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***THE USE OF TRANSLATION
SERVICES***

***Case: International
Companies in the
IT-Industry in Finland***

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ABSTRACT

International business is becoming ever more global and vast linguistic skills are required to manage international and localised business-making. However, even though the importance of languages, and hence translation, is recognised, research on translation in a business context is lacking.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the use of translation services in international companies in the IT-industry in Finland. The sub-problems of the research area are: why are translation services bought, how are translation services bought, and how is the use of translation services experienced. Translation services are regarded as a professional service. The research approach in this paper is qualitative and the study is a multiple, comparative case study where research data is collected from individual interviews.

The case companies were asked about the reasons for buying translation services. There was to be noticed four most obvious reasons for outsourcing translation: reasons of cost, lack of resources, lack of skills, and the internationalisation of business. Hence, the reasons why translation services are bought clearly follow the general tendency of outsourcing in today's business. Even though the amount of outsourced translations is vast in most of the case companies, the role of translation in managerial or budgeting terms is still rather small in most of the case companies.

When asked about how translation services are bought by the case companies, it was found out that the case companies prefer using only one or few service providers to handle their outsourced translation needs, hence the case companies do not competitively bid the translation agency with each translation need. Referrals then again are not used in a systematic way when choosing a translation service provider. With single translation assignments the established, routine modes of action define the buying behaviour of the buying centre inside the company, and any other company-specific or other factors are not seen to influence the buying behaviour. When asked about how the case companies experience the use of translation services, customer satisfaction was found to be a construct of expectations, value and quality, of which quality is seen as the strongest component. The case companies stated trust to be highly essential in having a good relationship and creating customer loyalty. Various switching barriers, such as risk and switching costs, were also found to create unwillingness to switch the translation service provider(s). Customer loyalty was seen to affect the translation service experience in terms of what a good relationship tolerates, forgives and forgets.

Keywords: Translation services, professional service buying, professional service satisfaction, relationship approach

PREFACE

The initiative to start working on this publication came from my master's thesis supervisors Sten-Olof Hansén and Birgitta Sandberg. The idea of transforming the master's thesis into a publication was raised when thinking about the cross-scientific nature of the thesis: talking about translation as a linguistic issue but taking an international business point of view. This publication was seen to be useful for instance to the linguistic unit of the University of Turku to provide a non-technical, business-based viewpoint to translation as an important tool in international business.

When I started with my master's thesis in the early spring of 2003, it seemed that very few academic writings that combine translation and international business were available neither from any universities nor the schools of economics. Hence, a clear need for combining the two aspects was noticeable.

I hope the publication gives an interesting insight into the slightly little examined research area of translation in international business. This research area requires further studies for stronger generalisations to be made; hopefully already in the near future more research is done in this rather narrow, but highly important branch of international business.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The globalisation of world's business today is increasing the need for companies to know how to operate and gain success world wide. A global player faces the challenges of international licensing agreements, joint ventures, and setting up subsidiaries on foreign ground. (Madlin 1988, 58.) As companies venture into new markets, the need for efficient translation and language management is emphasised. The influence of the Internet on international business, the need to comply with various language laws in other countries, and the big volume of documentation output has increased the need for multi-lingual translation. (Freivalds 1999, 49.)

However, it could be said that the value of good translation has been underestimated. Translation could be compared with advertising in the sense that nobody likes to spend huge amounts of money on advertising, but the value related to it is self evident. (Iverson 2000, 90.) Characteristically, translation is most expensive in countries in which English is not widely spoken, and unfortunately translation then is a cost paid by those who least can afford it (Weiss 1995, 409).

The position of translation in an international business and corporate context within translation studies' research remains unclear. In fact, the birth of translation studies can be traced to the area of cultural studies rather than in the area of international business. (Hermans & Lambert 1998, 113-116.) Hence, the role of language and translation as an individual business research area can be said to have been ignored rather systematically (Steyaert & Jansses 1997, 132). Unlike languages, translation is hardly even an issue in the literature of business communication. Obviously the lack of interest in the role of translation is due to the discipline not taking the language component in general so seriously into account. (Hermans & Lambert 1998, 128.)

The purpose of this study is to analyse the use of translation services in international companies in the IT-industry in Finland. With an international company it is meant that the company has to do business also outside Finland. It does not have to be a Finnish company, it can be of any original nationality, but it has to operate also outside Finland. However multinational the companies would be, the interest in this study is in how the company uses translation services essentially in Finland. The companies under study represent the IT-industry in Finland since vast translation needs, such as technical documentation translations, could be thought to exist in that field.

The IT-industry can be seen to be especially interesting in that it is a very international field. This field has also faced some big changes in the nature and competitive situation in the latest years, so it is interesting to see how differently or commonly the chosen IT-companies have responded to the changes and requirements of today's business in terms of the use of translation services. The use of translation services is discussed taking a holistic viewpoint, and the sub-problems of this study are formed as follows:

- Why are translation services needed?
- How are translation services bought?
- How is the use of translation services experienced?

Translation services are regarded throughout this paper as a professional service, thus the theoretical framework is mainly based on aspects from professional services theories. However, where available, supplementary or differing aspects from translation studies are presented.

The sub-issues presented above form the main theoretical outline of this study, and these theoretical issues will be discussed next in the following, second, chapter. Issues on the conduct of the empirical research and methodology are then discussed in the third section. In the fourth chapter the theoretical framework is then tried and tested on the companies chosen for this study by analysing the results of the research. Hence, the convergence of the case studies with the theoretical framework is analysed, and conclusions made in the end of the paper.

2 TRANSLATION SERVICES

As said earlier in the introduction, translation services will be examined in this paper according to aspects from professional services theories. The use of translation services will be regarded from the points of view of what translation services as professional services are, why they are bought, how they are bought, and how the use of translation services is experienced. At the end of this chapter, a summary of the theoretical framework is presented.

2.1 Translation as a professional service

What comes to defining professional services as a whole, the dimensions of expertise requirement and uncertainty reduction are most essential. In addition, Wilson (1975, 3) defines a professional service to be one purchased from outside the organisation or individual itself, and is meant to improve the buyer's performance or well-being. Below, a picture is drawn to put together the main concepts of a professional service and the professional service company transaction chain. The models by Gummesson (1979, 7) and Dawson (2000) are used as the basis for this model conceptualisation.

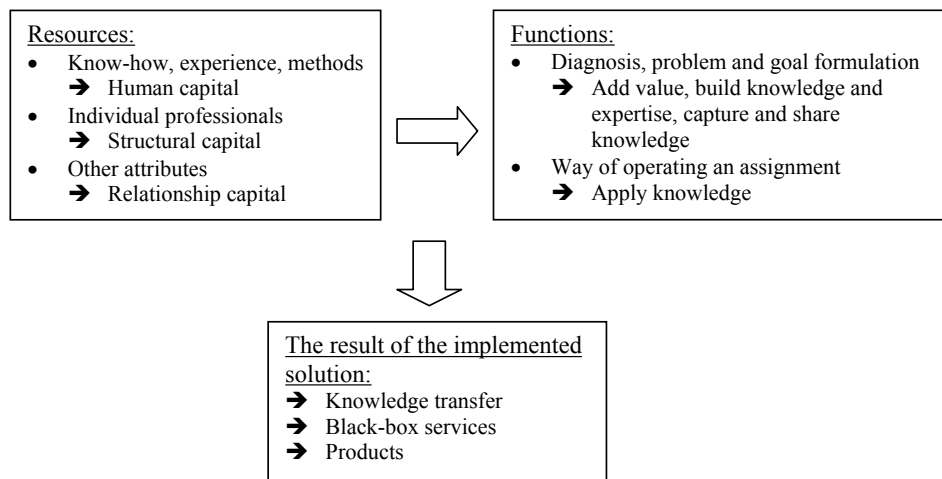


Figure 1 The nature of a professional service firm transaction chain

What comes to translation services, the essential resources consist of human translators and machine translation systems (Carrington-Windo 1995, 19). Human translators as a resource can be related to Gummesson's (1979) and Dawson's (2000) definition of a professional service's resources (specialist know-how, knowledge, and expertise). Machine translation systems can be compared to the definitions of Gummesson's (1979) other resources and Dawson's (2000) structural capital. Dawson's (2000) knowledge transfer, black-box services (services that are bought from an outside specialist organisation which is capable of better providing the function) and products can be compared with Gummesson's (1979) dimensions of the operation of the assignment and the end product. The end product of a translation service is the translated document, whether it is on paper or in electric form (Carrington-Windo 1995, 19).

2.2 Facing the need for translation services

Unlike with industrial goods, professional services are not just bought for the end product's sake, but for what the products will do for them in practical or perceptual terms as a whole (Wilson 1975, 7, 11). Even though many professional services have already gained an essential role in international companies' management processes, translation needs seem to lack proper attention inside management. In fact, translation is not often enough seen as being part of serious business-making. (Hermans & Lambert 1998, 123.) Hence, what is needed is a more strategic role for language, and thus translation, to be placed. This can be done by including aspects of language and translation to the highest levels of strategic planning and implementation. (Marschan, Welch & Welch 1997, 594.)

As the role of translation in management is being enhanced, the role of professional translation managers to pinpoint the need for buying this professional service can be seen to have grown since these managers play an important role in many companies' internationalisation efforts (Freivalds 1999, 50).

Budgets for language services and translation activities may not appear individually in the company's budget transcript, but it is clear that they take a large percentage in many Western European and other companies' budgets under various headings such as communication and advertising (Hermans & Lambert 1998, 115).

2.3 Buying translation services

However difficult buying a professional service is it might be one of the most important decisions management has to take. And it can also be one of the costliest mistakes management may have to bare if the decision goes wrong. (Day & Barksdale 1994, 44.) Taking the strong contributions professional service buying has, it could be thought that thorough research into this field was conducted. But according to Day and Barksdale (1994, 44), the situation is quite the opposite; the field lacks proper examination and model conceptualisations. However, in this section, available models of the buying process and the importance of referrals as a helping tool in the buying process of professional services are discussed in the light of available additional literature. In addition, the factors that define organisational buying behaviour in single assignments are presented and analysed.

The buying process has been analysed by several authors and models have been created which slightly differ from each other. A general aspect is, however, that the buying process for professional services is very different from buying consumer goods in that it includes more phases due to the high-risk character of the decision (Mitchell 1994, 316). The buying process model for professional services by Day and Barksdale (1994, 46) is presented below. The models by Mitchell (1994), Hill and Neeley (1988), Kotler and Bloom (1984), and Morgan (1991) will be analysed parallel to Day and Barksdale's (1994) model.

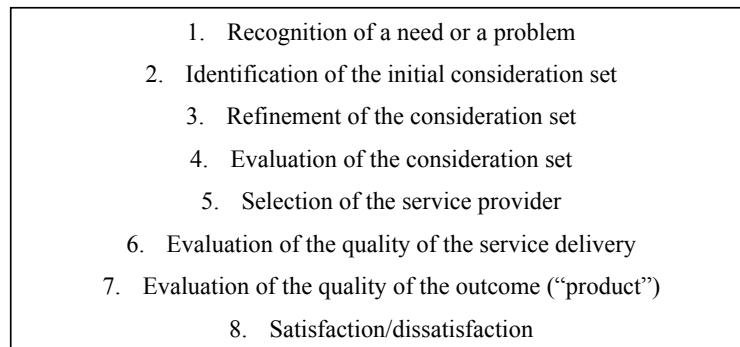


Figure 2 The organisational buying process for professional services (Day & Barksdale 1994, 46)

The first phase, *the recognition of the need or the problem*, has already been handled in more detail in section 2.2. In brief, the difficulty in problem recognition in buying a professional service is that the buyer seems less able to

pinpoint and clearly define the nature of the problem, and the variety of possible causes for the problem, and hence the variety of alternative solutions, increases the feeling of uncertainty (Hill & Neeley 1988, 18; Mitchell 1994, 318).

The second phase, *the identification of the initial consideration set*, involves pre-qualification of potential providers often taking place on the basis of the service providers' "product" portfolios (Day & Barksdale 1994, 46). Kotler and Bloom (1984, 75) call this stage as establishing specifications, and Morgan (1991, 37) as estimating parameters.

The search for possible service providers who fulfil the set selection criteria, *the refinement of the consideration set*, is the third phase. This stage faces the problem of information scarcity since only few professional service providers advertise in public media. (Mitchell 1994, 320.) As following the stage of the search process, Mitchell (1994, 323), Morgan (1991, 38), and Kotler and Bloom (1984, 76) recognise the possibility for the buyer organisation to concretely approach the candidate service providers to receive more information and to further define the buyer's problem.

A closer look into the criteria organisations use when selecting a translation service provider is interesting to take. Important selection criteria are regarded to include the past experience of the translation service provider in the specific industry of the customer. This is emphasised in how well the company understands the customer's specific problem, the staff capacity of the company, and the company's turnaround capabilities on a given project example (Potsus & Deschamps-Potter 2002, 7).

The next phase, *evaluation of the consideration set*, involves the "short-listing" of the still remaining candidates to form a sort of final list of potential service providers. The difficulty in this stage is in comparing equally qualified professional service providers, none of whom can predict the actual outcome if the purchase takes place. (Mitchell 1994, 325.)

After the evaluation of the consideration set, the *actual selection of the service provider* takes place. As the potential service providers have already been seen to have met a minimum requirement of qualifications, the selection should then be based on those criteria in which the service providers are thought to differ. (Day & Barksdale (1994, 48.)

The evaluation of the quality of the service delivery takes place during the service delivery process. In brief, this evaluation process usually includes the use of non-technical criteria and criteria that are unrelated to the specific need and service being provided (Morgan 1991, 39).

The evaluation of the quality of the outcome, the "product", as well as customer *satisfaction/dissatisfaction*, will be discussed in more detail later in this paper. A point of view of service process quality evaluation will also be

taken. In general it can be stated that assessing the quality of the outcome is difficult since many professional services lack such attributes which would enable the customer to assess the quality (Day & Barksdale 1994, 49).

The importance of referrals is not a surprise taken into consideration the nature of the service in question. When services are thought to require expertise, include credence qualities, be critical, or be heterogeneous, recommendations are considered important. This is obviously the situation with professional services. (Thakor & Kumar 2000, 73.)

Referrals are often obtained from a personal, independent source, which is the kind of information mostly available to the buyer of a professional service (Wheiler 1987, 194). Referrals do not, however, only exist as coming from other consumers or customers. According to Hill and Neeley (1988), referrals between professional service providers are also common and essential. In fact, probably the most relevant and reliable referrals are gained from professionals themselves.

There are **various factors explaining the buying behaviour for professional services**. Gummesson (1979) has formed a model to describe organisational buying behaviour for professional services. This model will be used as the main tool as it can be seen as an initial attempt to conceptualise the buying behaviour process. Comparisons to other authors' research findings will be made constantly. The Gummesson (1979) model is presented below.

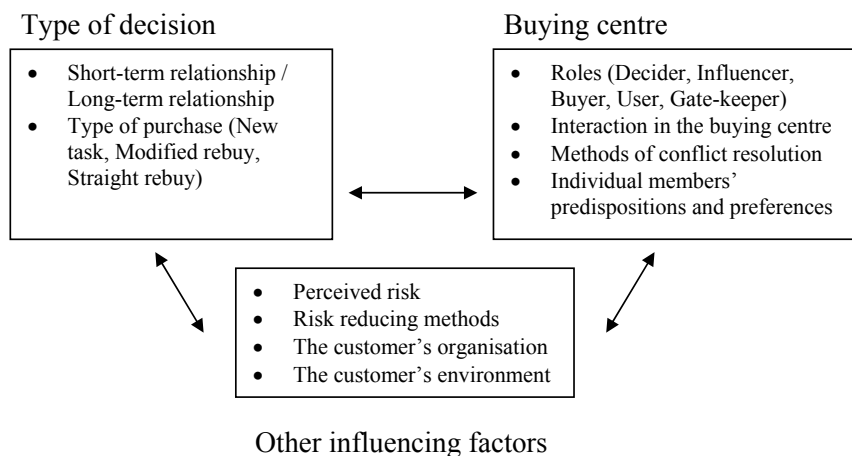


Figure 3 Factors explaining the buying behaviour of professional services (adapted from Gummesson 1979, 13)

How the decision of the purchase is made depends on *the type of the decision*, on whether it is question of a new task, a modified rebuy or a straight rebuy. New task buying decisions involve the highest uncertainty since the decision-

makers have the least experience in using this kind of professional services. (Kotler & Bloom 1984, 68; Morgan 1991, 32-33; Wilson 1975, 12). A modified rebuy occurs when the organisation has some familiarity and past experience with the problem at hand (Morgan 1991, 33), but the service bought has some different features than the one bought earlier (Kotler & Bloom 1984, 68). With straight rebuy the organisation buys something identical or highly similar to what it has bought before (Kotler & Bloom 1984, 68; Morgan 1991, 34).

The *buying centre* is the group of people who contribute in different roles to the purchase of a professional service (Gummesson 1979, 14). In her research on buying certified professional accountant services, Lynn (1987) found that the bigger the buying firm the bigger the buying centre, as well.

Gummesson (1979, 14) and Kotler and Bloom (1984, 70) define different roles to exist inside the buying group: the decider, influencers, buyer, user and gate-keeper. However clear the division of these roles may sound, interaction between the roles is obvious. This interaction and differences in perceptions can also create a possibility for conflicts. (Gummesson 1979, 14.)

The individual members' predispositions and preferences affect industrial buying behaviour in situations where for instance different educational backgrounds and different expectations of each member's task result in differences in expectations of the purchase (Sheth 1973, 53).

Looking at *other influencing factors*, there are many factors that may affect the buying behaviour. Perceived risk in the buying process refers to the buyer being highly uncertain about the purchase as the quality of the service bought is difficult to assess (Gummesson 1979, 15). There are various issues in the internal and external environment that need to be considered when buying translation services. Such internal factors include the size of the company, the degree of centralisation, and the orientation within the company (Sheth 1973, 54). When analysing the external environment, questions to analyse in buying translation services are such as the prediction of needs for translation services in the future and the preference for either long-term or short-term cost savings (Potsus & Deschamps-Potter 2002, 6).

2.4 Experience of the use of translation services

How the customer experiences the use of translation services will be analysed in this section. First, the formation of customer satisfaction is discussed in terms of expectations and value. Second, a deeper insight is taken into how translation service quality is formed in the eyes of the customer and what good

quality actually is. Finally, a look at the construct of relationship loyalty is taken and its effect on the service experience discussed.

When talking about **the components of customer satisfaction**, the three closely related concepts of quality, value and satisfaction have gained a lot of conceptual and practical attention in the research field. In general, service satisfaction is seen as a cognitive and affective judgement that results from confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations. Further, price has been included in the formation process of customer satisfaction; hence the concept of value has gained an essential role. (de Ruyter, Lemmink, Wetzels & Mattsson 1997, 63.)

Satisfaction is viewed to be affected through quality evaluation by the discrepancies between prior *expectations* and actual performance (Caruana, Money & Berthon 2000, 1341; Ojasalo 2001, 200; Brown & Swartz 1989, 93). Patterson (1995) identifies in his study on professional services several factors affecting the building of expectations. These include the prior attitudes of the customer, the novelty, complexity or importance of the purchase situation, and individual variables such as uncertainty in the buying process. The characters of customer expectations in (professional) services have been examined by for instance Ojasalo (2001), Patterson (1995) and Grönroos (1988) in essence; and through gap analysis by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985), and Brown and Swartz (1989).

As was stated earlier, the concept of satisfaction is built partly on customer perceived service *value*. Quality is perceived to be an antecedent to value in combination with price. This conceptualisation of value is defined as the value-for-money approach. (de Ruyter et al. 1997.) Value is a construct of cognitive analysis capturing the discrepancy between benefit and sacrifice in much the same way as quality analysis is constructed through the discrepancies between expectations and performance (Patterson & Spreng 1997, 421, 429). Service value should not, however, be seen as merely a trade-off between quality as a benefit and sacrifice as money, time and effort. The fact that value in complex, professional, services is created also during the service transaction process, needs to be taken into account. The value perceived by the customer is therefore also partly created by the customer itself through participation. (Lapierre 1997, 380, 388; de Ruyter et al. 1997, 62.)

Next, a figure is drawn to summarise the components of customer satisfaction.

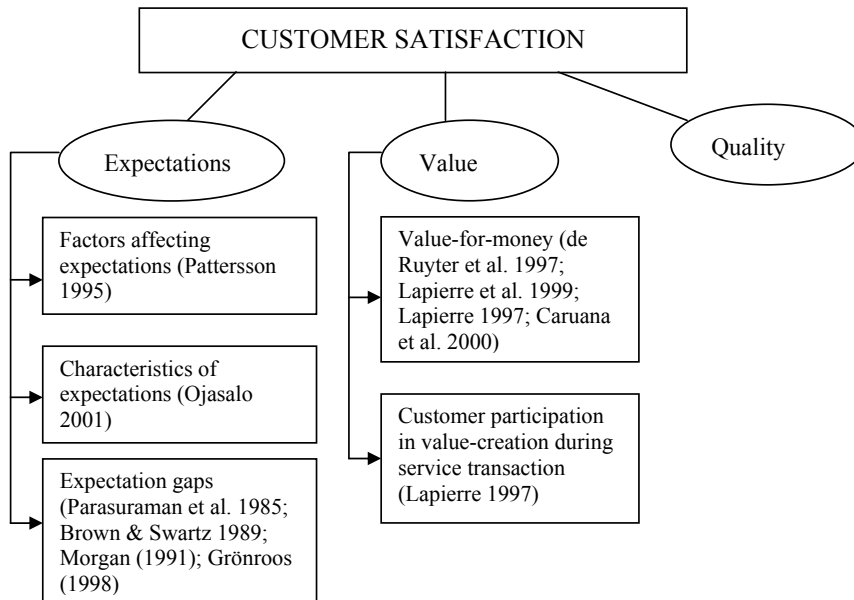


Figure 4 The components of customer satisfaction

Now, a closer look is taken into how the quality of a service is being evaluated and seen by the customer.

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, 5) **customer-perceived service quality** is that perceived by the customer as a result of the comparison of the customer's expectations or desires from the service provider with the customer's perceptions of the actual service performance. In addition, it needs to be taken into account the possibility for the customer's evaluation to take place not only according to the tangible elements of the service or the process, but also according to the relationship between the service provider personnel and the customer (Szmigin 1993, 8). This relationship point of view will be discussed later in this paper.

The components of service quality have been analysed by for instance Sipilä (1992), Szmigin (1993), and Lapierre (1998). However, the most emphasis is here put on the evaluation of the actual outcome quality of the service, the quality realised. According to the model by Sipilä (1992, 215), the "what"-quality is the actual core contents of the service. It is the result of the service performed and refers to the outcome, technical or physical quality (Swartz & Brown 1991, 242) and is called the technical quality (Grönroos 1988, 11) or outcome quality (Lapierre 1998, 35). The "how"-quality is about the way the service is performed, referring to process, functional or interactive

quality (Swartz & Brown 1991, 242). This dimension is called the functional quality (Grönroos 1988, 11) or the process quality (Lapierre 1998, 35). To avoid possible confusion and to gain different insight into the dimensions, it is suggested by Szmigin (1993, 9) that the terms “hard” and “soft” quality be used instead of the terms “technical” and “functional”. Indeed, in this paper, these terms by Szmigin (1993, 9) are used.

Going more deep into the criteria of good perceived quality, probably the best-known model in general service quality research, the SERVQUAL, is presented by Parasuraman et al. (1988). This model can be analysed parallel with Grönroos’ (1988, 13) identification of six criteria of good perceived service quality. Analysing more closely professional service quality like translation service quality in essence, research has been conducted by for instance Day and Barksdale (1992) and Patterson and Spreng (1997). Below, a figure is put together summarising the different aspects and comparable attributes of service quality by the various authors mentioned above.

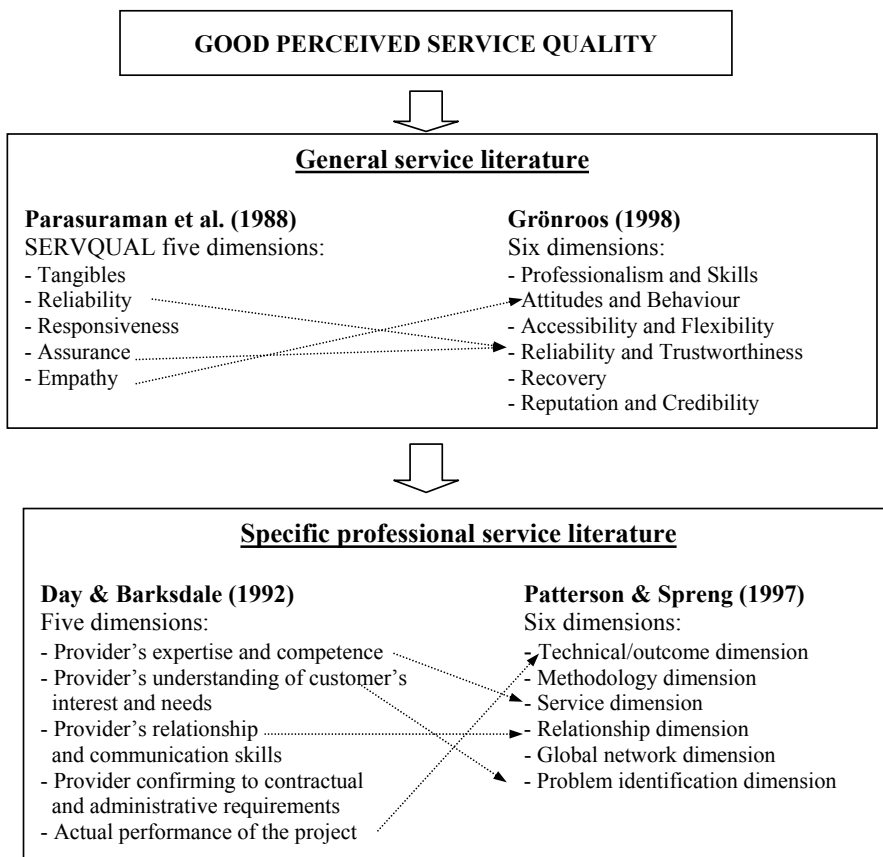


Figure 5 Good perceived service quality

As could be seen from the definitions, the dimensions by Parasuraman et al. (1988) and Grönroos (1998) differ in terms of the depth of the quality dimension. In professional service literature the dimensions by Patterson and Spreng (1997) can be seen to just slightly but still clearly differ from the Day and Barksdale (1992) dimensions in that the dimensions try to capture a rather wider scale of criteria.

How the service is experienced is not, however, always based on pure quality evaluations, for instance. How satisfied a customer is always depends also on the relationship of the customer and the service provider. Hence, a closer look at the relationship point of view is taken next.

The impact of relationship loyalty on the service experience is, indeed, interesting to take. Loyalty is defined as the observed purchase behaviour by the customer (Liljander & Strandvik 1995, 151), and thus the relationship approach in this study is essential to take for getting a deeper understanding of the buyer's experience of the service. Loyalty will be analysed according to the model below. Aspects from a model by Sharma and Patterson (2000) were taken and a modified framework taking a rather wider perspective into the construct of relationship loyalty was here formulated.

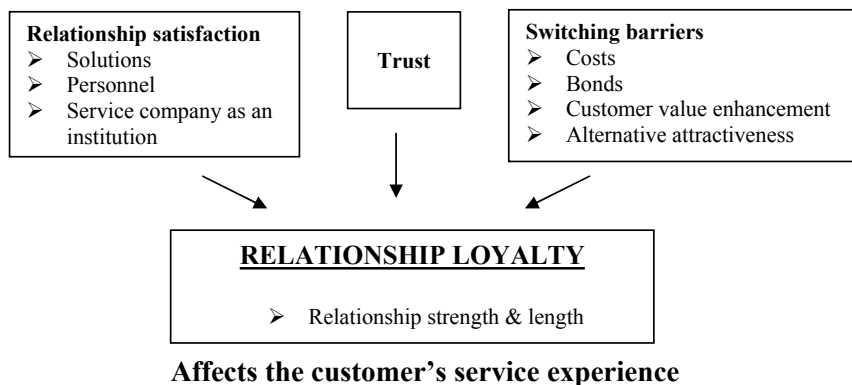


Figure 6 The construct of relationship loyalty

As seen from the picture, relationship loyalty is being constructed through satisfaction in the buyer seller relationship, trust, and the switching barriers. As loyalty in the relationship is achieved, it can be seen to affect the length and strength of the relationship and how business is done now and in the future. Now, each of the relationship loyalty components will be discussed shortly below.

Satisfaction in the relationship is one antecedent leading to the buyer committing itself into a relationship with the service provider. Ojasalo (1999) has created a model describing the satisfaction sources in a relationship in a

professional service context. These sources are: the solutions the service provider provides, the service provider in itself and the service company as an institution and its image.

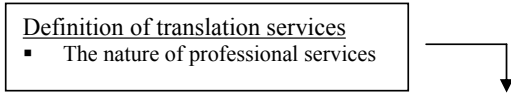
Trust can be seen to be an essential attribute especially in services with strong credence qualities where pre-buying evaluation counts for much (Liljander & Strandvik 1995, 152) and where risk is present and warranties absent (Sharma & Patterson 1999, 155-156; Crosby, Evans & Cowles 1990, 70).

Switching barriers represent any factor that makes it more difficult or costly for the customer to change the service provider (Jones, Mothersbaugh & Beatty 2000, 261), and thus makes the customer retain with and commit itself more to the current service provider. The switching barriers here are seen to consist of switching costs, bonds, extra benefits, and alternative attractiveness.

Relationship strength is related to the degree of commitment between the relationship parties, and relationship length is usually regarded as a some kind of indicator of strength. (Liljander & Strandvik 1995, 151-160.) In a translation service relationship context strength should come out in terms of efficient co-operation between the customer and the translation team to form a framework for the usually so rare feedback between the parties (Hermans & Lambert 1998, 125).

2.5 Summary of the theoretical framework

Below, a figure is drawn to sum up the theoretical framework of this paper. First, the concept of translation services was explained in section 2.1 through discussing the nature of professional services. Next, in section 2.2 the subject of facing the need for translation services was analysed by handling the issues of translation in management and budgeting translation needs. Section 2.3 concentrated on the buying of translation services by going through the buying process for translation services, the role of referrals and the buying behaviour for professional services. In section 2.4 issues on experiencing the use of translation services were discussed concerning the dimensions of customer satisfaction and the impact of the relationship between the buyer company and the service provider.



WHY TRANSLATION SERVICES ARE USED?

<p><u>Recognising the need</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nature of the problem 	<p><u>Meeting the need</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The strategic role of translation 	<p><u>Handling the need</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The role and skills of professional translation services managers ▪ The translation budget
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HOW TRANSLATION SERVICES ARE BOUGHT?

<p><u>Historical aspect</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of knowledge and models of the buying process 	<p><u>The buying process</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Problem recognition 2. Identification of the consideration set 3. Refinement of the consideration set 4. Evaluation of the consideration set 5. Selection 6.-8. Evaluation of the service delivery, outcome and satisfaction 	<p><u>Buying with referrals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Importance in buying professional services ▪ Referrals from independent sources ▪ Referrals between professionals 	<p><u>Professional service buying behaviour</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Factors explaining the buying behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - type of decision - buying centre - other influencing factors
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HOW THE USE OF TRANSLATION SERVICES IS EXPERIENCED?

<p><u>Customer satisfaction</u></p>			<p><u>The impact of relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship satisfaction ▪ Trust ▪ Switching barriers ➔ Relationship loyalty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship length & strength
<p><u>Expectations vs. experience</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Customer expectations ▪ Expectation gaps 	<p><u>Value</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Value-for-money approach ▪ Value-creation during service 	<p><u>Quality</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Definitions ▪ Components of service quality ▪ Good service quality 	

Figure 7 The theoretical framework

3 CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 Choice of the research method

The research in this paper is of *qualitative* character. As defined by Malhotra and Birks (2000, 156-158) qualitative research is an unstructured, primarily exploratory methodology that is based on small samples and is intended to provide insight and understanding into the research problem. In this paper, as the research question is about the use of translation services and the nature of analysing for instance the experience in the use of the services is anything but simple, the use of qualitative research is rational. In addition, as this study aims at taking a holistic view to the whole research area and since the area of translation services in a business context is very little examined before, the choice of a qualitative research approach is most appropriate regarding the aims of qualitative research (c.f. Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2002, 152; Ghauri, Gronhaug & Kristianslund 1995, 85).

Miles and Huberman (1994, 7) state that in qualitative research most analysis is done with words that permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyse and form patterns upon them. Indeed, in this paper *the qualitative research technique is exploratory and descriptive*, due the nature of exploratory research described above and due the fact that many aspects of the study subject can not be measured in quantitative manners.

3.2 Choice of the case companies

Inside the exploratory research field, the research in this paper is *a multiple, comparative case study* where same questions are asked and studied in a number of organisations and answers are then compared with each other to draw conclusions (Ghauri et al. 1995, 88, 93). *The target population is international companies operating in the IT-industry in Finland*. Since in this research a list of the target population is not directly available for at least reasons of cost, a direction to proceed in the data selection process is taken from the Finnish stock exchange market, the HEX. The case companies chosen were taken all but one from the list of data communications and

electronics. One of the case companies was taken from the list of other services based on the researcher's own knowledge about the company's good suitability to be included in this research. As these companies are listed in the stock market and their businesses operate on an international basis, it can be assumed that translation needs are present.

In the choice of the research data a very common method in qualitative research is *judgmental sampling* (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 18), which is also the method used in this research. In short, judgmental sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the population elements are purposely selected based on the judgement of the researcher (Malhotra & Birks 2000, 352-354). In this research, the case companies were judgementally selected from the before-mentioned HEX-lists.

Since the research in this paper is of qualitative character, an explorative study, the number of research examples does not have to inevitably follow any statistical rules. (Malhotra & Birks 2000, 77). *The final amount of the research examples was formed to seven case companies.* Initially 13 companies were taken contact to but six companies were fallen off due to various company specific reasons.

The aspect of the sample being representative enough is assured by picking such companies from the HEX-list that form rather a heterogeneous sample in terms of company turnover, personnel and number of international offices. Below, a table is formed where all the seven case companies are marked according to their 2002 turnover, average personnel and the company's current international presentation around the world.

Table 1 The case companies

Company	Turnover 2002			Av. personnel 2002			Offices 2003	
	1M€-150M€	151M€-300M€	Over 300M€	1-1500	1501-3000	Over 3000	In 1-10 countries	In over 10 countries
A	X			X				X
B			X			X	X	
C		X				X	X	
D		X		X			X	
E			X			X		X
F	X			X			X	
G	X			X			X	

As can be seen from the table, the case companies are heterogeneous in their year 2002 turnover and average personnel numbers and close to homogenous in the number of country offices. The ranges in the above table are purposefully made rather big to avoid any possible recognition of which case companies are in question.

3.3 Data collection

The collection of the research data in this study consisted of *seven individual interviews* conducted with the persons responsible for translation services purchase and use in the chosen case companies. The interviewees were sent in advance by email a guiding interview outline of the issues and questions that will be asked during the actual interview so that some orientation to the research issue was made possible for the interviewees. The interview technique used in this research was semi-structured individual interviews where the interviewer tries to cover a specific list of topics or issues. The people to be interviewed and the questions to be asked have been determined in advance. (Ghuri et al. 1995, 64.) The semi-structured interview technique was chosen due to, for instance, the theoretical framework in this study being rather wide but split into quite specific sub-areas, and a thorough picture of all the sub-issues was essential to gain. Below is a table presenting the title of the interviewees and the date and duration of the interviews.

Table 2 The case company interviews

Company	Title of the interviewee(s)	Date	Duration
A	Manager in usability & documentation	22.10.2003	1h 40min
B	Administrative Manager in Administration and translation services, and Group Leader in Translation services	23.10.2003	1h 25min
C	Communications Assistant	23.10.2003	1h 20min
D	Marketing Manager	30.10.2003	1h 15min
E	Communications Assistant	31.10.2003	1h 50min
F	Localization Manager	31.10.2003	1h 40min
G	Communications Manager	6.11.2003	1h 15min

As seen from the table, the titles of the interviewees vary rather much. It can be noticed that only in two companies, companies B and F, there is a clear managerial division for translation which the interviewees represented. One tendency seen from the table is the strong representation of the field of communications; two interviewees are communications assistants and one a manager. The two remaining interviewees in companies A and D are also managers, but in different fields. The duration of the interviews ranged from one hour and fifteen minutes to one hour and fifty minutes. Obviously, the character of the interviewee affects the duration, but also there were to be noticed differences in how vastly the interviewees preferred to answer to the questions.

3.4 Data analysis

The analysis of the research data was started by *transcribing* all the interviews from the tapes. To further organise the research data, *mind maps* were made of all interviews according to the main entities or themes of the research. After mind mapping, *the research data was coded*. The actual analysis of the data was started by pointing out from the data the most important *themes* according to the research. One important criterion for choosing this way of analysis was that by clearly organising the data in themes, comparing the information of all the interviews is made easier.

In qualitative research the measurement and proving of the trustworthiness of the research is not as easy as in quantitative research (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 209, 211). The validity and reliability of the research in this study are discussed following the modern dimensions described by Miles and Huberman (1994) who try to replace the traditional concepts with new, more appropriate ones for qualitative research. *Validity* in qualitative research refers to how well the indicators used in the research describe what they are meant to describe. Miles and Huberman (1994, 278-279) prefer talking about *the credibility or authenticity of the research*. In this research the interview questions were formed by systematically following the theoretical framework and main outlines of the paper. Therefore, the questions can be seen to give appropriate answers to the research question at hand.

The traditional concept of external validity is replaced by Miles and Huberman (1994, 279) by the aim of *transferability and fittingness of qualitative research findings*. The characteristics of the representative examples, research settings and procedures should be thoroughly explained, as is also tried to do in this paper in the required depth. The authors further define transferability as the importance of the research findings having a larger import, of whether they are transferable to another context. The transferability of the research findings in this study is tried to be covered by giving implications to both all IT-companies interested in reflecting and improving their way of operating translation needs, and to translation agencies to learn more about the issues the customer companies have in this field of business.

Reliability in qualitative research differs clearly from reliability in quantitative research. Miles and Huberman (1994, 278) prefer talking about *the confirmability of the research*, of whether the research conclusions depend on some research or situational biases. This issue is tried to be covered by describing in detail how the research was conducted and analysis made.

4 THE USE OF TRANSLATION SERVICES

In this chapter the research findings on the use of translation services will be presented and discussed concerning facing the need for translation services, buying translation services and experiencing the of using translations services. These issues will be dealt with accordingly in the following sections.

4.1 The need for translation services

The aim of this section is to give answer to questions raised from the theoretical framework regarding the need for translation services. The interviewed case companies were asked about the reasons why they have outsourced at least part of their translation needs, what these bought services concretely are, what is the role of translation in management, and how translation needs are handled in the companies' budgeting practices.

The research findings on **outsourcing translation services** revealed first of all that the outsourcing practices and what kind of services the case companies buy from translation agencies vary a lot. In most companies there is a tendency to buy official translations from outside the company, but also to use unofficial translation by employees inside the company. The reasons for outsourcing were easily identified in all the companies. The four most obvious reasons were found to be reasons of cost, lack of resources, lack of skills, and the internationalisation of business. The concrete translations that the companies buy are very similar ranging from technical documentation to marketing materials and financial reports. Most differences were found in financial reports concerning what is done inside the company and what is outsourced. It seems that translations take an ever more important role in an international company's business operations but how translation is seen in the management of the company may not always reflect its importance.

When talking about **the role of translation in management**, as was discussed earlier in this paper in the theory section, translation needs do not have as important a role in many companies' management as they should have. According to the research findings, the role of translation in management varies from having close to no role to having a role where it even is seen to add to the company's value. In most case companies translation does not have any role in the company's management, but is seen as just a

supportive function. The existence of a manager for translation services is obvious in only two of the case companies, but in most case companies there is, however, to be noticed some division of responsibility for the use of translation services. Any sort of training provided for the person who is responsible for translations is scarce; most managers have gained their skills from learning by doing.

As the importance of translation from the management's and whole company's point of view varies, it could be thought that the practices in budgeting translation vary accordingly. When talking about the research findings on **budgeting translation needs**, the research revealed there to be two practices in budgeting translation needs: translation needs have an own line under bigger headings such as marketing or communications or there is no common practice in how to budget translations, but each business unit decides on their own practices. In general, the share of translation inside its entity budget is very small, in essence in a situation where its entity budget in itself is vast. What comes to the future role of translation in its budget, most companies estimated the share to stay the same or increase or at least not to decrease due to the increased needs of international business.

As the need and reasons for buying translation services are recognised, and the role of translation in management and aspects of budgeting discussed, the actual buying of translation services needs to be discussed next in the light of the research findings. The research findings of buying translation services will follow the theoretical form from section 2.3.

4.2 Buying translation services

Buying professional services is highly different from buying normal consumer services what comes to the buying process. The role of referrals is also regarded as important to gain confirmation in the purchase process. In addition, there are various factors inside the buying organisation that affect the buying behaviour for professional services. Next, the research findings on the above-mentioned three aspect of buying translation services are discussed.

Following the research findings on **the buying process**, the main features of each stage in the professional service buying process are summarised in the table below.

Table 3 The professional service buying process in the case companies

The phase	Main features of the phase
1. Recognition of a need or a problem	- Handled earlier in section 4.1.
2. Identification of the initial consideration set	- Setting up selection criteria to define potential service providers: the quality and speed of translations, trustworthiness in timetables, the technical tools the agency uses, the international network of the agency, and price.
3. Refinement of the consideration set	- Finding the potential service providers through for instance own experiences or agencies' direct marketing. - Conducting a pilot project with the potential service providers - Defining the selection criteria for translation services: the functioning of the translation process, quality, the agency's network, previous experience in translating in the buyer's business field, and the translators inside the agency
4. Evaluation of the consideration set	- Defining final, decisive selection criteria to evaluate equally qualified translation agencies: the general trustworthiness of the agency, the personal relations already created to the agency, the project manager in the agency, the quality, a strong customer orientation, the size of the agency, and the price
5. Selection of the service provider	- Negotiations - Signing a skeleton contract that defines issues of co-operation between the parties
6. Evaluation of the quality of the service delivery	- Will be handled later.
7. Evaluation of the quality of the outcome	- Will be handled later.
8. Satisfaction / dissatisfaction	- Will be handled later.

To summarise from the table, the first phase, the recognition of the need for buying translation services has already earlier been handled in section 4.1. The second phase consists of defining criteria based on which potential translation agencies are initially searched for. The case companies were asked what these criteria are and they are found in brief in the table above. In the third phase the case companies revealed most information of translation agencies to come from own experiences or from the agencies themselves as they directly market directly to the companies. One important issue in this phase is the conduct of a pilot project or translation agency presentation to learn more about the potential service providers. As the consideration set is evaluated, decisive criteria to help choose between equally good translation services are set in the fourth phase of the process. The actual selection of the translation agency is based on pure negotiations where a skeleton contract in all but one of the case companies was signed. This skeleton contract defines outlines for the co-operation in terms of for instance delivery times and pricing.

In brief, probably the most interesting and crucial finding was the fact that the case companies really do not go through this process with every single translation assignment, but the process is used to select long-term service providers. For the companies who actually do competitive bidding, the selection process and selection criteria are very similar. One very common feature in selecting a translation service provider was found to be the use of a pilot project to find out more about the alternative service providers. Another common feature is the principle to write down a skeleton contract with the translation agency the company uses.

As the selection of a new service provider is an important and long process, it could be thought that help is taken from using referrals. But, according to the research findings, and contrary to the theoretical presumptions, **the role of referrals** is small and using referrals in any systematic way during the choosing process is not consciously seen as very important by any of the case companies. In addition, asking referrals from an outside source is not used by any of the case companies, though the possibility to use this sort of referral asking was recognised by three of the seven case companies. The two most important recommendation criteria according to the case companies are the quality of the translation and the service, and the general trustworthiness of the translation agency.

As the case companies prefer centralised use of translation agencies, it is interesting to discuss which factors then explain the buying behaviour in the buying organisation with single translation assignments when it is not question of selecting a new service provider. Based on theoretical aspects, **the factors that explain organisational behaviour when buying a professional service** were seen to include the type of the service task buy, the buying centre and other influencing factors inside or outside the buying organisation's environment. It was found out in this research that *the type of the decision* does not have that big an effect on how the buying organisation behaves when buying single translation assignments. The importance of the efficient use of previous translations was emphasised, and this use of past vocabulary and terminology can be seen as one decisive factor explaining the rather similar behaviour in each assignment.

A buying group handling single translation assignments is clearly present in four of the seven case companies, and centralisation of translation purchasing is recognisable in the other case companies, as well. The number of persons inside the buying group is small, but still, roles are visible though somewhat overlapping. Any bigger differences in opinions or conflicts were found out not to cause decisive changes in the buying behaviour.

Research findings on *other influencing organisational or environmental factors* revealed that inner organisational factors, such as changes in personnel

due to organisational restructuring, are regarded to influence the buying behaviour clearly more than external factors. Examples of an external factor that can affect the buying behaviour are the general market situation and the buying company's dealers' net.

When translation services, or any professional services, are bought, a crucial stage in the whole aspect of using translation services concerns how the outcome of the service delivery is experienced. In the following section the research findings on customer satisfaction, quality and the relationship between the buyer company and the translation agency will be presented.

4.3 Experiencing translation services

The way a buying company experiences the translation service bought is handled through the aspects of customer satisfaction, quality and relationship. Customer satisfaction is a holistic dimension that describes whether the rendered service is experienced positively or negatively. Quality, then again, is a strong individual component of satisfaction, and an issue probably most often brought up when discussing subjective experiences of translation services. The relationship point of view is essential in regards that long-term buyer-supplier relationships can clearly shape the way a service is experienced. These issues will now be discussed accordingly.

Customer satisfaction was regarded to be a construct of expectations, value and quality. According to the research findings on the building of customer satisfaction, making a translation service customer satisfied seems not easy. A customer has various *expectations* that the translation agency is expected to know and fulfil perfectly. According to the case companies, various expectations a buyer company has can be divided to concern the actual outcome of the service, the translation, and the fluency of the service as a whole. Expectations are born already before the actual experiences of the service, as is characteristic in buying a professional service. Disappointments occur but mostly expectations have been well fulfilled by translation agencies according to the case companies. In addition to expectations, *value* is an important dimension in creating satisfaction. Again, the difficulty in translation services comes in which components of value to value the most, and if needed, in which components to make concessions. According to the case companies, quality is the most important component of value, but the aspect of total sacrifice is also a good definition of how value at the end is constructed. It was also found out that certain business characteristics such as stock exchange legal requirements dictate value aspects.

The evaluation of quality seems important for all the case companies even though evaluating quality is not regarded as that easy. The figure drawn below sums up the research findings on the criteria of good quality in translation services mentioned by the seven case companies.

- | <u>Criteria for good quality in a translation service</u> | |
|--|--|
| ▪ | Trustworthiness and reliability of the agency |
| - | respect of timetables |
| ▪ | Competence and professionalism of translators |
| - | linguistic skills in nuances and vocabulary use, technical competence, flawless translations |
| ▪ | Quality in co-operation |
| - | improving vocabulary |
| ▪ | Communication |
| - | accessibility of essential persons |
| ▪ | Fluency of the service |
| - | speed and flexibility |
| ▪ | Responsiveness of the translation agency |
| - | interest shown by the translation agency |
| ▪ | International network |

Figure 8 Criteria for good quality in a translation service according to the case companies

As seen from the figure, the criteria for good quality are divided between evaluating good quality of the actual outcome of the translation service bought, and the translation service as a whole. The strongest criteria in terms of the criteria most frequently mentioned and emphasised by the case companies are the trustworthiness of the translation agency and the quality in translations in terms of the translators being professional and competent.

The case companies have in most terms similar practices in how quality is analysed. The importance of quality evaluation varies in most case companies according to the importance of the translated material. Evaluating translations is not seen as easy unless it is question of a common language such as English. The division of quality into “hard” and “soft” is not that essential according to most case companies; in the end, in most cases it is the concrete outcome of the translation that matters.

What is crucial to remember is that all the case companies have more or less long background with their translation agencies, and hence the building of satisfaction, aspects of quality and the whole experience of the service is influenced by the relationship. The experience of a service bought must hence be evaluated taking **the relationship point of view** into account. What creates customer loyalty and thus affects the experience in using translation services are satisfaction with the relationship, trust, and switching barriers. What

comes to *satisfaction with the relationship*, according to the research findings, the solutions the service provider provides do not act as a decisive factor in creating relationship satisfaction since most translation are purely Word-to-Word translations. What comes to the personal relations between the buyer company and the service provider, great importance was put on a good project manager in the translation agency. The image of the translation agency does not have any particular role in creating relationship satisfaction.

Trust is an important construct of a relationship, and thus customer loyalty. The reliability of the service provider was said to be an important criterion of good quality in a translation service, and this applies to the definition of trust, as well.

The companies' *unwillingness to switch* their translation service provider(s) is due to the risk of not knowing what is received from some other service provider if switched. The most important bond that makes the companies not change their partner agency is the knowledge bond. Further, the scarcity of truly potential service providers in the translation market creates one additional switching barrier according to the case companies.

In brief, probably the most essential factor concerning relationships is trust. Trust seems to be the strongest factor that creates customer loyalty and hence affects the way translations are handled and experienced. The relationship the buyer company and the service provider have has, indeed, an affect on how translation services are experienced. The level of commitment and loyalty varies amongst the companies but all companies admitted that they are loyal towards their partner agencies in that translation assignments are continuously directed at the same translation agencies.

In the following section conclusions about the research findings are made and possible generalisations drawn, as well.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this section, conclusions are made of the case companies' need for buying translation services, the buying of translation services, and the experience from using translation services. Conclusions are made by comparing the research findings with previous research findings and theoretical statements discussed in the theory part of this paper. Conclusions are also drawn from general patterns found amongst the case companies and reasons for common results are pondered. In addition, differences in patterns are discussed, and possible generalisations made.

Conclusions about the research findings concerning **the need for buying translation services** in terms of the practices and reasons for outsourcing translation services, the role of translation in management, and the aspects of budgeting translation needs are now first discussed. It became clear when presenting the research findings on *why translation services are bought* that translation services are bought due to the buyer company not having own resources or skills to do all translations by itself. This argument is rather obvious and holds true with Morgan's (1991, 30-31) statement on why professional services are bought. It could be generalised that due to the extended requirements of international business today in terms of vast markets with many languages, buying translation services is necessary at least in some extent. The practice of outsourcing translation services can be seen as very common as was assumed, too. How the handling of translation needs in the case companies is organised varies from having thoroughly thought of a best possible practice, to letting the needs be handled in a less systematic way, case by case. Hence, it can not be generalised that any one model for handling translation needs exists, but the practice depends on each company's own considerations.

It can be said, according to the research findings, that the more translation needs a case company has, the more organised the way of handling the needs is. The amount of needs is not dependent on the size of the company, but rather on the extent of the company's international business. In general, as could be easily thought too, the more languages business is done in, the more translation needs there are. As Hurmerinta-Peltomäki and Nummela (2001) found in their research, with this kind of specific professional services like translation services are, the aspects of company growth and internationalisation have an effect on translation needs. The

internationalisation of a company's business was, indeed, mentioned as clearly influencing the use of translation.

Conclusions concerning the actual services the case companies buy from translation agencies can also be made. The fact that the translation services bought are very similar in all the case companies is evidently due to the companies operating in the same business field. One factor differing the case companies in what is bought versus what is done by the company itself is seen in translating financial reports. It could be thought that the bigger the company, the more similar the way financial reports are handled if their organisational model is also the same. Then again, the smaller the company and the less organised the handling of translation needs or outsourced translation services, the more reports are at least partly done by the company itself.

Unlike what Mitchell (1994, 318) claims, the recognition of translation needs is not ignored but rather actively considered either in the beginning of or during a production process, according to the research findings. Hence, translations have, in fact, received ever more attention in international companies' business-making but can still be seen to lack full attention of a company's management. This contradiction is interesting; translation is seen as an important part of many products' or other materials' internationalisation processes but ignorance from the management's point of view was still admitted by many case companies.

What comes to *the role of translation in management*, as Hermans and Lambert (1998, 123) claim, translation needs have still not yet gained proper attention inside a company's management. It can be concluded, for most parts, that even though translation needs are well recognised, translation is not seen as a strategic function in business operations. The existence of a manager to handle translation needs follows the same path as the role translation has in management; in companies where translation has an important role in the company's management, there also is found an appointed person to handle translations. To conclude, as a clear task of a translations manager is found only in two of the case companies, it has to be said that translation needs are still not, in the case companies at least, such a big part of operational business that a separate manager for the task would be appointed. Only two of the case companies complied with Freivalds' (1999, 50) emphasis of the importance of a translation manager being skilful in convincing the use of translation services. Only two case companies have offered accounting or linguistic training to the person who handles translations.

As Hermans and Lambert (1998, 115) assume, *the budgeting of translation needs* is, indeed, in most case companies based on placing translation costs under various headings in the whole budget. As the use of translation services

is in some companies highly decentralised and responsibilities are independent along departments, it was no surprise to find out that the budgeting of translation needs in these same companies is also decentralised. Hence, it can be said that the more centralised and organised the handling of translation needs and the use of translation services, the clearer and more unanimous the practice of budgeting, as well. Then again, when everything else concerning handling translation needs is decentralised, the budgeting practices obviously also vary inside the company. Thus, the way translation needs are budgeted is dependent on the company's organisational model of handling translations. Hence, there is not any one model of how translations always are or should be budgeted. The share of translations in their budget entity is in most case companies small. In general, the share of translations is not seen at least to decrease in the near future. One exception was given where the share is actually predicted to decrease due to personnel achieving ever more skills of their own. This again reflects the fact that additional training is required and should be offered both to employees and managers to better know how to handle the increasing translation needs in the future.

To summarise the aspects of facing the need for translation services, buying translation services follows the general tendency of vast outsourcing in today's business world. Translation services, as a professional service, are bought to support companies' core businesses and international operations. Orientation towards cost-efficiency or value of company-specific, in-house knowledge dictates the way the outsourcing practice is handled. The needs for translation are in general well recognised inside the case companies, but still, proper value to translation's importance is not given. In addition, the role of a translation manager is in general not respected in terms of for instance training offered by the employer. The budgeting practice of translation services depends on the centralised or decentralised way of the company handling translation needs as a whole, hence no one practice for budgeting can be given.

Now, conclusions about **the buying of translation services** are made and generalisations given where possible. As was said in discussing the research findings on *the buying process* for translation services, none of the seven case companies follow the model of professional services buying process by Day and Barksdale (1994, 46) in every single translation assignment they face. Instead, the companies prefer long term relationships with one or few service providers. Therefore the Day and Barksdale (1994, 46) model is inappropriate in describing how translation services are in every single assignment bought. Instead, the model can be used to describe how the translation service provider to handle most of the company's future translations is selected. And as was already done in the theory section concerning buying translation services, the

quality and satisfaction evaluation phases should be regarded as separate phases from the selection process to concern single assignment evaluations.

As a starting point to the process of selecting long-term translation service providers, the interviewed companies start forming some sort of criteria that the potential agencies need to fulfil, as is suggested by Kotler and Bloom (1984, 75). The case companies agree with Mitchell (1994, 320) on public information about translation services being scarce and sometimes hard to find. But contrary to what Hill and Neeley (1988, 19) argue, searching for information about various translation services is not expensive, in fact, quite the opposite, as with all the companies the translation agencies are the ones contacting the companies and spending money on making the buyer companies aware of them.

All the case companies emphasised the use of company presentations as an important tool to learn more about the agencies. Indeed, agreeing with Mitchell (1994, 323), all the companies who competitively bid their translation agency emphasised the importance of a pilot project or a brief to see how the agency handles its translation process and how it would handle the buying company's needs. It was interesting to find out that it does not depend on the size of the case company or the extent of the company's translation needs how thoroughly information about a potential translation agency is required. In other words, it can be said that there is no difference in whether a translation agency is selected to handle less than ten assignment a year or close to a hundred; the information requirements are still the same.

The important criteria the buyer companies use when selecting a translation agency are very similar to what many authors state in the theory section in this paper. Potsus and Deschamps-Potter (2002, 7), Dawes, Dowling and Patterson (1992, 189), and Day and Barksdale (1992, 86) talk about the importance of the translation agency's previous experience in the buyer company's specific business area. This is one essential criterion mentioned by the case companies, as well. Potsus and Deschamps-Potter (2002, 7) further mention the staff capacity of the translation agency to form an important selection criterion. The same holds true in this research as the translators inside the agency are regarded as an essential factor in the evaluation. Congruent with Mitchell's (1994, 326-328) argument, the outcome of the service, in other words the actual translation, needs to fulfil professional quality perceptions. Mitchell (1994, 326-328) further talks about the translation agency having sufficient back-up facilities, and about the agency's current or future business situation. Applying to these arguments, the translation agency's network was mentioned as one important selection criterion in terms of that the agency has to have enough facilities to handle big and complex assignments in many languages.

One interesting issue that is not mentioned by any of the authors in the theory section of this paper is the importance of finding out about the translation process. One possible explanation to this may be the time of the other research findings compared to this research. Most of the authors' research findings on which the theoretical aspects of the buying process for translation services in this paper are based on are from the 1990s or earlier. It can be thought that nowadays when process thinking in many business areas has gained vast support, the field of translation services has been influenced, as well. Then again translation as a professional service differs in some terms from for instance consultant services in that a clear process in a translation service is visible, whereas in consulting the process is probably harder or inappropriate to describe.

Day and Barksdale (1994, 48) talk about strong subjective assessments that count in the final evaluation of potential service providers. This is true with some of the case companies where personal feelings and relationships play important roles along "cold" evaluation criteria. It can be seen that the most important, decisive criteria the case companies mentioned are interestingly divided into "soft" and "hard" evaluation criteria. Some criteria are rather personalised, whereas the general trustworthiness of the agency, the quality, the size of the agency, and price stand for the more "cold" criteria of evaluation. Hence, it depends rather much on the selecting persons which criteria at the end are decisive, and thus no general definition of the criteria can be given.

Probably the most interesting issue in comparing the findings in this research to previous model constructs and researches concern the final negotiations in the selection process. The signing of a skeleton contract is not mentioned by any of the authors in the theoretical part of this paper. Actually, as the buying process presented in the theory part considers single assignment purchasing, it probably does not take into account the alternative of signing a long term contract. However, the skeleton contract plays an essential role in the case companies' every-day translation assignment management and should hence be mentioned in the selection process.

Unlike what was expected in the theoretical framework of using *referrals*, the case companies do not see referrals as so important in choosing a translation service provider. The case companies agree with the fact that public advertisement of translation services is uncommon but they do not see this as increasing their expenses of finding out about various service providers, as Hill and Neeley (1988, 19) suggest. As claimed by Wheeler (1987, 194), if used, the referrals the case companies get, mostly come from independent, personal sources. In addition, as Sipilä (1992, 342) mentions, the recommendations some of the case companies use, are not necessarily based

on first hand experience by the ones who recommend, but referrals are taken also based on only pure word-of-mouth. What comes to the criteria that make customers recommend, according to the case companies, it could be said that recommendation criteria are divided into two aspects: more evident, concrete criteria like quality and price, and criteria that are not so concretely seen like trustworthiness and communication skills. None of the case companies use any official outside professional referral asking. Hence, generalisations on the commonality of outside recommendations can not be confirmed. Even though the case companies claimed the role of referrals not to be so big or referral asking not to be a conscious and systematic act, still, what other people have said or heard of any translation service providers has an effect in choosing potential agencies. In these terms, the use of referrals complies with what Wheiler (1987) concludes that referrals indeed have a role in buying professional services in for instance reducing uncertainty.

Talking about the *factors that affect the buying behaviour for professional services*, the Gummesson (1979, 13) model claims *the type of the decision* to influence the way an organisation behaves when buying a professional service. It was found out that none of the case companies see any major changes in how the buying process proceeds depending on the character of the buy. This character of standardised buying behaviour holds true to Lynn's (1987, 124) findings about the structure of the decision-making not being influenced in situations where it is question of a modified or straight rebuy. Hence, it can be said that the clearer routines and an organised way of handling single translation assignments, the less the type of the buy affects the process. What comes to the character of uncertainty in buying a professional service, there seemed to be little or no uncertainty in buying a modified rebuy or a new task purchase from a translation agency since the translation agency/agencies used have been given supportive material, vocabulary and terminology already in advance. Hence, uncertainty can not be seen as an influencing factor in the buying behaviour. Risk, in general, can be seen as automatically reduced since all the case companies prefer using agencies with stable relationship. Hence, any particular risk reducing methods are not used. In brief, referring to the Gummesson (1979, 13) model, the type of the decision should not be included in the model as a factor explaining single translation assignment purchasing.

Contrary to Lynn's (1987) research findings, the size of *the buying centre* for translation services is not dependent on the size of the buyer company. The number of persons inside the buying centre or the group of people who usually handle translations varies from two to three in the case companies. This fits into Lynn's (1987, 122) research findings and does not then again fit into Wilson's (1975, 10) findings of the number of persons inside the buying centre. The fact that the size of the buying centre is similar in all the case

companies can be explained by the operational model of the buyer company. It could be concluded that the bigger the buyer company as a whole, the more dispersed the buying of translation services usually is, and hence a centred, clear buying group is not to be found, but instead, responsibilities are divided around the organisation. Then again, the smaller the company, the more centred the use of translation services should, efficiently thinking, be, and hence there is a tendency of pointing translations needs at certain persons either officially or from habit. Another explanation for the size of the buying centre being so small is also found. It could be thought that the nature of the professional service influences the size of the buying centre in that translation services are probably not seen as that important and complex a professional service that many persons would be required to handle these services compared to for example buying legal services.

All case companies were able to pinpoint some *roles* inside the buying centre, and as said by Lynn (1987, 125), these roles seem to overlap and interact, and in some situations they seem to blur a bit, as well. Then again, contrary to Lynn's (1987, 123) claim that the number of persons involved in the buying process varies according to the stage of the process, the number of individuals in the process is always the same in the case companies as the process always follows learned, standardised routines.

This standardised way of handling translation needs is also visible in the case companies nowadays being able to avoid any bigger conflicts or differences in opinions. This fact is opposite with Sheth's (1973, 53-55) opinion of the influence of individual member's preferences and personal opinions in the buying process. Differences in the buying centre's members' preferences do not, in general, cause conflicts or disagreements that would affect the way a translation is bought. Hence, these issues can not be seen as factors that explain the buying behaviour of translation services according to the research findings.

Looking at *factors inside the buyer company* that can influence the buying behaviour, it is interesting to notice that either Sheth (1973) or any other author does not mention in any context the organisational structure and changes in the structure to have any influence in the behaviour. In general it could be thought that in situations where there is a rather clear, centralised buying centre in the buyer company, changes in the construct of this group have a greater influence in the buying behaviour than in companies where the buying of translation services is decentralised and hence is not that dependent on certain, named persons. It was to be noticed that all the case companies have an orientation to include aspects of translation automatically in production processes, for instance. Hence, the operational model, one inner organisational factor, on how translations are handled inside the company

obviously affects the buying behaviour. And changes in these operational models, such as mother leaves, eventually lead to changes in the organisational behaviour as a whole.

Talking about the factors in the company's external environment that could influence the company's organisational behaviour, the market situation was mentioned as one issue, as is given as an example by Potsus and Deschamps-Potter (2002, 6), as well. However, as five of the seven case companies do not see any important issues in their environment that could affect their buying behaviour, it could be in some extent generalised that mostly only the issues inside the buyer company's organisation have a significant affect on the buying behaviour.

Below, a figure is drawn of the conclusions made of the factors affecting the buying behaviour for professional services in the case companies. The figure is drawn on the basis of the model by Gummesson (1979, 13) on page 13 in this paper but the results of this research are used to complete the model.

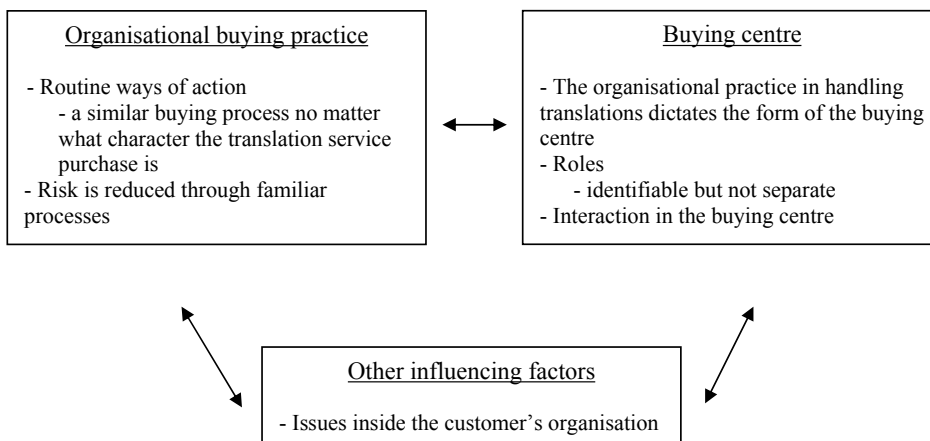


Figure 9 Conclusions on the factors explaining professional service buying behaviour

As seen from the picture and compared to the Gummesson (1979, 13) model, the first affecting factor is the way the buyer company has organised the handling of single translation assignments, not the type of the decision. The buying centre indeed has roles, as suggested by Gummesson (1979, 13), but probably a more interesting issue defining how the buying centre affects buying behaviour is the form of the group. Interaction inside the group and along the roles is essential. Unlike in Gummesson's (1979, 13) model, methods of conflict resolution or the influence of varying personal preferences or opinions are not to be included in the context of the buying group. The customer's organisational environment is seen as the only other influencing

factor that explains buying behaviour as only few comments were given on any possible outer environment issues.

To summarise the conclusions on buying translation services, the Day and Barksdale (1994, 46) model of the buying process for professional services can not be used when discussing how the case companies' handle every-day translations. In fact, the Day and Barksdale (1994, 46) model needs to be used to describe the selection process of a long-term translation service provider. The phases, the definitions of the phases and the selection criteria are, indeed, very similar to the case companies' processes, and thus the model can be seen as a generalising model that fits to reality. The importance of referrals is not appropriately recognised, but still, recommendations are used. Generalisations on referral asking are hence difficult to give; some companies value and use it more than others. However, the criteria for recommending are congruent with past researches and thus gain some generalisation. Generalisations on the factors explaining the buying behaviour for translations can also be made. The type of the decision does not, contrary to what was assumed before hand, influence the buying behaviour. In addition, the buying centre is more or less recognisable in most of the case companies and can thus be said to be an important explaining factor in the buying behaviour. In addition, various buyer company organisational issues are in general seen as also affecting the way the organisation behaves when buying single translation services. Conclusions on the third research area, how the use of translation services is experienced, will be made next.

Conclusions on **how the use of translation services is experienced** are handled according to three aspects: expectations, quality and the relationship point of view. It was found out from interviewing the case companies that the buyer companies actually have rather clear *expectations* of the translation services they buy. It can be generalised that some sort of expectations always exist when buying translation services. One exception in defining expectations was provided by one case company which admitted expectations to have somewhat blurred since their initial expectations have never been met by the translation agency, and now the case company is very reserved with how their translations come back. How expectations are born comply with Patterson's (1995) arguments in that the complex nature of a professional service forces the buyer organisation to trust the service provider already in advance. Buying translation services as a whole is, indeed, regarded by the case companies to include uncertainty that affects the building of expectations in terms of reducing uncertainty by forming trust before the actual service delivery. Even though translation services are not seen by any of the case companies to be that important a business area, emphasis in making the service function well is not any smaller.

As Parasuraman et al. (1985) and Brown and Swartz (1989, 93) claim, there indeed exist different gaps between the buyer company and the service provider due to different perceptions of expectations. Differences in expectations in how the buyer of a translation service sees the quality of the outcome are rather understandable. As evaluating translations was admitted by the case companies to be difficult, some evaluation estimates in the most common languages are still done. A translator can seldom be fully aware of the linguistic skills of the one who receives the translation.

The case companies opinions of *value*, what value is and how it is created, are quite unanimous, and hence somewhat generalisable. Quality is seen as the most important component of value and, in addition, costs play an essential role in the value construct in determining the total benefit of the service bought. Hence, it can be concluded that the case companies' orientation towards the construct of value follows the value-for-money approach by de Ruyter et al. (1997). Quality and price indeed make a strong link between each other in that best value for the money paid is always wanted. As was said by some of the case companies, a bad quality translation is worth nothing however cheap it would be.

However, what was interesting to notice is that some case companies value a lot the translator's ability to provide exactly the wanted quality according to the situation. In other words, many companies said that in some situations a translation only has to be good enough, they do not want to pay extra for additional quality they do not need. This aspect fully complies with Mangararas (1995, 63-64) who emphasises a translator's ability to deliver exact quality according to the customer's wishes. Another question is then again what is the translator's willingness to provide less than perfect quality. These concessions in quality can in some extent be seen as harmful for the whole translation industry. It seems very important to make all expectations clear already in advance, before the service delivery, and to improve interaction between the buyer company and the service provider also during the service delivery to avoid possible misunderstandings.

The importance of interaction between the buyer company and the translation agency during the service delivery as a dimension to value divided the case companies in two. Most companies value continuous interaction between the two parties and can hence be regarded as agreeing with what Lapierre (1997, 380, 388), de Ruyter et al. (1997, 62) and Lapierre, Filiatrault and Chebat (1999, 246) claim about the customer's important role in creating value during the service delivery process. It can be concluded that even though two of the case companies do not want to interfere with the service delivery during the process, co-operative interference can still be seen as an additional tool in conducting the translation as the buyer company wishes. This aspect is

rather obvious in that if wishes, changes or complaints are not revealed as the translation is ongoing; the customer is at least partly responsible if the translation does not fulfil the customer's wishes. Why the interaction between the buyer company and the translation agency is not seen as important by two case companies could probably be explained by the opinion that too much interaction is a waste of valuable working hours which should be directed at doing something more profitable.

Evaluating quality can in general be said to be important, but difficult in most cases due to insufficient linguistic skills, as is suggested by Swartz and Brown (1991, 238). However important the evaluation is regarded, not all of the case companies check the translations' quality in every case, but instead the importance of the translation is the decisive factor determining whether checking will be done or not. Hence, it can be said that evaluating quality is not an automatic consequence for buying a translation service, but is preferred the more important the translation is. The fact that translations are not always evaluated can be explained by for instance the great volume of translations, a dispersed use of translation services so that evaluation practices vary, the unimportance of some translations, and the trust the buyer companies have towards their translation agencies.

To divide the quality of a translation into "soft" and "hard" can not be said in general to be common or very conscious. The evaluation of the soft quality is usually unconscious and is not placed much importance on. The bigger the translation volume and hence the more contact between the buyer company and the translation agency contact persons, the more emphasis is put on the functional, soft quality of the service. The fact that the hard, outcome quality is still in general valued more can be explained by Sipilä's (1992, 215) claim that the less the customer knows about the service, the more emphasis is put on the outcome when evaluating a translation.

Talking about the criteria of good quality in a translation service, below is drawn a figure that compares the research findings on good quality criteria according to the case companies with the definitions of good quality in professional services by Day and Barksdale (1992) and Patterson and Spreng (1997).

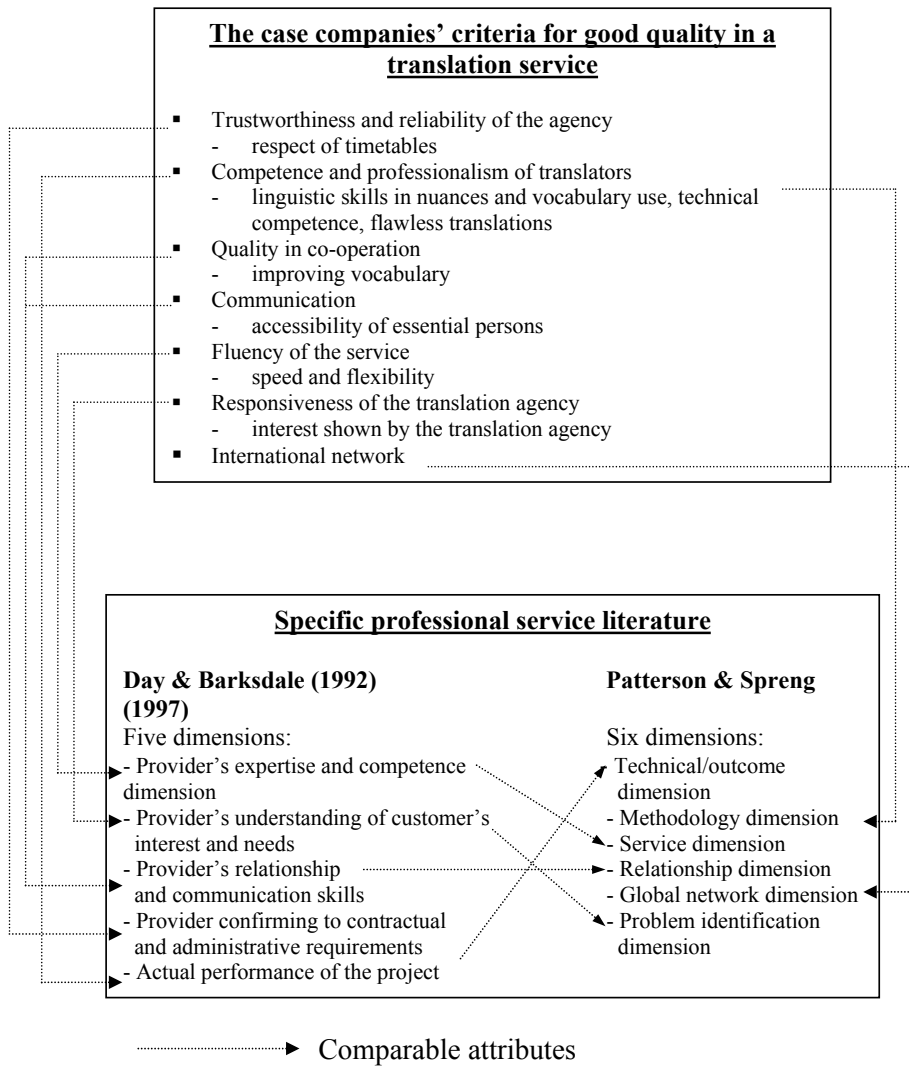


Figure 10 Comparison in quality dimensions for translation services

As seen from the picture, the criteria the case companies gave are fully comparable with previous research findings by Day and Barksdale (1992) and Patterson and Spreng (1997). The trustworthiness and reliability of the translation agency can be compared with the provider confirming to contractual and administrative requirements in terms of for instance respecting timetables. The case companies' dimension of the professionalism and competence of translators in terms of how good in quality the translation is, is comparable with the actual performance of the projects and hence the outcome dimension, and in terms of the technical delivery of the service to the methodology dimension, as well. Quality in co-operations and the

communication skills refer to the provider's relationship and communication skills and hence the relationship dimension. The aspect of fluency in the service in terms of flexibility and speed can be compared with the provider's expertise and competence and the service dimension. The responsiveness of the translation agency stands for the provider's understanding of the customer's interest and needs, and can be called the problem identification dimension. Finally, the criterion of an international network is the same as the global network dimension. To conclude, the criteria for good quality in a translation service comply with previous research, and can be in these terms generalised.

Conclusions on *the relationship approach to experiencing the use of translation services* will be discussed accordingly to the figure below. The form of the figure is based on the figure on page 16 in this paper, and the figure is modified to correspond to the conclusions made according to the findings in this research.

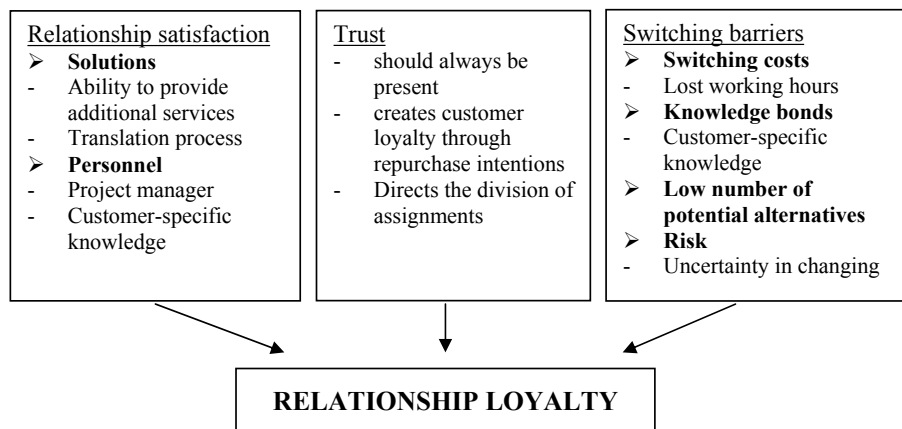


Figure 11 Conclusions of the construct of relationship loyalty

As seen from the picture, *relationship satisfaction* is according to the research findings a construct of the solutions the service provider can provide and the service provider's personnel. The service concept and the service provider's ability to apply the service concept are seen as somewhat important, as Ojasalo (1999, 173) claims. However, the role of the service concept is rather small since most translations are done with basic programs. Only two case companies mentioned the service concept to clearly affect their satisfaction, hence it can not be generalised that a translation agency could gain much competitive advantage by for instance offering additional services. The reason

why translations are usually only asked in a basic Word-to-Word form can be explained by the fact that all company presentations, publications, brochures etc. are always put on company-specific forms with company logos, for instance, hence a basic translation is all that is needed from the translation agency and the layout etc. are done separately. The translation process acts as a measure of how well translations are handled, and if the process does not work as expected, it clearly is noticed by the case companies to cause dissatisfaction.

The personal relations created between the buyer company and the translation agency are seen as a tool in for instance solving problems and in adding company-specific knowledge in the translation agency by getting to know each other's businesses better. This argument complies with Kersch's (1995) statement of getting the agency familiar with the customer's business, to pay customer-specific attention through personal relations. As a conclusion, these personal relations can be seen as creating customer loyalty.

Unlike what Liljander and Strandvik (1995, 144) claim, as seen from the figure above, the translation agency as an institution, its image, does not have any role in how evaluations of the services are made and relationship satisfaction built. Also contrary to Ojasalo (1999, 184), the case companies do not see the translation agency to have any effect on the buyer companies' image. As a conclusion, the dimension of the service provider's image can be excluded from the relationship satisfaction construct.

Trust, as expected, is seen as a crucial component that creates customer loyalty and affects how services are experienced. Like Ravald and Grönroos (1996, 24) say, trust indeed is, according to the case companies, built over time, through previous experiences with the same service provider. The issue of having to trust the translation agency already in advance, before the first service purchase, was not confirmed by all the case companies. In fact, only three of the seven case companies mentioned that trust has to exist already before the first purchase. Hence, it can not be generalised that systematic trust-building always occurs already when selecting the translation agency. This contrasts with Liljander and Strandvik (1995, 152) who claim pre-buying evaluation to count for much with professional service. It can be thought, however, that trust actually is present already from the beginning, but the concept of trust is very different in the beginning. As it is question of buying a professional service, the credence qualities of the service cause the buyer to want to trust the service provider in advance already in the beginning. Trust may, however, manifest just as an abstract feeling, and nothing concrete for enhancing it in the beginning is done.

The switching barriers were from the theoretical aspect assumed to consist of costs, bonds, extra benefits as a value enhancement factor and the

attractiveness of alternatives. As Jones et al. (2000, 262) claim, switching costs are indeed seen by five out of the seven case companies to be an effective switching barrier in terms of lost working hours on selecting and training a new translation agency. However, one case company's aspect to possible switching costs differs greatly; the company does not see any costs to exist since the selection process is continuous and training costs are avoided by having an efficient translation memory to provide to the new translation agency. Concerning this case company in question, unlike what Jones et al. (2000, 262) and Sharma and Patterson (2000, 484) claim, low switching costs, dissatisfaction and willingness to switch do not walk hand in hand. In fact, this case company did not mention to be at all dissatisfied with most of the translation agencies it uses, but instead, the willingness to change comes from the principle of continuous competitive bidding and search for the best cost-efficiency. However, somewhat good generalisation can be made, confirmed by five case companies, that switching costs do play a role as a switching barrier.

Liljander and Strandvik (1995) claim there to exist six different bonds in industrial relationships. However, the research findings suggest somewhat very contrasting. The only bond that creates a switching barrier according to the research in this study is the knowledge bond in that a long-term translation agency partner is regarded to have gained much important customer-specific knowledge that takes years to build. Hence, no other bond, according to the research findings should be included as a component of the switching barriers.

Another clear contradiction to the theoretical aspect of possible switching barriers concerns the possible value enhancement methods such as extra benefits provided by the translation agency. Ravald and Grönroos (1996, 26) see that the service provider should increase the customer's perceived value with some extra benefits to make leaving the relationship not beneficial. But in fact, none of the case companies receive any extra benefits in any form from their partner agencies, and even if they did receive, the extra benefits would not play any role in making the decision to exit or stay in the relationship. Hence, any value enhancement procedures can not be seen to be efficient, they do not construct a switching barrier.

The low number of truly potential alternatives to switch the agency to affects directly the case companies' willingness to stay in the relationship even though they would not be fully satisfied. Holding true with Szmigin (1993, 12-13) and Jones et al. (2000, 263), the difficulty of knowing what exactly is received from another translation agency affects the switching behaviour in that even though the number of alternatives is bigger, to know which ones are potential is difficult.

One dimension that was not specifically mentioned as a construct of the switching barriers is risk. According to the case companies, the most obvious barrier for the case companies to change their translation agency or agencies is the risk of not getting anything better or even the same quality from a new translation agency. The risk and hence the uncertainty felt in what is going to be received can be said to be the greatest and most common switching barrier according to the case companies. Hence, risk should definitely be added as one aspect of the switching barriers when it comes to buying translation services or professional services in general.

To summarise the conclusions made on experiencing the use of translation services, customer satisfaction is, indeed, built through expectations, value and quality. Translation quality can be said to be the strongest component in forming the service experience. However, the linkage between expectations, value and quality in satisfaction is obvious since many expectations are linked to quality and quality is also the most essential construct of value. It was interesting to notice how well the criteria of good quality matched previous research findings, and hence generalisations on these criteria could be made. Interesting differences to some theoretical aspects on the dimensions of relationship loyalty were found and a new model was drawn based on the findings of this research. In brief, it was to be somewhat generalised that contrary to previous research the translation agency's image plays no role as one aspect of relationship satisfaction. In addition, many aspects of possible switching barriers proved wrong compared to the initial model construct. For instance, the number of truly effective barriers proved smaller than expected. Relationship loyalty can be said to influence how a service is experienced in terms of for instance how much a good relationship forgives and forgets, and how differently for instance expectations are formed and fulfilled in a good relationship.

6 SUMMARY

International business is becoming ever more global and business is done in ever more languages. Nowadays, it is not enough to manage only in English; effective and profitable business requires selling and other business operations to be done in the local language (Babcock & Du-Babcock 2001). Even though the importance of localised selling in terms of the right use of market languages is recognised, translation as a business function has still not gained the appreciation it would need (Ferraro 1996, 39). Even though translation is not probably still respected at its highest, the global translation industry can be said to be booming at the moment (Freivalds 1999, 49).

The purpose of this study was to analyse the use of translation services, and more specifically, the use of translation services in international companies in the IT-industry in Finland. The sub-problems of the research area were:

- Why are translation services needed?
- How are translation services bought?
- How is the use of translation services experienced?

Translation services were regarded as a professional service. A closer look at what translation services are was taken through professional service definitions.

The need for a translation service was handled from the point of view of translation as a part of serious business-making (c.f. Hermans & Lambert 1998, 123). The roles of translation in management and translation managers were discussed. In addition, some aspects to the budgeting of translation needs were given.

How translation services are bought was regarded from three theoretical aspects: the selection process of a translation service provider, the use of referrals, and the factors that explain the buying behaviour for single translation service purchases. In addition, the use of referrals was discussed both from an individual and professional point of view.

Organisational buying behaviour was analysed from the basis of the Gummesson (1979, 13) model of factors explaining the buying behaviour of professional services. The type of the decision, the buying centre, and possible other influencing factors were said to influence the way an organisation behaves when buying a single translation service.

How translation services are experienced was analysed from three dimensions: how customer satisfaction in translations services is created, what

is quality in translation services, and what is the importance of the relationship between the customer and the supplier in how the service is experienced. Customer satisfaction was seen to be a construct of three components: expectations, value and quality, of which quality was in addition handled also in more details. The relationship approach was analysed based on the assumption that customer loyalty changes the way a translation service is always experienced. A model was created where loyalty was seen to be a construct of relationship satisfaction, trust, and switching barriers.

The research approach in this paper was qualitative, more precisely an exploratory research. The study was a multiple, comparative case study where the research data consisted of several case companies whose research findings were compared together to make conclusions. The target population were the stock exchange companies listed on the HEX-listing of data communications and electronics. To select the possible case companies, judgmental sampling was used. The final group of representative examples consisted of seven companies. The collection of research data was done by individually interviewing representatives of the case companies. The trustworthiness of the research was discussed in details according to definitions by Miles and Huberman (1994).

What comes to the research findings on *facing the need for translation services*, it was found out from interviewing the case companies that the organisational model for handling translation needs varies in terms of how much is done inside the company versus how much is outsourced. However, there were to be noticed four most obvious reasons for all the companies to outsource their translation needs: reasons of cost, lack of resources, lack of skills, and the internationalisation of business. In addition, the services bought from translation agencies are very similar in all the case companies, being such as manuals, technical documentation and financial reports. The role of translation in management varies between the companies from having close to no role to having a role where it even is seen to add to the company's value.

According to the research findings, there were to be found two practices in *budgeting translation needs*: most companies have an own line for translation in a bigger entity and for the rest, there is no specific practice for budgeting. Translation takes a small share in its budget entity, but in the future a general opinion said the share is not going to at least decrease.

Conclusions on facing the need to buy translation services were made. It can be said that outsourcing is a popular trend when it is question of translation services. The needs for translation are in general well recognised inside the case companies, but still, proper value to translation's importance is not given in management. What comes to budgeting, the budgeting practice of translation services depends on the centralised or decentralised way of the

company handling translation needs as a whole, and hence, no generalisations on the practice of budgeting can be given.

Talking about *buying translation services*, one of the most interesting and crucial findings in studying *the buying process for a translation service* was the fact that the case companies really do not go through the Day and Barksdale (1994, 46) buying process model with every single translation assignment. However, in the companies that actually do competitive bidding, the selection process with all the phases and selection criteria was found to be very similar. One very common feature in selecting a translation service provider was found to be the use of a pilot project to find out more about the alternative service providers. Another common feature is the practice of writing down a skeleton contract to guide the ways of co-operation with each translation agency the company uses.

Using *referrals* in any systematic way during the choosing process is not consciously seen as very important by any of the case companies. Most companies admitted in-house referrals to be the best ones and to play some role, but in general, any automatic and official referral-asking is not common.

About the research findings on *the factors that explain the buying behaviour for single assignments*, the type of the purchase was found not to affect how an organisation behaves due to the companies' standardised modes of action. The buying centre is in some companies more visible than in others, but in most companies a bundle of persons who mostly deal with translation purchases can be identified. Different roles inside the buying group are recognisable, though overlapping. Differences in opinions or conflicts between the group members were not found in any greater extent. Inner organisational factors, such as organisational restructuring in personnel, were found to affect the behaviour more than any external factors.

Conclusions on the buying of translation services were made. The Day and Barksdale (1994, 46) model of the buying process for professional services needs to be used to describe the selection process of a long-term translation service provider, and from this viewpoint the model can be seen as a generalising model that fits the reality. Generalisations on referral asking are difficult to give since some companies value and use referrals more than others. A new model of the factors explaining buying behaviour was formed since the research findings on the type of the purchase were not congruent with previous research. Several other generalisations on the buying group and other influencing factors were, however, possible to make.

Research findings on *experiencing translation services* first dealt with *customer satisfaction*. The research revealed that customer expectations are clearly divided in the actual outcome of the service and the functioning of the service as a whole. These expectations are initially been born from having to

trust the translation agency already in advance. The most important component of value was said to be quality. It came clear that some concessions in different aspects of value may sometimes be required as stock exchange legal requirements take over. But still, bad quality is never valued.

What comes to research findings on *quality*, evaluating quality was in general seen as important and difficult. The strongest criteria in terms of which criteria were most mentioned and emphasised by the case companies are the trustworthiness of the translation agency and the quality in translations in terms of the translators being professional and competent.

About the research findings on *the relationship approach*, trust seemed to be the strongest factor creating customer loyalty and hence affecting the way translations are handled and experienced. Another important factor is the buyer company's unwillingness to switch the translation service provider due to for instance risk.

Conclusions on experiencing translation services were made. As was assumed in the theory part, customer satisfaction is, indeed, built through expectations, value and quality, of which quality is the strongest component. Expectations gaps do exist, and what is important concerning future co-operation is that both the buyer company and the translation agency make expectations clearer and more visible. The criteria of good quality in translations given by the case companies are fully congruent with previous research findings, hence generalisations on the criteria can be made. The research findings on some dimensions in the relationship approach revealed differences compared to some theoretical aspects, and hence some changes to the model were made based on the new findings. In brief, it was to be generalised that the translation agency's image plays no role as one aspect of relationship satisfaction. In addition, the assumed influence of several bonds, extra benefits and the attractiveness of alternatives as possible switching barriers proved wrong compared to the initial theoretical model construct. Thus some factors were excluded from the list of switching barriers. It was concluded that relationship loyalty, indeed, influences how a service is experienced in terms of what a good relationship tolerates, forgives and forgets.

This research can be seen to have given some new insights and depth to the research field of using translation services. The research was based on testing previous model constructs, theoretical aspects and research findings, but information above just the theoretical framework was also received. It is, however, to be admitted that a bigger number of case companies would probably give better confirmation to base conclusions and models on. Hence, what is required, is more research on this field, more depth into interesting details and strong research evidence to make valid conclusions.

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