively and qualitatively. First, all data that can be analysed quantitatively is analysed. This data consists of all answers to the closed-ended questions, dichotomous questions, and multiple choice questions. This analysis is split up in two parts, with the first part consisting of all participants, and the second part consisting of only the participants aged 20 through 30. The reason for this is that the situations that were created for the role-play are only dependent on the answers given by the participants aged 20 through 30, because all participants of the role-play fall in this age range. This distinction is important because familiarity with the situations may differ between ages. To make for a consistent study, it is necessary to only take into account the relevant ages to produce the material for the role-play.

Second, a qualitative analysis is done. To do so, all answers to the open-ended questions are coded and further analysed. This analysis is also split up in two parts, with the first part discussing the situations that are judged as full-fledged lies and the second part

discussing the situations that are judged as white lies. These two parts are compared to each other afterwards to make it possible to give an explanation as to what constitutes a white lie and in what aspects white lies differ from full-fledged lies. This is discussed in the second part of the results section. The quantitative analysis is discussed first.

#### 4.1.1 Quantitative analysis

##### 4.1.1.1 All ages

In total, 72 participants (18M; 54F) are included in this analysis. Of the 72 participants, 16 men and 48 women have indicated to use white lies. The remaining 2 men and 6 women claim to never use white lies. When these numbers are translated into percentages, it becomes clear that exactly the same percentage of men and women do or do not use white lies, with 88,9% that do use white lies and 11,1% that do not use white lies ( $X^2 = 0,000$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 1,000$ ; see Table 1).

Table 1

*Do you use white lies? (all ages)*

	Yes		No		Total	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
Male	16	88,9	2	11,1	18	100
Female	48	88,9	6	11,1	54	100
Total	64	88,9	8	11,1	72	100

When further comparing genders, male respondents answered that they use white lies more frequently than female respondents. This holds true for the following categories; using white lies every day (male: 16,7%, female: 7,4%), once a week (male: 33,3%, female: 29,6%) and once a year (male: 11,1%, female: 7,4%). A larger percentage of female respondents answered that they use white lies once every two weeks (female: 14,8%, male: 11,1) and once a month (female: 24,1%, male 16,7%). What is noticeable here is that to this question, two men (11,1%) answered that they never lie, which is the same as to the earlier question ‘Do you use white lies?’ (see Table 1), while there are three more women (16,7%), 9 in total, that answered that they never use white lies ( $X^2 = 2,213$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = 0,819$ ; see Table 2).

According to DePaulo & Kashy (1998: 63), people lie a lot in everyday life. This suggests that most people lie every day. Combining this claim with the status of white lies as not grave and of little consequence, it might be the case that people are not aware of the

amount of white lies they say (DePaulo et al. 2003: 76). It therefore is very well possible that people feel like they lie only once a week or even once a year, but when the literature considered it can be the case that people lie more often than they think. White lies are a good candidate to explain the discrepancy between people's own judgement and the amount of lies that they tell in reality: because white lies are judged to be morally acceptable, people do not judge them as lies (Camden et al. 1984: 321).

Table 2

*How often do you use white lies? (all ages)*

	Male		Female		Total	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
Every day	3	16,7	4	7,4	7	9,7
Once a week	6	33,3	16	29,6	22	30,6
Once every two weeks	2	11,1	8	14,8	10	13,9
Once a month	3	16,7	13	24,1	16	22,2
Once a year	2	11,1	4	7,4	5	6,9
Never	2	11,1	9	16,7	11	15,3
Total	18	100	54	100	72	100

Male and female participants think that people use white lies for similar reasons. Men (22,2%) more frequently answered that people lie to be more trustworthy than women (9,4%) did. Men also more frequently answered that people use white lies to benefit themselves (male: 72,2%, female: 60,4%), to protect others (male: 88,9%, female: 83,0%) and protect themselves (male: 77,8%, female: 71,7%). Women more frequently answered that people use white lies more often to feel less guilty about a decision (female: 64,2%, male: 55,6%) and to benefit others (female: 66,0%, male: 61,6%) (see Table 3).

According to Fish et al. (2017: 148), women use white lies to show their solidarity and to get closer to others. Since they only investigated women's behaviour, only the results of the women can be compared. So when comparing their claim with the percentages in Table 3, it is supported that women use white lies to benefit others and the most frequent given argument for women to use white lies is to protect others. When it comes to both men and women, Levine & Schweitzer (2015: 89) mention that white lies are used quite frequently for self-

benefit and self-protection, which also gets supported by the percentages in Table 3. It thus seems that the findings of the current study are consonant with those of previous ones.

Table 3

*Why do you think people use white lies? (all ages)*

	Male		Female		Total	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
To benefit themselves	13	72,2	32	60,4	45	63,4
To benefit others	11	61,1	35	66,0	46	64,8
To feel less guilty about a decision	10	55,6	34	64,2	44	62,0
To be more trustworthy	4	22,2	5	9,4	9	12,7
To protect themselves	14	77,8	38	71,7	52	73,2
To protect others	16	88,9	44	83,0	60	84,5
To be polite	14	77,8	38	71,7	52	73,2
Total <sup>5</sup>	82	455,6	226	426,4	308	433,8

Women (80,9%) use white lies most frequently with family and more so than men (76,5%) do. Women (78,7%) also use white lies more with friends than men (64,7%) do. Men use white lies most frequently with family, colleagues and acquaintances (76,5% for all), while 63,8% of women use white lies with colleagues and 57,4% with acquaintances. Men also use white lies more than women with their partner (male: 35,5%, female: 27,7%) and with professionals (male: 41,2%, female: 27,7%) (see Table 4).

Regarding the recipients of white lies, it seems that women use white lies more with friends than men do, which is shown in the literature as well. Fish et al. (2017: 150) mention that women use white lies most frequently with friends, because they do not want to harm the relationship. This could also explain the high percentages when it comes to saying white lies to family; in both cases it is important to maintain a good relationship. However, this mechanism does not work in the same way when it comes to romantic partners. A possible explanation for this might be that a relationship between partners has to be built on mutual

<sup>5</sup> Because this is a question where multiple answers were possible, the total is not cumulative. That is why both the absolute and relative total is more than it should be at first sight. In the raw data, the absolute total of men is 18 and of women is 53. The relative total is 100%.

trust. When a lot of white lies are said and, maybe even more important, recognized, this could very well decrease the amount of trust. That white lies do not increase trustworthiness can also be seen in Table 3, with on average only 12,7% of the participants thinking that it does. This result can be caused by the research methodology used: when asked directly, as done in this thesis, people are not likely to consider white lies as increasing trustworthiness. It could however be the case that when this is assessed in an indirect way, white lies might turn out to increase trustworthiness, as was done by Levine & Schweitzer (2015).

White lies thus can be harmful. This does depend on the type of relationship; they are more harmful in closer, more intimate relationships. This is supported by DePaulo et al.'s claim (2003: 76) that white lies can leave a mark and make the speaker feel less comfortable in the presence of the person they lied to, which can be a problem when they are your partner.

Table 4

*With whom do you use white lies? (all ages)*

	Male		Female		Total	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
Family	13	76,5	38	80,9	51	79,7
Friends	11	64,7	37	78,7	48	75,0
Colleagues	13	76,5	30	63,8	43	67,2
Acquaintances	13	76,5	27	57,4	40	62,5
Partner	6	35,3	13	27,7	19	29,7
Professionals	7	41,2	13	27,7	20	31,3
Total <sup>6</sup>	63	370,7	158	336,2	221	345,4

#### 4.1.1.2 Participants aged 20 through 30

In total, 55 participants (12M; 43F) are included in this analysis. These 55 participants are the participants that filled in the questionnaire and are aged 20 through 30. Of these 55 participants, 11 men and 40 women say they use white lies. This means that 1 man (8,3%) and 3 women (7,0%) claim to never use white lies ( $X^2 = 0,026$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0,873$ ; see Table 5).

<sup>6</sup> See <sup>5</sup>

Table 5

*Do you use white lies? (respondents aged 20-30)*

	Yes		No		Total	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
Male	11	91,7	1	8,3	12	100
Female	40	93,0	3	7,0	43	100
Total	51	92,7	4	7,3	559	100

Men reported they use white lies more frequently (every day or once a week) than women did (once every two weeks, a month or a year). 8,3% of the male participants and 7,0% of the female participants answered that they never use white lies, which gives the same result as the previous question ‘Do you use white lies?’ (see Table 5) ( $X^2 = 1,715$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = 0,887$ ; see Table 6).

The results of how often white lies are used by respondents aged 20 through 30 (see Table 6) are very similar to those of all ages (see Table 2). This means that the same hypothesis can be made: it is possible that people say more white lies than they think they do (Camden et al. 1984: 321). This could be related to the definition people give of white lies: it is possible that researchers have a wider definition of lies than speakers themselves, which, as mentioned previously, can also apply to white lies.

Table 6

*How often do you use white lies? (respondents aged 20-30)*

	Male		Female		Total	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
Every day	2	16,7	4	9,3	6	10,9
Once a week	5	41,7	15	34,9	20	36,4
Once every two weeks	1	8,3	7	16,3	8	14,5
Once a month	2	16,7	12	27,9	14	25,5
Once a year	1	8,3	2	3,7	3	5,5
Never	1	8,3	3	7,0	4	7,3
Total	12	100	43	100	55	100



Men and women think that people use white lies for roughly the same reasons. Men think that people use white lies mainly to benefit themselves (male: 91,7%, female: 67,4%) and to be polite (male: 91,7%, female: 79,1%), whereas women think that people use white lies mainly to protect others (81,4%). Men however also think quite frequently, even more often than women do, that people use white lies to protect others (83,3%). When it comes to using white lies to protect themselves, about the same percentage of men (75,0%) and women (76,7%) think that people use white lies for this reason. This is also the case when it is about benefitting others, with 66,7% of men and 72,1% of women. When it comes to the reason of being more trustworthy, more men (33,3%) than women (11,6%) think white lies are used for this (see Table 7).

The results of why participants aged 20 through 30 think people use white lies (see Table 7) are very similar to the results of the participants of all ages (see Table 3). This partially leads to the same analysis: women use white lies more than men to benefit others and most frequently to protect others. When it comes to politeness, almost all men think white lies are used for this reason. This can be explained when referencing Coleman & Kay's claim (1981: 29) that white lies are the most common kind of remark to make when politeness is required in a situation. This may be why so many men link politeness to white lies. However, when comparing this to the other results in Table 7, one thing stands out. According to Argo & Shiv (2012: 1094), white lies are polite because they are other-benefiting deception. Contrary to this, almost all men say white lies are used to benefit themselves. These findings thus disagree with the claim made by Argo & Shiv (2012: 1094).

Table 7

*Why do you think people use white lies? (respondents aged 20-30)*

	Male		Female		Total	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
To benefit themselves	11	91,7	29	67,4	40	72,7
To benefit others	8	66,7	31	72,1	39	70,9
To feel less guilty about a decision	7	58,3	29	67,4	36	65,6
To be more trustworthy	4	33,3	5	11,6	9	16,4
To protect themselves	9	75,0	33	76,7	42	76,4

To protect others	10	83,3	35	81,4	45	81,8
To be polite	11	91,7	34	79,1	45	81,8
Total <sup>7</sup>	60	500	196	455,7	253	465,6

Men (81,8%) use white lies most frequently with their family, with 80,0% of women doing this. Women use white lies most frequently with their friends (82,5%). Men use white lies as frequently with friends, colleagues and acquaintances (all 72,7%). Men use white lies slightly more frequently with their partner (36,4%) than women (32,5%) do. White lies are used least frequently with professionals by both men (27,3%) and women (30,0%) (see Table 8).

The results of with whom white lies are used by participants aged 20 through 30 (see Table 8) are very similar to the results of the participants of all ages ( see Table 4), which means that the same analysis goes: women use white lies most frequently with friends and both men and women use white lies less frequently with their partner.

Table 8

*With whom do you use white lies? (respondents aged 20-30)*

	Male		Female		Total	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
Family	9	81,8	32	80,0	41	80,4
Friends	8	72,7	33	82,5	41	80,4
Colleagues	8	72,7	27	67,5	35	68,6
Acquaintances	8	72,7	24	60,0	32	62,7
Partner	4	36,4	13	32,5	17	33,3
Professionals	3	27,3	12	30,0	15	29,4
Total <sup>8</sup>	40	363,6	141	352,5	181	354,8

#### 4.1.2 Qualitative analysis

In this section, all participants are taken into account in the analysis. There is no separate analysis for participants aged 20 through 30.

<sup>7</sup> Because this is a question where multiple answers were possible, the total is not cumulative. That is why both the absolute and relative total is more than it should be at first sight. In the raw data, the absolute total of men is 12 and of women is 43. The relative total is 100%.

<sup>8</sup> Because this is a question where multiple answers were possible, the total is not cumulative. That is why both the absolute and relative total is more than it should be at first sight. In the raw data, the absolute total of men is 11 and of women is 40. The relative total is 100%.

#### 4.1.2.1 Definition of white lies

One of the questions in the questionnaire is for the participants to give their definition of white lies. The goal of this question is to be able to compare their definition with the motivations for the use of a white lie they give later on in the questionnaire and in the role-play. Since this is an open question, the different elements that make up each definition have to be coded separately. This coding of the definitions gives the results that can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9

#### *Components of the definition of white lies*

	<b>Absolute</b>	<b>%</b>
To benefit themselves	34	47,2
To protect others	31	43,1
To benefit others	27	37,5
To not hurt others	11	15,3
To protect themselves	10	13,9
Not harmful	9	12,5
With good intentions	9	12,5
To spare the others' feelings	9	12,5
Innocent lie	8	11,1
Easier than telling the truth	7	9,7
No or small consequences	7	9,7
To avoid conflict	6	8,3
To be kind	3	4,2
No point in telling the truth	2	2,8
To feel less guilty about a decision	1	1,4
Total <sup>9</sup>	174	241,7

When these results are grouped into overarching categories, three categories emerge. These categories are 'in the benefit of the speaker', 'in the benefit of the hearer', and 'perceived lack of necessity for honesty'. Under 'in the benefit of the speaker', the elements

<sup>9</sup> Because the participants were asked to give a definition for white lies of which all elements were later encoded, the total is not cumulative. That is why both the absolute and relative total is more than it should be at first sight. In the raw data, the absolute total is 72 participants. The relative total is 100%.

'to benefit themselves', 'to protect themselves', 'to avoid conflict', and 'to feel less guilty about a decision' fall. Under 'in the benefit of the hearer', the elements 'to protect others', 'to benefit others', 'to not hurt others', 'not harmful', 'with good intentions', 'to spare the others' feelings', and 'to be kind' fall. Under 'perceived lack of necessity for honesty', the elements 'innocent lie', 'easier than telling the truth', 'no or small consequences', and 'no point in telling the truth' fall.

The category 'in the benefit of the speaker' makes up 70,8% of the elements. The category 'in the benefit of the hearer' makes up 137,6% of the elements. The category 'perceived lack of necessity for honesty' makes up 33,3% of the elements. To make for an easier comparison with the results that will follow, these percentages are recalculated to make for a total of 100%. This means that the category 'in the benefit of the speaker' makes up 29,3% of the elements, 'in the benefit of the hearer' makes up 56,9% of the elements, and 'perceived lack of necessity for honesty' makes up 13,8% of the elements. This shows that when it comes to the definition of white lies given by the participants, what comes up most is that white lies are said in the benefit of the hearer. This is in line with the findings of Camden et al. (1984: 315), who also found that white lies are said mostly in the benefit of the hearer. What this shows as well is that even though white lies are thought to be less said in the benefit of the speaker, they still can be said for this reason. Levine & Schweitzer (2015: 90) show the same results; according to them, white lies can both be said in the benefit of the hearer and in the benefit of the speaker. The last category 'perceived lack of necessity for honesty' is discussed by DePaulo et al. (2003: 76), who mention that white lies are thought to be of little consequence. All components of the definitions given by the participants are thus in line with previous literature regarding white lies.

When looking into the definitions the participants gave, it might be important to make a distinction between two groups, with these groups being the participants who say they use white lies and the participants who say they never use white lies. As it turns out, the definitions of white lies that were given by the participants in these two groups are made up of mostly the same key elements. This means that what makes these participants say or do not say white lies is not because they view white lies differently, at least not in the definitions they gave in this questionnaire. If it were the case that the participants who say they never use white lies are using many more negative words in their definitions than the participants who say that they do use white lies, the difference between saying and not saying white lies would be explained. This however is not the case. Their use or non-use of white lies does not reflect their evaluation of white lies as good or bad. A different reason must be found to explain this.

Therefore it will be assumed that there is a difference between people in how honest they want to be in their communication.

The participants were also asked to give an example of a white lie they said recently. The reason for this is that the definition given by the participants can be controlled for by comparing it with the example they give. In total, 49 participants gave an example – some refused and some claimed they never use white lies, which would make it impossible to give an example of a white lie they said recently. All examples were coded. There are nine broad categories in which these white lies fall (see Table 10).

Table 10

*Categories of examples given in the questionnaire*

	<b>Absolute</b>	<b>%</b>
Distorting the truth	11	22,4
Saying you did something when you did not do it	9	18,4
Lying about other's appearances	8	16,3
Changing the reason you are late	6	12,2
Fake compliment (not about appearances)	5	10,2
The reason you did not do or will not do something	3	6,1
Saying you are doing fine	3	6,1
The reason you did not go or will not go somewhere	2	4,1
Saying something is not to be bothered about	2	4,1
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100</b>

The examples that are given in the questionnaire are equivalent to examples of white lies given in the literature. For example Terkourafi (forthcoming: 3) gives examples that contain lying about appearances, giving false reasons for why someone will not go somewhere, and giving fake compliments. This gives the impression that what is seen in the literature as white lies and what is seen by native speakers of Dutch as white lies show a lot of overlap.

#### *4.1.2.2 Situations and motivations*

In the questionnaire the participants were given fifteen situations. For every situation, they had to answer whether according to them it was a full-fledged lie, a white lie, or no lie. They also had the option of giving a different answer. Of these fifteen situations, five situations were seen as not involving lies. These five situations were intended as control situations to

ensure that the participants were paying attention to the content of the situations before answering. Five situations were seen as full-fledged lies and the remaining five situations were seen as white lies by the majority of the participants. In order to be able to see what distinguishes white lies from full-fledged lies, all motivations the participants have given will be discussed in the following section. In paragraph 4.3, the results of these two discussions will be used to compare them with the motivations for the full-fledged lies and white lies used in the role-plays. First, the full-fledged lies will be discussed.

#### 4.1.2.2.1 Full-fledged lies

The five situations that were assessed as full-fledged lies by the majority of the participants are the situations that are named *Opdracht*, *Boek*, *Koffie*, *Tas*, and *Gamen*. The original Dutch versions of the situations and English translations of these situations can be found in Appendix A. In this section, the main trends as to why these situations are seen as full-fledged lies are discussed.

The motivations given for situations *Opdracht* and *Gamen* show that these situations are considered to have too large consequences to be a white lie. For situations *Boek*, *Koffie*, and *Tas*, the motivations given show that since the lie only benefits the speaker, it is seen as a full-fledged lie. What can be seen in Table 11 is that a large number of motivations are about the disadvantage for the hearer. This motivation was given in relation to all situations that were seen as full-fledged lies, which shows that a negative outcome for the hearer can be a reason for judging a lie as a full-fledged lie.

Table 11

*Motivations of full-fledged lies in the questionnaire*<sup>10</sup>

	Absolute	%
To benefit themselves	38	13,9
To protect others	6	2,2
To protect themselves	28	10,3
To hurt others	5	1,8
With bad intentions	2	0,7

<sup>10</sup> To compile Table 11, all motivations for when a situation was seen as a full-fledged lie were taken into account. This means that also motivations for full-fledged lies were included even when the majority classified the situation as a white lie.

To others disadvantage	49	17,9
Too big of a lie	42	15,4
Big consequences	33	12,1
To blame others	33	12,1
Unfair	31	11,4
In your own disadvantage	29	10,6
Harmful	21	7,7
Shed your responsibility on others	12	4,4
Socially undesirable behaviour	11	4,0
Selfish	9	3,3
To deceive others	8	2,9
To be unkind	4	1,7
To be impolite	2	0,7
To offend others	1	0,4
<b>Total<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>364</b>	<b>133,5</b>

These results can be grouped into overarching categories to make for an easier comparison with the results of the definitions of white lies (see Table 9). The three overarching categories that emerged out of the results of these definitions are ‘in the benefit of the speaker’, ‘in the benefit of the hearer’, and ‘perceived lack of necessity for honesty’. These categories were sufficient to describe the definitions given for white lies. Table 11 however is about full-fledged lies, which means that two categories need to be added to describe all motivations given: ‘in the disadvantage of the speaker’ and ‘in the disadvantage of the hearer’. The category ‘in the benefit of the speaker’ contains the elements ‘to benefit themselves’, ‘to protect themselves’, and ‘selfish’, and makes up 27,5% of the elements. The category ‘in the benefit of the hearer’ contains the element ‘to protect others’ and makes up 2,2% of the elements. The category ‘in the disadvantage of the speaker’ contains the element ‘in your own disadvantage’ and makes up 10,6% of the elements. The category ‘in the disadvantage of the hearer’ contains the elements ‘to hurt others’, ‘with bad intentions’, ‘to others disadvantage’, ‘to blame others’, ‘unfair’, ‘harmful’, ‘shed your responsibility on others’, ‘to deceive others’, ‘to be unkind’, ‘to be impolite’, and ‘to offend others’, and makes up 61,7% of the elements.

<sup>11</sup> Because the participants were asked to motivate why they answered full-fledged lie of which all elements were later encoded, the total is not cumulative. That is why both the absolute and relative total is more than it should be at first sight. In the raw data, the absolute total is 273 motivations. The relative total is 100%.

The category ‘perceived lack of necessity for honesty’ contains the elements ‘too big of a lie’, ‘big consequences’, and ‘socially undesirable behaviour’, and makes up 31,5% of the elements. To make for an easier comparison with the results that will follow, these percentages are recalculated to make for a total of 100%. This means that the category ‘in the benefit of the speaker’ holds 20,6% of the elements, ‘in the benefit of the hearer’ holds 1,6% of the elements, ‘in the disadvantage of the speaker’ holds 7,9% of the elements, ‘in the disadvantage of the hearer’ holds 46,2% of the elements, and ‘perceived lack of necessity for honesty’ holds 23,6% of the elements. When comparing these results with the definitions of white lies (see Table 9), what stands out is that full-fledged lies get characterized by their disadvantage to the hearer. This is opposed to white lies which get characterized by their benefit to the hearer. This difference might be what distinguishes white lies from full-fledged lies.

The situations that were seen as full-fledged lies by the majority of the participants were not all intended and normed as full-fledged lies: situation *Gamen* was intended and normed as a white lie. The results therefore are to a certain level unexpected, because a slight majority of the participants saw this situation as a full-fledged lie. This can be linked to an earlier finding, which is that white lies are not frequent between partners (see Table 4 and Table 8). Even though this situation was set up as a white lie and was seen as such by 47,2% of the participants, this is a much lower percentage than expected. When this situation gets compared to the other five situations that were intended as white lies, the percentages of this situation are noticeably different.

#### 4.1.2.2.2 White lies

The five situations that were seen as white lies by the majority of the participants are the situations that are named *Presentatie*, *Cake*, *Feest*, *Ober*, and *Kapsel*. The original Dutch versions of the situations and English translations of these situations can be found in Appendix A. In this section, the main trends as to why these situations are seen as white lies are discussed.

Two main trends can be distinguished when looking into the motivations given for as to why these situations were seen as white lies. First, there is the motivation that it is a white lie because it is said to protect the hearer, which is the case with situations *Presentatie* and *Ober*. Second, there is the motivations that it is a white lie because it benefits the hearer, which is the case with situations *Cake*, *Feest*, and *Kapsel* (see Table 12).



Table 12

*Motivations of white lies in the questionnaire*<sup>12</sup>

	<b>Absolute</b>	<b>%</b>
To benefit themselves	26	6,8
To protect others	202	53,0
To benefit others	67	17,6
To not hurt others	87	22,8
To protect themselves	64	16,8
Not harmful	6	1,6
With good intentions	34	8,9
To spare the others' feelings	66	17,3
Innocent lie	6	1,6
Easier than telling the truth	22	5,8
No or small consequences	30	7,9
To avoid conflict	21	5,5
To be kind	23	6,0
No point in telling the truth	31	8,1
To be polite	26	6,8
To not offend others	21	5,5
Socially desirable behaviour	9	2,4
<b>Total</b> <sup>13</sup>	<b>741</b>	<b>194,4</b>

The results of Table 12 can be grouped in the same overarching categories as the definitions of white lies (see Table 9). Some changes do emerge in these existing categories. In the category 'in the benefit of the speaker' the element 'to feel less guilty about a decision' disappears because it does not occur in the motivations. To the category 'in the benefit of the hearer' the elements 'to be polite' and 'to not offend others' are added. To the category 'perceived lack of necessity for honesty' the element 'socially desirable behaviour' is added.

<sup>12</sup> To compose Table 12, all motivations for when a situation was seen as a white lie were taken into account. This means that also motivations for white lies were included even when the majority classified the situation as a full-fledged lie.

<sup>13</sup> Because the participants were asked to motivate why they answered white lie of which all elements were later encoded, the total is not cumulative. That is why both the absolute and relative total is more than it should be at first sight. In the raw data, the absolute total is 381 motivations. The relative total is 100%.

The category ‘in the benefit of the speaker’ makes up 29,1% of the motivations. The category ‘in the benefit of the hearer’ makes up 139,5% of the motivations. The category ‘perceived lack of necessity for honesty’ makes up 25,8% of the motivations. As was done with the results of Table 9, these percentages will also be recalculated to make for a total of 100%. ‘In the benefit of the speaker’ makes up 14,9% of the motivations, ‘in the benefit of the hearer’ makes up 71,8% of the motivations, and ‘perceived lack of necessity for honesty’ makes up 13,3% of the motivations. These results are somewhat similar to the results of Table 9. The category ‘in the benefit of the hearer’ is by far the largest category. This means that white lies are seen as said in the benefit of the speaker by most participants. These findings are in line with the findings of Camden et al. (1984: 315) as discussed in paragraph 4.1.2.1. This shows that the elements of the definitions that were given by the participants are backed up by the motivations given by the participants.

When comparing the motivations of white lies in the questionnaire (see Table 12) with the motivations of full-fledged lies in the questionnaire (see Table 11), it can be seen that there are some elements that differ for full-fledged lies and white lies. It can be assumed that these differences are what make a white lie a white lie. For example, a lie gets classified as a full-fledged lie because it has big consequences, while a lie gets classified as a white lie because it has no or small consequences. This probably has to do with what Argo & Shiv (2012: 1093) call the “acceptable range” in which lies must fall to be seen as white lies. The various antonyms that exist in the data support this view; when a lie is too much of something, for example too big or too unkind, it gets classified as a full-fledged lie. This could also be linked to Bryant’s (2008: 36) category of grey lies. Grey lies are lies that do not fall into the category of either white lies or full-fledged lies. Bryant (2008: 36) distinguishes two categories of grey lies: *ambiguous grey lies* and *justifiable grey lies*. Ambiguous grey lies are lies that can be considered both as white and full-fledged lies and depend on the situation. Justifiable grey lies are lies that lean slightly more into the category of full-fledged lies but are said by everybody and therefore are justified. When considering the motivations given for why a situation was considered a white lie or a full-fledged lie, some participants answered that they thought it depended on the context (*ambiguous grey lies*) or that they did it themselves and therefore thought it was justified (*justifiable grey lies*). This shows that some evidence came up for grey lies in the results of the questionnaire, even though this was not directly asked for.

## 4.2 Role-play

The scenarios that are acted out in the role-play are derived from the situations that were seen as white lies by at least 43% of the participants in the questionnaire, as explained in paragraph 3.2. There were seven situations that met this condition. Every situation was rewritten into two new scenarios, to make for a total of fourteen scenarios used in the role-plays. These scenarios are each marked with a letter, which gives scenarios A through N. Scenarios A and B are derived from situation *Presentatie*. Scenarios C and D are derived from situation *Cake*. Scenarios E and F are derived from situation *Feest*. Scenarios G and H are derived from situation *Kapsel*. Scenarios I and J are derived from situation *Ober*. Scenarios K and L are derived from situation *Gamen*. Scenarios M and N are derived from situation *Tas*.

In total, there were 16 participants. As explained in paragraph 3.2, the participants were paired and both received an instruction sheet for either role 1 or role 2. Following this, they held a conversation. The participant acting out role 1 would always be in the position to say a white lie. All pairs of participants acted out two scenarios, which means that 16 scenarios were acted out. Since there were only 14 unique scenarios, two scenarios were acted out twice; these being scenarios A and J. Scenarios J, J and M<sup>14</sup> are excluded from the results because the instructions were unclear to the participants, which gives a total of 13 acted out scenarios in the results. Participants chose to use lies in eleven out of thirteen scenarios; only in scenarios B and D no lies were told.

I decided on having fourteen scenarios rather than for example only two scenarios because I was interested in researching to what extent the type of relation made a difference as to when a white lie would or would not be said. The consequence of this choice is that it is not possible to find tendencies for individual scenarios; if the same two scenarios had been acted out by multiple pairs of participants, tendencies could have been found. For this reason, the results of the role-play for individual scenarios can only be qualitatively analysed. Nevertheless, some overall tendencies can be detected across scenarios (for example regarding the use of white lies by gender). These are presented in the next sections.

---

<sup>14</sup> Scenario J was acted out by two pairs of participants. Both times, the instructions for acting out the scenario were unclear to the participants, which resulted in excluding both times this scenario was acted out from the results. That the instructions were unclear in scenario J was concluded by looking at the videotapes; a small nuance was missed both times by the participant acting out role 1. That the instructions were unclear in scenario M was concluded by looking at the exit-interviews; in the exit-interview of the participant acting out role 2, it came up that they did not know why the participant acting out role 1 started commenting on a certain aspect. This aspect had failed to make it into the instructions of role 2 and therefore is a mistake in the research material.

### 4.2.1 Lies said

Table 13 provides an overview of the amount of full-fledged lies and white lies said by gender and role of participant in the scenario (1 corresponds to role 1, the initiator, and 2 to role 2, the responder). It can be seen that when acting out role 1, both males and females never said a full-fledged lie. When it comes to white lies in role 1, females said a white lie six times, while males said a white lie three times. Three males in role 1 told no lies, while one female in role 1 told no lie. Recall that the set-up of the role-play made it most likely for role 1 to tell a white lie.

Looking at role 2, it can be seen that males said a full-fledged lie twice, while one female said a full-fledged lie. When it comes to white lies in role 2, both males and females said a white lie once. Males and females told no lies in role 2 equally frequent, namely four times (see Table 13).

Table 13

*Full-fledged lies, white lies and no lies in the role-plays*

	<b>Full-fledged lie</b>	<b>White lie</b>	<b>No lie</b>	<b>Total</b>
Male (1)	0	3	3	6
Male (2)	2	1	4	7
<b>Male (total)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>
Female (1)	0	6	1	7
Female (2)	1	1	4	6
<b>Female (total)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>
Total	3	11	12	26

Summarizing the role-play results, females said white lies more often than males (females: 53,8%; males: 30,8). When comparing this to the results of the questionnaire, it can be seen that this gives very different results. As discussed in paragraph 4.1.1.2, 93% of the female participants and 91,7% of the male participants say they use white lies (see Table 5). Fish et al. (2017: 148) suggest that women tend to use white lies to maintain social relationships slightly more often than men do. This might explain why in the role-play females said slightly more white lies than males.

In order to compare the results of the role-play with the results of the questionnaire, it is necessary to take into account the type of relation between the hearer and speaker. In Table 14, the type of lie and the type of relation for each scenario can be found. It can be seen that

with family, friends, colleagues, and professionals only white lies were used, while with acquaintances and partners both white lies and full-fledged lies were used. When comparing these results with the results of the questionnaire, there is a slight difference. In the questionnaire, both full-fledged lies and white lies were used with family, friends, colleagues, and professionals, while with acquaintances only white lies were used and with partners only full-fledged lies were used (see Table 8). In the questionnaire, the set-up was that for every type of relation, a situation was meant to evoke the response that a white lie was used. This was not the case in situation *Gamen*, with the type of relation being partner. The situation was seen as a full-fledged lie-inducing scenario rather than a white lie-inducing scenario. Therefore it could be expected that in the role-play scenarios with the type of relation being partner less or no white lies would be said. This is not the case, since two white lies were said by a participant in role 1 to their ‘partner’ and one full-fledged lie was said by a participant in role 2 to their ‘partner’. This discrepancy can also be seen in the other types of relations regarding the questionnaire and the role-play. This could be an indication that when it comes to the type of relation, there is a difference in the results of the questionnaire and the role-play. This might mean that people do not always do what they think they do, or, in other words, people might not be consistent in their practice and their beliefs.

Table 14

*Types of lies and relations in the role-plays*

Scenario	Type of lie				Type of relation
	Role 1		Role 2		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
A	No lie		Full-fledged		Friends
A		White lie	No lie		Friends
B		No lie		No lie	Colleagues
C	White lie		Full-fledged		Acquaintances
D	No lie		No lie		Family
E	No lie			White lie	Friends
F		White lie		No lie	Family
G		White lie	No lie		Partner
H		White lie		No lie	Colleagues
I	White lie		No lie		Professionals

K		White lie	Full-fledged	Partner
L	White lie		White lie	Acquaintances
N		White lie	No lie	Family

#### 4.2.2 Motivations

As can be seen in Table 15, the motivations that were given during the exit-interview for why a full-fledged lie was said are scattered. All four motivations were given once, with these motivations being with bad intentions, to blame others, unfair, and selfish.

Table 15

*Motivations of full-fledged lies in the role-play*

	Absolute	%
With bad intentions	1	33,3
To blame others	1	33,3
Unfair	1	33,3
Selfish	1	33,3
Total <sup>15</sup>	4	133,2

The motivations given in Table 15 can be grouped in the same overarching categories as the motivations of full-fledged lies in the questionnaire (see Table 11). However, only two categories emerge because there are only four motivations. The two categories are ‘in the benefit of the speaker’ which contains the element ‘selfish’ and makes up 33,3%, and ‘in the disadvantage of the hearer’ which contains the elements ‘with bad intentions’, ‘to blame others’, and ‘unfair’ and makes up 99,9%. When these percentages are recalculated to make for a total of 100%, the category ‘in the benefit of the speaker’ holds 25,0% and ‘in the disadvantage of the hearer’ holds 75,0%. Because there are so little motivations, it is not possible to make a useful comparison between the role-play and the questionnaire with just these results. However, the motivations of the full-fledged lies in the role-play (Table 15) can be compared with the motivations of the full-fledged lies in the questionnaire (Table 11). The

<sup>15</sup> Participants were asked why they said a full-fledged lie, each giving their motivation. The elements crucial to these motivations were encoded. However, some gave more than one motivation, therefore, the total is not cumulative. This is why both the absolute and relative total are more than they should be at first sight. In the raw data, the absolute total of times a full-fledged lie is said is 3. The relative total is 100%.

largest category in the questionnaire was ‘in the disadvantage of the hearer’, which is also reflected in the role-play. As discussed in paragraph 4.1.2.2.1, this disadvantage to the hearer might be what distinguishes white lies from full-fledged lies. The results of the role-play support this claim; the outcome of the questionnaire is reflected in the behaviour of the participants during the role-play.

The motivations that were given for as to why a white lie was said are slightly less scattered. As can be seen in Table 16 the most often given motivation for saying a white lie was that it was said with good intentions (36,4%). To spare the other’s feelings (27,3%), to not hurt others (27,3%), and to convince others (27,3%) are also given as motivations fairly often. This last one is interesting, because this motivation does not occur in the questionnaire, only in the role-play. This might mean that white lies can be used for a reason that is not about doing something good, but also to get something done. This can be linked to manipulation as described by Oswald (2010: 112); a white lie is said to get the hearer to do something that can benefit both the hearer and the speaker.

Table 16

*Motivations of white lies in the role-play*

	<b>Absolute</b>	<b>%</b>
To benefit themselves	1	9,1
To protect others	1	9,1
To benefit others	2	18,2
To not hurt others	3	27,3
With good intentions	4	36,4
To spare the others’ feelings	3	27,3
Easier than telling the truth	1	9,1
To avoid conflict	1	9,1
To be kind	1	9,1
No point in telling the truth	1	9,1
Socially desirable behaviour	2	18,2
To convince others	3	27,3
Total <sup>16</sup>	23	209,3

<sup>16</sup> Participants were asked why they said a white lie, each giving their motivation. The elements crucial to these motivations were encoded. However, some gave more than one motivation, therefore, the total is not cumulative.

The motivations of white lies in the role-play (see Table 16) can be grouped in the same overarching categories as the motivations of white lies in the questionnaire (see Table 12). Some changes do emerge in these existing categories. In the category ‘in the benefit of the speaker’ the element ‘to protect themselves’ disappears because it does not occur in the role-play. In the category ‘in the benefit of the hearer’ the elements ‘not harmful’, ‘to be polite’ and ‘to not offend others’ disappear because they do not occur in the role-play. In the category ‘perceived lack of necessity for honesty’ the elements ‘innocent lie’ and ‘no consequences’ disappear because they do not occur in the role-play, while the element ‘to convince others’ is added.

The category ‘in the benefit of the speaker’ makes up 18,2% of the motivations. The category ‘in the benefit of the hearer’ makes up 127,4% of the motivations. The category ‘perceived lack of necessity for honesty’ makes up 63,7% of the motivations. As was done with the results of Table 9 and Table 12, these percentages will also be recalculated to make for a total of 100%. ‘In the benefit of the speaker’ makes up 8,7% of the motivations, ‘in the benefit of the hearer’ makes up 60,9% of the motivations, and ‘perceived lack of necessity for honesty’ makes up 30,4% of the motivations. When comparing these results with the results of the definitions of white lies (see Table 9) and the motivations of white lies in the questionnaire (see Table 12), it can be noted that a shift took place. The category ‘in the benefit of the speaker’ is much smaller than it was in the definitions and in the questionnaire, while the category ‘perceived lack of necessity for honesty’ holds many more motivations. This can be explained with the findings of Levine & Schweitzer’s (2015: 89) study; because white lies are seen as polite and the use of them is learned at a young age, people might not realise that they are saying a white lie. The role-plays are very similar to everyday situations. This means that the participants for the most part said what they would say in a similar situation if it would happen during a regular, non-scripted conversation. Because the participants had to fill in exit-interviews after acting out the situations, they were more aware of what they had just said than they would be after an everyday conversation. The relatively large category ‘perceived lack of necessity for honesty’ can thus be explained by how mild the white lies are in the perception of the speaker. In the questionnaire, almost no white lies fell into this mild category, which explains those results as well.

---

That is why both the absolute and relative total are more than they should be at first sight. In the raw data, the absolute total of white lies said is 11. The relative total is 100%.



What is interesting is that in the scenarios in which no lie was told, the scenario slightly escalated. For example, in scenario A participant 1 was in the position to say a white lie about the skills of participant 2, but s/he chose not to do so. As a result, participant 2 was agitated, which in the end made participant 1 apologize for saying the truth. This gives a good example of why white lies are acceptable in certain scenarios. As described by Rothermich & Pell (2015: 4), white lies can be used to maintain social relationships and this is a good example of that.

### **4.2.3 Recognition of lies**

When it comes to the recognition of lies, it turns out that only four times out of a total of fourteen the lie was recognized as such. The recognized lies are all white lies. Three times someone thought a lie was said when that was not the case. To be able to understand why a lie does or does not get recognized, it might be useful to look at the actual lies said in the role-play. First, all white lies that were recognized are discussed. After that, all lies that were not recognized are discussed. Lastly, lies that were not said but were thought to be said by the participant in the opposite role are discussed. To distinguish these categories two things are looked at: the exit-interviews the participants filled in and the video-tapes of the conversations. Whether or not an utterance was recognized as a lie is derived from the exit-interviews. The behaviour of the person (thought to be) telling the lie is analysed by looking at the video-tapes at the moment of telling the lie.

#### *4.2.3.1 Recognized white lies*

There are in total four white lies said that were recognized by the participant in the opposing role. In scenario A, the white lie by 1 (female) got recognized by 2 (male). The white lie was that 1 said that 2 had a good presentation, while the presentation was actually not that good. In terms of nonverbal behaviour, when participant 1 uttered this white lie, she looked away from participant 2.

In scenario E, the white lie by 2 (female) got recognized by 1 (male). The white lie was that everyone that participant 2 invited to her party would be super spontaneous and therefore participant 1 would be included in the group in no time. When participant 2 said this white lie, she looked participant 2 in the eyes.

In scenario L, the white lie by 2 (male) got recognized by 1 (male). The white lie was that 2 said he would ask whether or not there would be other drinks at a high-tea than just tea,

while both 1 and 2 knew that this would not be the case. When participant 2 said this white lie, he looked away from participant 1.

In scenario N, the white lie by 1 (female) got recognized by 2 (female). The white lie was that 1 said she put a lot of effort in acquiring a birthday present for 2, while actually she did not put a lot of effort in acquiring said present. When participant 1 said this white lie, she looked participant 2 in the eyes.

The white lies that were recognized have in common that it was not that important for the speaker not to get caught, because it was clear to the hearer that the white lie was said to benefit the hearer. According to Argo & Shiv (2012: 1093) these white lies fall into an acceptable range which makes them harmless, even when they are recognized. As Terkourafi (forthcoming: 8) mentions, because these white lies are recognized by the hearer, the politeness of the speaker's utterance has a high chance of being strengthened. This could also be seen in the exit-interviews; in scenario L, participant 1 mentioned that he knew that participant 2 was lying, but that it showed that participant 2 tried to accommodate participant 1. There is no pattern to be recognized in whether the person saying the lie was looking away or looking into the eyes of the other; both happened two times. According to Rothermich & Pell (2015: 13) avoiding eye contact or gazing away can be a clue for a white lie to be said. Since this was only what happened in two out of four recognized white lies, there could be other factors that gave away that a white lie was said. Other behaviour when saying a white lie, according to Rothermich & Pell (2015: 13), is using too upbeat words and voice tone. This is exactly what happened in scenarios E and N; both times the hearer was not convinced that what was said was actually what was meant, because it was said in a too upbeat manner.

#### *4.2.3.2 Non-recognized full-fledged lies*

There are in total three full-fledged lies said that were not recognized by the participant in the opposing role. In scenario A, 2 (male) said a full-fledged lie which was not recognized by 1 (male). The full-fledged lie was that 2 said that 1 did not have the right to criticize their presentation, while 1 actually did have that right. When participant 2 said this full-fledged lie, he looked away from participant 1.

In scenario C, 2 (male) said a full-fledged lie which was not recognized by 1 (male). The full-fledged lie was that 2 said that they made a certain dish more often, while he did not. When participant 2 said this full-fledged lie, he looked participant 1 in the eyes.

In scenario K, 2 (female) said a full-fledged lie which was not recognized by 1 (female). The full-fledged lie was that 2 thought that romantic comedies were all the same,

while actually 2 does not think that. When participant 2 said this full-fledged lie, she looked participant 1 in the eyes.

The full-fledged lies that were not recognized have in common that it was not possible for the co-participant to derive from the scenario that they were lied to. All these full-fledged lies did not have much to do with the scenario but were additional information given by the participant saying them. This information could have easily been true and therefore these full-fledged lies were not recognized. There is no pattern to be recognized in whether the person saying the lie was looking away or looking into the eyes of the other; looking away happened one time and looking in the eyes happened two times.

#### *4.2.3.3 Non-recognized white lies*

In total, there are seven white lies said that were not recognized by the participant in the opposing role. In scenario C, 1 (male) said a white lie which was not recognized by 1 (male). The white lie was that 2 did not do that bad at cooking, while 1 actually thought that it was not that great of a meal. When participant 1 said this white lie, he looked away from participant 2.

In scenario F, 1 (female) said a white lie which was not recognized by 2 (female). The white lie was that 1 did not have that much money to go out for dinner, while 1 actually could afford it but did not want to go out for dinner and preferred to just stay in. When participant 1 said this white lie, she looked participant 2 in the eyes.

In scenario G, 1 (female) said a white lie which was not recognized by 2 (male). The white lie was that 1 did not like the new shoes of 2 at all, but tried to say it in a kinder, friendlier way. When participant 1 said this white lie, she looked away from participant 2.

In scenario H, 1 (female) said a white lie which was not recognized by 2 (female). The white lie was that 1 did not mention to 2 that their self-tan turned out a little bit orange, but instead said that 2 looked good with a tan. When participant 1 said this white lie, she looked away from participant 2.

In scenario I, 1 (male) said a white lie which was not recognized by 2 (male). The white lie was that 1 said he did not mind lukewarm beer, while actually he did mind it. When participant 1 said this white lie, he looked participant 2 in the eyes.

In scenario K, 1 (female) said a white lie which was not recognized by 2 (female). The white lie was that 1 said that they could try watching a horror movie, while actually 1 did not want to watch a horror movie at all. When participant 1 said this white lie, she looked participant 2 in the eyes.

In scenario L, 1 (male) said a white lie which was not recognized by 2 (male). The white lie was that 1 said that they were not a big fan of tea<sup>17</sup>, while actually 1 does not like tea at all. When participant 1 said this white lie, he looked participant 2 in the eyes.

The white lies that were not recognized have in common that they were accommodating to the scenario, which made it hard for the co-participant to recognize the lie. Even though white lies are permissible to be recognized as explained in paragraph 2.2.2, it is not the case that white lies always will be recognized. What is noteworthy is that all white lies that were not recognized were said by participant 1. In the design of the role-plays, it was intended for participant 1 to be able to say a white lie. This means that the white lies that were not recognized were all lies that fitted into the perception of the hearer and therefore did not stand out to them as possibly being a white lie. This can be linked at the findings of Fish et al. (2017: 148), who describe that there is a general bias towards judging others as truthful. This can explain why these white lies were not recognized. When comparing this to the white lies that were recognized, this speculation gets partially supported by the fact that two of these recognized white lies were said by participant 2. These recognized white lies have in common that they were exaggerations of the truth, which made the opposing participant aware of the white lie. However, there were also two recognized white lies said by participant 1, which counters this speculation. There is however a slight difference: the recognized white lies said by participant 1 have in common that they were elaborated in the conversation. This made the opposing participant suspicious that something else might be going on and made them therefore judge these as white lies. The recognition of the white lies was not dependent on the order in which the participants acted out the scenarios. This could have been the case since a pair of participants acted out two scenarios, with each participant acting out role 1 and role 2 once. However, because the participants filled out the exit-interview after they had acted out both scenarios, they were not aware of the possibility to lie. This awareness could also have been caused by first acting out role 1 and seeing that a lie could be said, but this did not show up in the answers on the exit-interviews.

DePaulo et al. (2003: 79) give a possible explanation for the high number of non-recognized white lies. They say that when a lie is based on a script, the liar tends to make fewer mistakes and therefore the lie remains invisible to the hearer. Because the participants were given a script with the scenario, it can be the case that these scripts were used as a

---

<sup>17</sup> Even though this can also be seen as an understatement, in the exit-interview it was made clear by the participant acting out role 1 that this was meant as a white lie. See the limitations section for a further discussion on understatements versus white lies.

guideline for the white lie they could say. This is backed up by the transcripts of the conversations; all white lies were in line with the script.

There is no pattern to be recognized in whether the person saying the lie was looking away or looking into the eyes of their co-participant; looking away happened three times and looking in the eyes happened four times. Rothermich & Pell (2015: 13) describe that besides gazing away and using overly upbeat words, as described in paragraph 4.2.3.1, someone saying a white lie might hesitate in their speech, and smile or fake smiling. With these four behaviours, all non-recognized white lies can be classified. In scenarios C, G, and H, the person saying the lie looked away. In scenario F, K, and L, there was a hesitation in the speech. Finally, in scenario I, a fake smile appeared.

#### 4.2.3.4 *Incorrectly 'recognized' lies*

There were four times when a participant thought their co-participant had said a lie when this was in fact not the case. In scenario A, 1 (male) thought that 2 (male) said a full-fledged lie, this being that 2 thought their presentation did not go well when saying that it did. 2 did think that their presentation went well.

In scenario E, 2 (female) thought that 1 (male) said a white lie, this being that 1 did not actually mean it when they said they would come to the party of 2.

In scenario G, 1 (female) thought that 2 (male) said a white lie, this being that 2 did not actually would want to hear the truth the next time, even though they said they appreciated this truthfulness about 1.

In scenario N, 1 (female) thought that 2 (female) said a white lie, this being that 2 was overenthusiastic about the gift they just received from 1.

The incorrectly 'recognized' lies have in common that the opposing participant thought that the speaker was overdoing it and therefore something was classified as a lie, which can be linked to Rothermich & Pell (2015: 13); being too upbeat or using too upbeat words such as *fantastisch* (fantastic) and *prachtig* (gorgeous) can give away when a white lie is said. This explains why these utterances were falsely recognized as white lies.

### 4.3 Combined results

The results of the questionnaire and the role-play show many similarities. When it comes to the motivations given for as to why something was seen as a full-fledged lie or a full-fledged lie was said, all motivations given in the role-play are also given in the questionnaire (see Table 11 and Table 15). Because of the small number of full-fledged lies said in the role-play,

which is most likely caused by the design of the role-play, it is not possible to make a complete comparison, but because no new reasons were given, the results are seen as comparable. Looking at the motivations given for as to why something was seen as a white lie or a white lie was said, the motivations between the questionnaire and role-play are roughly the same. The only motivation that stands out is the motivation ‘to convince others’, since this motivation was only given in the role-play. This is in line with paragraph 4.2.1, where it is concluded that people tend to do something different than they think they do. It might be the case that in actual conversations, white lies are more often used for the benefit of the speaker, either in a way that it is easier for the speaker to say a white lie or to convince others, than the results of the questionnaire show. This is supported by the results of the role-play (see Table 12 and Table 16).

When comparing the results of the questionnaire and the role-play based on whether or not males and females say white lies, it can be seen that in the questionnaire many more participants answered that they use white lies as opposed to the times a white lie is said in the role-play. In the role-play, four out of thirteen males, which is 30,8%, said a white lie, with 91,7% of males aged 20 through 30 in the questionnaire mentioned they say white lies. As many as seven out of thirteen females, which is 53,8%, said a white lie in the role-play, as opposed to 93,0% of females aged 20 through 30 in the questionnaire who mentioned they say white lies (see Table 5 and Table 13). This means that even though the percentages between the two parts of the study differ a lot, which may be due to the small scale of the role-play, women in both the questionnaire and the role-play say more white lies than men.

## **5 Discussion**

The results of this thesis show a decent amount of overlap with previous studies. One aspect that stands out is that according to Terkourafi (forthcoming: 7), whether an utterance is seen as a white lie or as a full-fledged lie depends on the context. In this thesis, this context got defined by the type of relation between the speaker and hearer. Recall situation *Gamen* in paragraph 4.1.2.2.1: when the relationship is a romantic one, an utterance that would be seen as a white lie when said in a different relationship was seen as a full-fledged lie. This was also found by DePaulo et al. (2003: 76) and discussed in paragraph 4.1.1.1. Intimacy can thus be seen as incompatible with lying.

Another finding that can be linked to previous studies concerns the motivations given for classifying a white lie as such. According to Oswald (2010: 98), there is such a thing as deception with good intentions. Levine & Schweitzer (2015: 89) link this kind of deception to

white lies. In the results, this is reflected in the motivations given that are about benefitting and protecting others. When a white lie is said to benefit the hearer, it is said with good intentions, even though it can be deceptive. Camden et al. (1984: 310) also mention that white lies are said to benefit others. Furthermore, they say that white lies can be used to avoid tension or conflict. This was also found in this thesis, albeit to a lesser extent (see Table 12 and Table 16). Levine & Schweitzer (2015: 89) found that white lies can have self-serving motives as well as other-serving motives, which is reflected in the results extensively with the use of the overarching categories ‘in the benefit of the speaker’ and ‘in the benefit of the hearer’ (see Table 3, Table 7, Table 9, Table 12, and Table 16). This thesis shows similar results when compared to other scientific publications in this field. It also shows that the findings of those scientific publications, which are focused on English, also apply to Dutch.

## **6 Limitations**

This thesis is an exploratory study for how white lies are defined and used in Dutch. Because there is not much literature about this topic at the moment, there are some flaws in the experimental design of this research. These limitations will be discussed in this section.

First of all, no empirical research has been done on the topic of white lies in connection to Dutch. This made it difficult to figure out how to research how white lies are used in Dutch, which is why a combination of methods was used, with these methods being the questionnaire and the role-play. These methods however also posed some issues themselves, which will be discussed below.

A number of issues were posed by the questionnaire. First of all, the specified situations might have affected the answers that were given. It could very well be the case that even though the situations were normed before the questionnaire was sent out, they were not clear-cut for all participants. It might also make a difference in how the situations are phrased, especially when a value judgment is part of the situation. An example is situation *Kapsel* from the questionnaire, where ‘*does not look that good*’ could also have been phrased as, for example, ‘*looks terrible*’. For future research it would be advisable to study the effects of this negative and positive phrasing in relation to (white) lies. In other words, does how strongly negatively or positively our opinions are expressed have an effect on the recognition of the (white) lies we tell? This is also related to the subject of understatements. What is seen by some people as a white lie can be seen by others as an understatement. This subjective view can be a problem for deciding what is and is not a white lie. The definition for white lies

proposed in paragraph 2.2.2 does not solve this problem; understatements must be recognized, while white lies are permissible to be recognized as well.

The role-play also posed some issues. The main problem was that for some participants the instructions they received were not sufficient. Even though these instructions were tested beforehand, it turned out that some people did not know what to do or did not read the instructions thoroughly enough, which made for three scenarios to be eliminated. It was also the case, as is the case with the questionnaire, that the scenarios might affect the amount of white lies that were said. Because this is an exploratory study, it unfortunately was not possible to take this into account before the research was executed.

Lastly, the results of this thesis will have been influenced by the amount and diversity of the participants. The questionnaire was filled out by a decent number of participants. However, there was not much diversity between them; the larger part of the participants was between twenty and thirty years old and studied at a university. Because this is not a representative sample of the Dutch population, it is not possible to relate the results of this thesis to how white lies are actually used by native speakers of Dutch other than by this part of the population.

The exploratory nature of this study made for some limitations. These limitations are to be recognized and could be accounted for when further research is done on the subject of the use of white lies by native speakers of Dutch.

## **7 Conclusion<sup>18</sup>**

In this thesis, a theoretical framework regarding lying and white lies has been discussed. It was mentioned that white lies are a type of lie, but that white lies cannot be defined by the exact same definition as full-fledged lies. This is why a new definition was proposed to define white lies, which is an adjustment of the definition of lies given by Saul (2012: 29). The theoretical framework formed the basis for a two-part research consisting of a questionnaire and a role-play. In the questionnaire, participants had to decide whether a given situation was a full-fledged lie, a white lie, or not a lie. The participants also gave their definitions of white lies and how they use white lies. The results of the questionnaire were compared with the role-play, in which participants acted out rewritten versions of the situations of the questionnaire that were seen as white lies. The results of this two-part research project answer

---

<sup>18</sup> All conclusions are only applicable to this thesis. No statements are made about the entire population of native speakers of Dutch.



the research question posed in the introduction: *How are white lies used by native speakers of Dutch?* To answer this question, four sub-questions have to be answered. The first sub-question is: To what extent do native speakers of Dutch use white lies? What is shown by the results of this thesis is that native speakers of Dutch use white lies in their daily lives. The second sub-question is: How do native speakers of Dutch define white lies? White lies are defined by native speakers of Dutch as a way of protecting others and benefiting both the speaker and hearer. The third sub-question is: When do native speakers of Dutch use white lies and why do they use them? Native speakers of Dutch use white lies in everyday conversations. The results however do not show that native speakers of Dutch use white lies every day. Women use white lies more frequently than men do. White lies are used because they are thought to have no or small consequences and also because not saying a white lie could have a negative effect, which makes them acceptable in certain situations. The fourth and last sub-question is: Do native speakers of Dutch use white lies in the way they think they do? This thesis shows that native speakers of Dutch might not be aware of the reasons why they say white lies and why they think they say white lies.

Further research in the field of white lies is necessary to describe this phenomenon more thoroughly. To test the research done about white lies in English, it is advised to do research about white lies in relation to other languages, such as Dutch.

## 8 References

Argo, J.J. & Shiv, B. (2012). Are White Lies as Innocuous as We Think? *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38(6), 1093-1102.

Biziou-van-Pol, L., Haenen, J., Novaro, A., Liberman, A.O. & Capraro, V. (2015). Does Telling White Lies Signal Pro-Social Preferences? *Judgment and Decision Making*, 10(6), 538-548.

Bok, S. (1978). *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Bond, C.F. & DePaulo, B.M. (2008). Individual Differences in Judging Deception: Accuracy and Bias. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134(4), 477-492.

Brown, P. & Levinson, S.C. (1978). Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena. In E. Goody (ed.), *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction* (pp. 56-310). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reprinted as: Brown, P. & Levinson, S.C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Language Universals in Language Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bryant, E. (2008). Real Lies, White Lies and Gray Lies: Towards a Typology of Deception. *Kaleidoscope* 7, 23-50.

Camden, C., Motley, M.T. & Wilson, A. (1984). White Lies in Interpersonal Communication: A Taxonomy and Preliminary Investigation of Social Motivations. *The Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 48, 309-325.

Coleman, L. & Kay, P. (1981). Prototype Semantics: The English Verb *Lie*. *Language* 57: 26-44.

DePaulo, B.M. & Kashy, D.A. (1998). Everyday Lies in Close and Casual Relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(1), 63-79.

DePaulo, B.M., Lindsay J.J., Malone, B.E., Muhlenbruck, K., Charlton, K. & Cooper, H. (2003). Cues to Deception. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 74-118.

Ekman, P., O'Sullivan, M., Friesen, W.V. & Scherer, K.R. (1991). Invited Article: Face, Voice, and Body in Detecting Deceit. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 15(2), 125-135.

Fallis, D. (2009). What is Lying? *The Journal of Philosophy*, 106(1), 29–56.

Fish, K., Rothermich, K. & Pell, M.D. (2017). The Sound of (In)sincerity. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 121, 147-161.

Galasinski, D. (2000). *The Language of Deception. A Discourse Analytical Study*. London: Sage.

Grice, H.P. (1975). Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole & J.L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics 3 (Speech Acts)* (pp. 41-58). New York: Academic Press.

Grice, H.P. (1989). *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hardin, K. (2010). The Spanish Notion of Lie: Revisiting Coleman and Kay. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42(12), 3199-3213.

Levine, E.E. & Schweitzer, M.E. (2014). Are Liars Ethical? On the Tension Between Benevolence and Honesty. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 53, 107-117.

Levine, E.E. & Schweitzer, M.E. (2015). *Prosocial Lies: When Deception Breeds Trust*. Ms. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

Lumsden, D. (2008). Kinds of Conversational Cooperation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40, 1896-1908.

Meibauer, J. (2014). *Lying at the Semantics-Pragmatics Interface*. Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Oswald, S. (2010). *Pragmatics of Uncooperative and Manipulative Communication*. University of Neuchâtel.

Reboul, A. (1994). The Description of Lies in Speech Act Theory. In H. Parret (ed.), *Pretending to Communicate* (pp. 292–298). Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.

Rothermich K., & Pell, M.D. (2015). Introducing RISC: A New Video Inventory for Testing Social Perception. *PLoS ONE*, 10(7).

Saul, J. (2012). *Lying, Misleading, and What Is Said*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Searle, J.R. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, J.R. (1979). *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Terkourafi, M. (forthcoming). Lying and Politeness. In J. Meibauer (ed.), *The Handbook of Lying*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## **9 Appendix**

### **A1 Situations (questionnaire) original version**

#### *Opdracht*

Je wordt op maandagochtend door de baas in zijn kantoor geroepen: ‘We hebben een probleem; de opdracht is niet doorgegeven, waardoor we enorme verliezen oplopen. Weet jij wie hiervoor verantwoordelijk is?’ Hierop antwoord jij: ‘Ik weet het niet zeker, misschien heeft de secretaresse het niet goed doorgegeven. Ik zal er achteraan gaan.’ Jij had vrijdag zo veel zin in het weekend dat je vergeten bent de opdracht te versturen.

#### *Presentatie*

Stel je voor dat je op je werk bent. Je collega moest een belangrijke presentatie houden, waar hij erg zenuwachtig voor was: ‘Heb ik de presentatie een beetje goed gedaan?’ Hierop antwoord jij: ‘Ja zeker, het was erg duidelijk allemaal.’ Hij sprong van de hak op de tak en stamelde veel.

#### *Boek*

Stel je voor dat je een boek geleend hebt van de bibliotheek, maar vergeten bent het terug te brengen. De bibliothecaris vraagt je: ‘Ik zie dat je dit boek nog in je bezit hebt. De boete is 6 euro en 20 cent, kun je dat nu en betalen en het boek zo snel mogelijk terugbrengen?’ Hierop antwoord jij: ‘Ik heb geen idee waar u het over heeft, ik heb dat boek nooit geleend!’ Je was van plan het boek terug te brengen, maar je wilt de boete niet betalen.

#### *Cake*

Het is zondagmiddag, je gaat op bezoek bij je oma. Ze heeft een cake gebakken: ‘Wil je nog een stukje?’ Hierop antwoord jij: ‘Nee bedankt, maar hij was heerlijk!’ De cake was niet gaar.

#### *Feest*

Stel je voor dat je wordt uitgenodigd door een kennis: ‘Kom je naar mijn feest volgende week?’ Hierop antwoord jij: ‘Nee sorry, ik kan niet, ik zou al bij mijn ouders langsgaan.’ Je hebt nog helemaal geen plannen, maar je vindt de kennis in kwestie niet zo aardig.

#### *Ober*

Stel je voor dat je in een restaurant zit en de ober langs komt: ‘Is alles naar wens?’ Hierop antwoord jij: ‘Ja hoor, het is heerlijk.’ Het eten is koud en smakeloos.

### *Kapsel*

Op een middag loop je door de stad en opeens kom je een vriendin tegen. Ze vraagt aan je: 'Hoe vind je mijn nieuwe kapsel? Ik kom net van de kapper!' Hierop antwoord jij: 'Leuk, het staat je goed!' Eigenlijk staat het nieuwe kapsel haar helemaal niet zo goed.

### *Gamen*

Stel je voor dat je met je vriend(in) gaat winkelen. Hij/zij houdt van gamen en is van plan om vandaag een nieuw computerspel te kopen. Hij/zij vraagt je: 'Wat wil jij? Misschien kan ik iets kopen wat we samen kunnen spelen!' Hierop antwoord jij: 'Ja, dat lijkt me een goed idee!' Je haat gamen.

### *Koffie*

Op een luie zaterdag krijg je ineens een telefoontje van je beste vriendin. Ze vraagt je: 'Waar ben je? We hadden afgesproken om samen koffie te drinken!' Hierop antwoord jij: 'Het spijt me zo, maar mijn moeder is ziek en ik ben bij haar om voor haar te zorgen.' Na het telefoontje ga je verder met Netflix kijken in je eigen woonkamer.

### *Tas*

Stel je voor dat je een nieuwe tas gekocht hebt en blij thuiskomt om hem aan je ouders te laten zien. Ze vragen je: 'Hoeveel heb je ervoor betaald?' Hierop antwoord jij: 'Niks, ik heb hem gratis gekregen van een vriend die hem niet meer wilde!' Eigenlijk kostte de tas 100 euro.

## **A2 Situations (questionnaire) English translation**

### *Opdracht*

On Monday morning you get called into your boss' office: 'We have a problem; the order has not been passed on, which makes us have huge losses. Do you know who is responsible for this?' To this you answer: 'I am not sure, perhaps the secretary failed to pass it on. I will go after it.' On Friday, you were so excited about the weekend that you forgot to send the order out.

### *Presentatie*

Imagine you are at work. Your colleague has held an important presentation, which made him very nervous: 'Did I do alright with the presentation?' To this, you answer: 'Yes definitely, it was very clear.' His presentation was all over the place and he stuttered a lot.

### *Boek*

Imagine you lent a book from the library, but forgot to return it. The librarian asks you: 'I see that you still have this book in your possession. The fine is 6 euros and 20 cents, can you pay that right now please and bring the book back?' To this, you answer: 'I have no clue what you are talking about, I never borrowed that book!' You were planning on returning it but you don't want to pay the fine.

### *Cake*

Imagine you are visiting your grandmother. She made a cake: 'Would you like another piece?' To this, you answer: 'No thank you, but it was delicious!' The cake was undercooked.

### *Feest*

Imagine you are getting invited by an acquaintance: 'Are you coming to my party next week?' To this, you answer: 'No, sorry, I can't. I made plans to go over to my parents.' You don't have plans, but you don't like this acquaintance very much.

### *Ober*

Imagine you are sitting in a restaurant and the waiter walks by: 'Is everything to your liking?' To this, you answer: 'Yes, thank you. It is delicious.' The food is cold and tasteless.

### *Kapsel*

Imagine you are walking through town and suddenly you run into a friend. She asks you: 'How do you like my new haircut? I just went to the hairdresser!' To this, you answer: 'Nice, it looks good on you!' Actually, the new haircut does not look that good on her.

### *Gamen*

Imagine you are going shopping with your boy/girlfriend. S/he loves gaming and is planning on buying a new computer game today. S/he asks you: 'What do you want? Maybe I can buy something we can play together?' To this, you answer: 'Yes, that seems like a great idea!' You hate gaming.

### *Koffie*

On a lazy Saturday you suddenly get a call from your best friend. S/he asks you: 'Where are you? We were supposed to meet at the coffee shop!' To this, you answer: 'I am so sorry, but

my mother is sick so I am over at her place to take care of her' After the phone call, you get back to lying on the couch and watching Netflix in the comfort of your own home.

*Tas*

Imagine you have bought a new bag and happily come home with it to show it to your parents. They ask you: 'How much did you pay for it?' To this, you answer: 'Nothing, I got it for free from a friend that didn't want it anymore!' Actually, it cost 100 euros.



## **B1 Scenarios (role-play) original version**

### **Scenario A**

#### **Rol 1**

Je hebt college en een vriend heeft net zijn paper gepresenteerd. Het was geen hele goede presentatie, maar het is niet voor een cijfer.

#### **Rol 2**

Je hebt college en je hebt net je paper gepresenteerd, wat naar jouw idee prima ging. Het is niet voor een cijfer.

### **Scenario B**

#### **Rol 1**

Je werkt in een restaurant. Je hebt een nieuwe collega die net voor het eerst een bestelling heeft opgenomen. Hierbij maakte ze wat kleine fouten.

#### **Rol 2**

Je hebt je eerste werkdag in een restaurant. Je hebt net voor het eerst een bestelling opgenomen, wat best goed ging.

### **Scenario C**

#### **Rol 1**

Je huisgenoot, die normaal nooit kookt, heeft avondeten gemaakt. Hij is vergeten zout toe te voegen.

#### **Rol 2**

Je hebt voor het eerst gekookt voor je huisgenoot. Normaal kook je nooit, maar voor je gevoel ging het goed.

### **Scenario D**

#### **Rol 1**

Je gaat bij je broer eten. Hij denkt dat hij een wijn heeft gehaald die jij lekker vond, maar hij heeft juist een hele vieze wijn gehaald.

#### **Rol 1**

Je gaat bij je zus eten. Ze denkt dat ze een wijn heeft gehaald die jij lekker vond, maar ze heeft juist een hele vieze wijn gehaald.

#### **Rol 2**

Je broer komt bij je eten. Je hebt speciaal voor hem een fles wijn gehaald die hij lekker vindt.

**Rol 2**

Je zus komt bij je eten. Je hebt speciaal voor haar een fles wijn gehaald die zij lekker vindt.

**Scenario E****Rol 1**

Een vriendin nodigt je uit voor haar huisfeest, maar je kent niemand. Je wilt niet gaan.

**Rol 1**

Een vriend nodigt je uit voor zijn huisfeest, maar je kent niemand. Je wilt niet gaan.

**Rol 2**

Je nodigt een vriend uit voor je huisfeest, waar je heel veel zin in hebt.

**Rol 2**

Je nodigt een vriendin uit voor je huisfeest, waar je heel veel zin in hebt.

**Scenario F****Rol 1**

Je nicht vraagt of je samen uit eten wil met haar nieuwe vriend, zodat je hem kunt ontmoeten.

Je ontmoet hem liever een keer bij je nicht thuis, maar ze staat er op om uit eten te gaan.

**Rol 1**

Je neef vraagt of je samen uit eten wil met zijn nieuwe vriendin, zodat je hem kunt ontmoeten.

Je ontmoet haar liever een keer bij je neef thuis, maar hij staat er op om uit eten te gaan.

**Rol 2**

Je hebt een nieuwe vriend en je wilt graag een keer uit eten met je nicht zodat zij hem kan ontmoeten.

**Rol 2**

Je hebt een nieuwe vriend en je wilt graag een keer uit eten met je neef zodat hij hem kan ontmoeten.

**Scenario G****Rol 1**

Je vriend heeft nieuwe schoenen gekocht waar hij heel blij mee is. Jij vindt ze niet zo mooi.

**Rol 1**

Je vriendin heeft nieuwe schoenen gekocht waar ze heel blij mee is. Jij vindt ze niet zo mooi.

**Rol 2**

Je hebt nieuwe schoenen gekocht waar je heel blij mee bent. Je laat ze vol trots aan je vriend zien.

**Rol 2**

Je hebt nieuwe schoenen gekocht waar je heel blij mee bent. Je laat ze vol trots aan je vriendin zien.

**Scenario H****Rol 1**

Een collega verschijnt op het werk met een ietwat oranje uitgeslagen selftan. Ze is zich hier niet van bewust.

**Rol 1**

Een collega verschijnt op het werk met een ietwat oranje uitgeslagen selftan. Hij is zich hier niet van bewust.

**Rol 2**

Je hebt gister een selftan gedaan en gaat nu naar je werk.

**Scenario I****Rol 1**

Je zit in een bar waar je een biertje hebt besteld. Je bier komt vers uit de tap maar blijkt lauw te zijn.

**Rol 2**

Je werkt als bartender en serveer een klant een biertje, vers uit de tap.

**Scenario J****Rol 1**

In de supermarkt kun je de ongezouten cashewnoten niet vinden. Je vraagt het aan een vakkenvuller, die even later aan komt lopen met een zakje gezouten cashewnoten.

**Rol 2**

Je bent vakkenvuller in een supermarkt. Een klant vraagt waar de cashewnoten zijn, dus je gaat op zoek en brengt hem een zakje.

**Rol 2**

Je bent vakkenvuller in een supermarkt. Een klant vraagt waar de cashewnoten zijn, dus je gaat op zoek en brengt haar een zakje.

## **Scenario K**

### **Rol 1**

Je bent op een eerste date en je date stelt voor om een horrorfilm te kijken. Daar houd je niet zo van, hij is echter groot fan.

### **Rol 1**

Je bent op een eerste date en je date stelt voor om een horrorfilm te kijken. Daar houd je niet zo van, zij is echter groot fan.

### **Rol 2**

Je bent op een eerste date en je wilt graag een horrorfilm kijken, dat is namelijk je favoriete genre.

## **Scenario L**

### **Rol 1**

Door een kennis wordt je uitgenodigd op een luxe high tea, waar er ook daadwerkelijk alleen maar thee wordt geschonken. Je lust geen thee.

### **Rol 2**

Je nodigt een kennis uit om mee te gaan naar een luxe high tea.

## **Scenario M**

### **Rol 1**

Je gaat eten bij een vriendin. Jij zou voor de wijn zorgen. Omdat je zelf een wijnliefhebber bent, heb je een fles van 30 euro meegenomen. Je vriendin moet rondkomen van 25 euro per week.

### **Rol 1**

Je gaat eten bij een vriend. Jij zou voor de wijn zorgen. Omdat je zelf een wijnliefhebber bent, heb je een fles van 30 euro meegenomen. Je vriend moet rondkomen van 25 euro per week.

### **Rol 2**

Je hebt een vriend uitgenodigd om te komen eten. Hij heeft een fles wijn meegenomen. Omdat je de wijn erg lekker vindt, wil je weten waar hij vandaan komt zodat je hem zelf ook kan halen.

### **Rol 2**

Je hebt een vriendin uitgenodigd om te komen eten. Ze heeft een fles wijn meegenomen. Omdat je de wijn erg lekker vindt, wil je weten waar hij vandaan komt zodat je hem zelf ook kan halen.

## **Scenario N**

### **Rol 1**

Je schoonzus is jarig. Toen je op zolder aan het opruimen was, kwam je daar nog een schilderij tegen wat je erg geschikt vond als cadeau. Dit heeft je dus niets gekost.

### **Rol 1**

Je zwager is jarig. Toen je op zolder aan het opruimen was, kwam je daar nog een schilderij tegen wat je erg geschikt vond als cadeau. Dit heeft je dus niets gekost.

### **Rol 2**

Je bent jarig. Van je schoonzus krijg je een prachtig schilderij wat veel gekost moet hebben.

### **Rol 2**

Je bent jarig. Van je zwager krijg je een prachtig schilderij wat veel gekost moet hebben.

## **B2 English translations**

### **Scenario A**

#### **Role 1**

You are in class and a friend has just presented his paper. It was not that great of a presentation, but it is not for a grade.

#### **Role 2**

You are in class and you have just presented your paper, which went alright in your opinion. It is not for a grade.

### **Scenario B**

#### **Role 1**

You work in a restaurant. Your new colleague has just taken her first order. She made some small mistakes doing this.

#### **Role 2**

It is your first day at work in a restaurant. You just took your first order, which went quite well.

### **Scenario C**

#### **Role 1**

Your roommate, who usually never cooks, made dinner. They forgot to add the salt.

**Role 2**

You made dinner for the first time for your roommate. You usually never cook, but you think it went alright.

**Scenario D****Role 1**

You are going over for dinner at your sibling. They think they bought a bottle of wine you like, but instead they got a very nasty bottle of wine.

**Role 2**

Your sibling is coming over for dinner. You made some effort to buy a bottle of wine they like.

**Scenario E****Role 1**

A friend invites you to their party, but you don't know anybody there. You don't want to go.

**Role 2**

You invite a friend to your party, which you are very excited for.

**Scenario F****Role 1**

Your cousin asks you if you would like to go out for dinner with them and their new boyfriend, so you can meet him. You would rather meet him at your cousin's house, but they insist to go out for dinner.

**Role 1**

Your cousin asks you if you would like to go out for dinner with them and their new girlfriend, so you can meet her. You would rather meet her at your cousin's house, but they insist to go out for dinner.

**Role 2**

You have a new boyfriend and you would like to go out for dinner with your cousin, so they can meet him.

**Role 2**

You have a new girlfriend and you would like to go out for dinner with your cousin, so they can meet her.

## **Scenario G**

### **Role 1**

Your boyfriend got a new pair of shoes that they really like. You do not like them as much.

### **Role 1**

Your girlfriend got a new pair of shoes that they really like. You do not like them as much.

### **Role 2**

You got a new pair of shoes that you really like. You proudly show them to your boyfriend.

### **Role 2**

You got a new pair of shoes that you really like. You proudly show them to your girlfriend.

## **Scenario H**

### **Role 1**

A colleague comes to work with a selftan that turned slightly orange. They are not aware of this.

### **Role 2**

Yesterday you did a selftan and now you are at work.

## **Scenario I**

### **Role 1**

You are at a bar where you have ordered a beer. Your beer is fresh from the tap but turns out to be lukewarm.

### **Role 2**

You work as a bartender and you serve a customer a beer, fresh from the tap.

## **Scenario J**

### **Role 1**

You are at the grocery store and you can't find the unsalted cashews. You ask a stock clerk who a moment later returns with a bag of salted cashews.

### **Role 2**

You are a stock clerk in a grocery store. A customer asks you where the cashews are, so you go find them and get the customer a bag of cashews.

## **Scenario K**

### **Role 1**

You are on a first date and your date suggests you could watch a horror movie. You are not into horror movies; they however are a big fan of them.

### **Role 2**

You are on a first date and you want to watch a horror movie. After all, that is your favourite genre of movies.

## **Scenario L**

### **Role 1**

An acquaintance invites you to a luxury high tea, where there really is only tea served. You don't like tea.

### **Role 2**

You invite an acquaintance to go with you to a luxury high tea.

## **Scenario M**

### **Role 1**

You are having dinner with a friend. You were supposed to take care of the wine and because you are a wine enthusiast, you took a bottle of 30 euros with you. Your friend has to live off of 25 euros a week.

### **Role 2**

You invited a friend over for dinner. They took a bottle of wine with them. Because you really like the wine, you ask them where they got it so you can go and get it yourself.

## **Scenario N**

### **Role 1**

Your sister-in-law has her birthday. When you were cleaning out the attic, you found a painting that you think she would really like. You give her the painting for her birthday, which therefore cost you nothing.

### **Role 1**

Your brother-in-law has his birthday. When you were cleaning out the attic, you found a painting that you think he would really like. You give him the painting for his birthday, which therefore cost you nothing.



**Role 2**

It is your birthday. From your sister-in-law, you get a beautiful painting which must have cost her a lot.

**Role 2**

It is your birthday. From your brother-in-law, you get a beautiful painting which must have cost him a lot.