On Sunday a comedian with no voice spoke to the nation and the nation responded. It got me thinking about the importance of language and reminded me how important it is.

I’m half Irish and half Scottish and language has played a big part of my life. I’m also an army brat and grew up in various parts of the UK, Northern Ireland and Germany. You could say I’m from everywhere and nowhere and my accent reflects that. It’s not fixed to one place and I’ve picked up various colloquialisms along the way. When it comes to meeting people for the first time, they usually notice my accent, or lack of one, first. It’s always a talking point and something I’m always conscious of. It’s why the Nelson Mandela quote above resonates with me so much.
The subtle nuances of language, people and place became even more apparent when I worked with account teams across the Highlands and Islands. Helping them to identify opportunities to incorporate Gaelic (gaa-lik), Orcadian and Shetlandic language and culture into their clients businesses and access new markets. There are big differences in culture across Scotland, and the UK, and cultural referencing in advertising is something I’ve always had an interest in. Whilst people will relate to their own language, seeing a foreign language will also disrupt their thinking and make the advert stand out. Most of us will remember Audi and “Vorsprung Durch Technik”. Two campaigns where brands are utilising language as an asset to create a point of difference caught my eye recently.

**Kelly’s Cornish for Ice Cream**

[https://youtu.be/GEEMaBoFPOs](https://youtu.be/GEEMaBoFPOs)

I saw the Kelly’s Ice Cream advert for the first time during Britain’s Got Talent some time in 2016 (I have an 8-year-old son please don’t judge my TV choices!). Like many I recognised the brand but it took my brain a little bit of time to catch up to the fact that they were not speaking English. The campaign increased the profile of Kelly’s Ice Cream but it also became a positive advert for Cornwall and the Cornish language. The ad was made with support from the Cornish Language Partnership and a new advert has recently been launched using the same approach.

**Laphroaig Whisky – #OpinionsWelcome**

If you can pronounce Laphroaig then you are ahead of the curve (but if you can’t here is how: LA-FROY-IG). Whisky is one of Scotland’s biggest exports but many can’t pronounce the Gaelic names on the bottles. Laphroaig have embraced this and have created online videos where people from different backgrounds explain what it tastes like. Some love it, others don’t, but this highlights that everyone has their own opinion, which they express in their own unique way.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jgq-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jgq-)
As we move through 2018 and beyond continuing to embrace voice search, and voice activated products, language will become increasingly important. Just think of how many times you have asked Alexa for something and had to repeat yourself or change your pronunciation. Brands are no different, one size does not fit all, and an advert that works in one part of the UK may not work in another. Now, more than ever, brands must ensure they are speaking to people not just in a language they understand but one that will resonate with them on personal level. It all starts with understanding the audience – starting with people first you will always get better results.

References

1 – Achtung! The information processing of foreign words in advertising. Domzal Hunt and Kernan