

The Foreign Language Effect in Cooperation Games

F.A. Heine¹, J. van Hugten², A. van Witteloostuijn^{2,3,4}, A. Harzing^{1,5}

1. Tilburg University, Netherlands
2. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands

3. University of Antwerp, Belgium
4. Antwerp Business School, Belgium

5. Middlesex University, England

Introduction

- We increasingly operate in a global, multilingual environment; in the workplace, many of us use a foreign language to work with others.
- Three seminal prior studies on this:
 1. Akkermans, Harzing, and van Witteloostuijn (2010)
Binary cooperation game, two languages
 2. Gargalianou, Urbig, and van Witteloostuijn (2017)
Binary cooperation game, one foreign two native languages
 3. Urbig, Terjesen, Procher, Muehlfeld, and van Witteloostuijn (2016)
Continuous cooperation game, two language setting

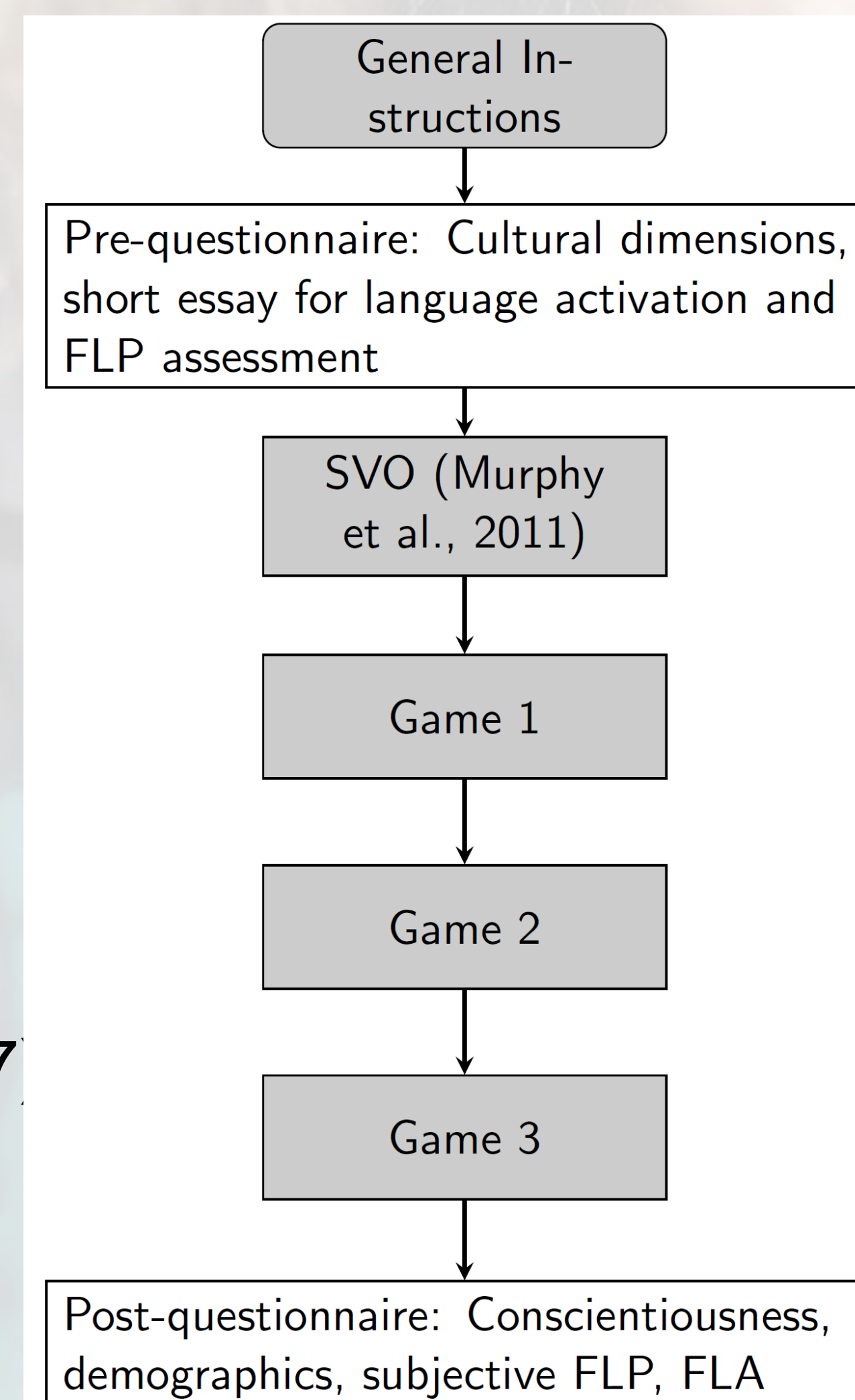
Method

- Three Treatments:
1. Mother Tongue (German)
 2. Foreign Language 1 (English)
 3. Foreign Language 2 (Dutch)

- Three one-shot cooperation games (random order):
1. Prisoner's Dilemma
 2. Public Goods Game
 3. Volunteer's Dilemma

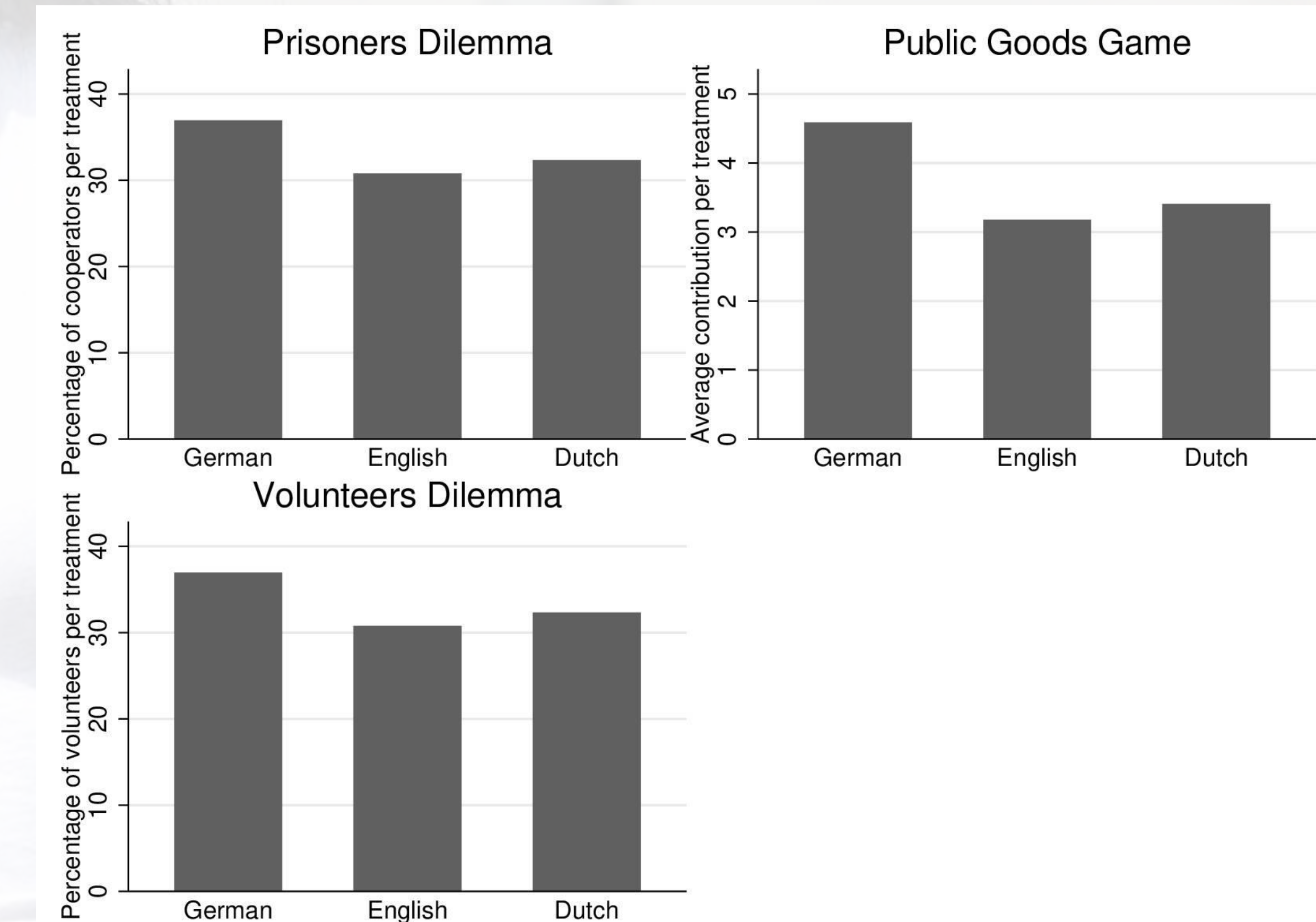
130 German participants at Maastricht University using z-Tree by Fischbacher (2007)

60 minutes
average earnings €10.01



Results

- Higher cooperation rates in German than in other languages (mother tongue bias)
- A lot of noise in data – especially low statistical power in binary games



Discussion

- Tendency towards common directionality in all three games (i.e. mother tongue bias)

Directions for future research:

- Communication between participants for higher degree of immersion in language
- Repetition for learning & more data
- Belief elicitation