

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Faculty of Philosophy

English Studies

Riina Härkönen

ELF and Translationese in Relation to Plain English on the Websites of
Finnish Medium-Sized Export Companies

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Englanninkielisillä kotisivuilla on suuri merkitys erityisesti suomalaisille vientiyrityksille, sillä niiden avulla yritykset pystyvät markkinoimaan itseään ja tuotteitaan potentiaalisille ulkomaisille asiakkaille. Nykyään yrityksen kotisivut toimivat usein ensimmäisenä kontaktina asiakkaan ja yrityksen välillä asiakkaan hankkiessa tietoa uudesta yrityksestä tai tuotteesta. Koska yritysten kotisivuilla on tärkeä rooli ensivaikutelman luomisessa, on tärkeää, että myös niillä käytettävä kieli on helppolukuista ja virheetöntä.

Erilaiset kielelliset poikkeamat osoittautuivat kuitenkin varsin yleisiksi vientiyritysten englanninkielisillä kotisivuilla. Nämä kielelliset poikkeamat tunnistettiin Englanti lingua francana - ja translationese-kielimuodon piirteiksi. Englanti lingua francana (ELF) on kielimuoto, jota englantia vieraana kielenä puhuvat henkilöt käyttävät puhuessaan muiden vieraskielisten kanssa. Translationese on puolestaan kielimuoto, jota esiintyy käännetyissä kirjoitetussa kielessä ja jossa lähdekielen piirteet ovat selkeästi havaittavissa ja heikentävät käännöksen sujuvuutta. Internetissä kieli yhdistelee kirjoitetun ja puhutun kielen ominaisuuksia, mikä selittää molempien kielimuotojen esiintymisen kotisivuilla. Tutkimuksessa näitä kielellisiä piirteitä verrattiin lisäksi Plain English -kielimuotoon, jonka ensisijainen pyrkimys on tuottaa kielellisesti ja tyyllillisesti mahdollisimman selkeää ja helppolukuista englantia väärinymmärrysten välttämiseksi.

Tutkimus osoitti, että ELF-piirteet eivät johda vakaviin väärinymmärryksiin mutta saattavat vaikuttaa negatiivisesti tekstin luettavuuteen. Sanatasolla translationese johtaa selkeisiin poikkeamiin Plain English -kielimuodosta, mutta niiden vaikutus luettavuuteen jää kuitenkin vähäisemmäksi kuin lausetasolla ilmenevän translationesen, joka poikkeaa selkeästi Plain English -kielimuodoista ja johtaa helposti väärinymmärryksiin. ELF:n ja translationesen yleisyys yritysten kotisivuilla osoittaa, etteivät monet yritykset vielä tiedosta helppolukuisten ja kielellisesti virheettömien kotisivujen positiivista vaikutusta koko yrityksen imagoon, ja enemmän huomiota tulisikin tulevaisuudessa kiinnittää yritysten englanninkielisten kotisivujen kielelliseen laatuun.

AVAINSANAT: corporate websites, English as a Lingua Franca, translationese, Plain English

1 INTRODUCTION

In the process of globalization, the Internet has become an important medium, and the English language holds its status as the dominant language on it. Nowadays, 68.4 % of the websites on the Internet are in English, the total number of websites being approximately 313 billion (Online Language Web Site Content Statistics 2011). In order to reach the potential new customers, not just in the home country, but all around the world, also Finnish companies are likely to need to have their websites in English in order to promote their exports to both English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. Corporate websites are a strong medium in the business world, while they have further enhanced the status of English.

The Internet is a key factor in the process of internationalisation, but it has, still, made its real breakthrough in the business world only recently, during the second half of the 1990s (Yli-Jokipii 2000: 104). During a relatively short period of time, the Internet has become an essential tool for different companies as a promotional medium. By having English websites, different companies can market their products and themselves for a global clientele. Nowadays, it is practically essential for companies aiming at exports to have websites as they are often the first contact between a potential new client and the company. For information about a certain type of company or a product, corporate websites are often used as the first source of information. We all do this in our everyday lives as, for instance, when we seek a certain type of product or company to work for, we are likely first to perform a search on the Internet by using a search engine (e.g. Google) and then browse suitable corporate websites to acquire more information about the product or the company. Corporate websites often give the first impression of the company and are, thus, a strong promotional medium.

The English language plays an important role in corporate websites. It is no longer tied to any particular geographical location nor does it represent Standard British or American English. Different lexico-grammatical deviations from standard language norms are common, and they are likely to derive from two different backgrounds: the use of *Eng-*

lish as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and of *translationese*, the interference of the source language in the translated text (Gellerstam 1985: 88). The aim of this thesis is to identify and analyse the unconventional linguistic features of ELF and translationese on the corporate websites of five Finnish medium-sized export companies (*Iivari Mononen Oy*, *Laine-Tuotanto Oy*, *Merivaara Oy*, *Suomen Kuitulevy Oy* and *Vexve Oy*) and to compare them with the guidelines of Plain English of which overall aim is to use language that is as clear and readable as possible (Crystal 1988: 266). This is to explore if the use of ELF and translationese can cause problems in understanding. Jenkins, however, claims (2004: 64) that although features of ELF deviate from the standard language norms, they are not usually regarded as obstacles for successful communication.

As mentioned, the material of the present study consists of the websites of five Finnish medium-sized export companies. In 2010, approximately 20 % of exports in Finland came from forest industry, and approximately 15 % from metal industry (Suomi lukui-na, Finland in numbers 2011). Significantly, the material represents industries which are relatively important to Finnish exports as *Iivari Mononen Oy* (later IM) and *Suomen Kuitulevy Oy* (later SK) operate in wood industry, and *Laine-Tuotanto Oy* (later LT) and *Vexve Oy* (later VX) operate in metal industry. *Merivaara Oy* (later MV), however, manufactures and sells hospital equipment and falls thus outside the two fields, but the corporate websites of this company are otherwise well suited as material for the study. The opening sites, the sites offering information about the company and the sites including information about the products the company manufactures and sells are included in the study because these sites appeared on each company's website, and also as these sites are probably more often visited by potential customers than some additional sites on the corporate websites.

ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) is a form of English that is primarily used in communication between non-native speakers (NNSs) of English in a non-native speaker setting. It is often used as the mutual language of choice in settings such as conferences, business meetings, and political gatherings, in which speakers of different native languages communicate. The acronym EFL, then, stands for *English as a Foreign Lan-*

guage, and it is used in settings in which non-native speakers and native speakers of English communicate, usually in a native speaker setting. (Jenkins 2004: 63–64.) Whereas EFL aspires to native-like language production, ELF has no such function. There are certain features characteristic for ELF which deviate from standard language norms. For instance, confusion in the use of prepositions and omissions of definite and indefinite articles are features of ELF that are regarded as grammatical errors in ENL (*English as a Native Language*) and also in EFL settings. An example from the corporate websites illustrates a typical feature of ELF: in the phrase *in [sic] latest technology* (LT 2010), the definite article *the* is missing when it should have been inserted in front of the superlative *latest*. Usually ELF studies focus on the spoken language but in this study, ELF is studied in written language on the corporate websites as the Internet language can be seen as a mix of written and spoken languages. In addition, unconventional linguistic forms are common on the corporate websites because the language on the Internet is not monitored and controlled.

As the English corporate websites are not aimed at any particular linguistic group, the setting is a mixture of EFL and ELF settings. In written language, the aim is, however, to reach speakers with native-like English instead of non-native English. Not every deviation from standard language norms can be, however, simply labelled as occurrence of ELF. As the English corporate websites are often translations from the Finnish websites, *translationese* may explain the majority of the lexico-grammatical deviations from standard language. A translation becomes *translationese* when the source language is strongly visible in the target text. For instance, the phrase *by investing in **an own** pressing department* (LT 2010) is a relatively literal translation from the Finnish phrase *perustamalla **oma** puristosasto* (*by founding an own pressing department*). The adjective *oma* in Finnish can be translated as *own* in English, but in this case, the word *separate* would have been a more appropriate choice as *own* can be used as an adjective after a possessive word and followed by a noun (as in *We grow our own vegetables.*) or as a pronoun after a possessive word but without a following noun (as in *This book is my own.*) (Macmillan Dictionary 2009–2012).

Features of ELF and lexical translationese (occurring on the word level) and syntactic translationese (occurring on the sentence level) are, then, compared with the guidelines of Plain English in the present study. Plain English refers to the kind of written language which a cooperative, motivated person can understand in the same way as it was intended to be. It means using simple language and understandable style which does not lead into misinterpretation. (Aittokoski 2009: 23.) It can be claimed that the general aim of writing in Plain English is in line with that of the linguistic aims of the companies whose websites form the material of the present study as also the company representatives emphasised that they had aimed at using clear and readable language on their English websites.

The following sections describe previous studies, and the material and the method of the present thesis. In addition, information from the company representatives' telephone interviews concerning the creation of the websites will be discussed in a separate section. The theoretical framework is outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. The second chapter focuses on the status of the Internet as a contemporary medium and in particular, on the benefits and challenges that having corporate websites has particularly for medium-sized companies. The strong status of the English language on the Internet is discussed in this chapter as well. Chapter 3 centres on analysing the varieties of English of interest in the present study on the Internet, that is, the concepts of ELF, translationese, EFL and Plain English. In Chapter 4, the findings concerning ELF and translationese on the corporate websites are discussed in detail in relation to the norms of standard language and guidelines of Plain English. Finally, conclusions drawn on the basis of the analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

1.1 Previous studies

David Crystal has widely studied the global status of the English language and the way language is used on the Internet in his books *English as a Global Language* (1997) and *Language and the Internet* (2001). According to Crystal (1997: 110), the Internet is be-

coming more multilingual and he has, therefore, focused on studying the language forms on the Internet from a more language-neutral viewpoint, whereas particularly the English language is of interest in the present study. Moreover, Crystal has broadly studied the language used on the Internet (2001), these including, for instance, the language used in e-mail correspondence and in online chat room discussions. These language forms differ significantly from the language used on corporate websites which does not significantly differ from written language. Crystal has not, however, approached the Internet language from a translational viewpoint or as non-native language production.

No systematic study particularly on website translation has previously been conducted. Scholars such as Yves Gambier, Aline Remael and J. Ritter Werner have studied multimedia translation in the book *(Multi)Media Translation: Concepts, Practices and Research* (2001), but multimedia translation is seen to cover not just the translation of text, but also pictures, moving image and music, that is, all the means of conveying a message on the Internet. Helen Kelly-Holmes (2005) and Anja Janoschka (2004) have studied the use of corporate websites as a promotional tool and as a means of advertising. They have not, however, focused on the form of language used on the corporate websites, but have taken a more communicational viewpoint. In addition, there are various books available that give concrete instructions for constructing a good website and how to structure the information given on them. For instance, in his book *Small Websites, Great Results: the Blueprint for Creating Websites that Really Work*, Doug Addison (2004) provides concrete guidelines for creating a good website, as well as Scott Mitchell in his book *Create Your Own Website: Using What You Already Know* (2004). Although the Internet and websites are increasingly getting more and more attention from various scholars, it seems that the English language itself used in this setting remains a relatively untouched topic.

Anna Mauranen states (2006: 146) that the English language used on the Internet is a fruitful source of study as linguistic changes are observable in this setting more easily than in published written language because the language on the Internet is not, and cannot be, monitored and controlled. Crystal (1997: 134) is also aware of the different

forms of English, but he emphasises that a mutual writing system brings all the forms of English together. It is important to keep in mind that languages live in a constant change, though this change is relatively slow. Changes in language occur first in speech and are traditionally considered errors when appearing in written language. Barbara Seidlhofer (qtd. In Jenkins 2004: 64) has studied these errors in oral settings and has used the term ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) to refer to the form of English spoken by non-native speakers in countries in which English has no official status, that is, the Expanding Circle (Kachru qtd. In Jenkins 2003: 16). Kachru's model of the spread of English is further discussed in subchapter 3.1. Seidlhofer has introduced specific features of ELF (qtd. in Jenkins 2004: 64) which are used as the basis in the present study for identifying ELF on corporate websites. Jennifer Jenkins (2004) also regards ELF more as a form of spoken English and focuses on discussing the relatively negative attitudes towards ELF in her book *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity* (2007).

Since the beginning of this millennium, ELF has been of interest for various other scholars as well. Elizabeth J. Erling and Tom Bartlett (2006) have studied the use of ELF among university students in Germany. Sandra Mollin (2006) has conducted a study on the status of ELF and has concluded that ELF is a register rather than a language variety, while Elina Ranta (2006) has focused specifically on investigating the use of the progressive form in ELF. Furthermore, Aaltonen (2006) has taken a step further as she has conducted a brief study on the features of ELF on corporate websites, but she seems not to have taken into account that not all deviations from the norms of Standard English can be labelled simply as features of ELF: as English websites of Finnish companies are often translations, some of the deviations from the standard language rules derive from an overtly literal translation strategy which has resulted in translationese.

The term translationese appears relatively seldom in translation studies as such. Usually the term is only briefly defined in course books that deal with translation theory. This does not, however, mean that the effect of the source language on translation has not

been previously studied. The level of equivalence between the source text and the target text has formed the main focus of interest for various translation scholars. Already Eugene Nida studied equivalence between source and target texts and used the terms *formal equivalence* and *dynamic equivalence*, of which the former refers to following closely the words and textual patterns of the source text, whereas the latter refers to the attempt to re-create the function the words might have had in their original setting. Nida seems to have preferred the dynamic rather than functional equivalence. A similar juxtaposition can be seen, for instance, in Peter Newmark's theory on translation: he has distinguished *semantic* and *communicative translation*. Semantic translation aims at preserving the formal features of the source text, whereas communicative translation takes into account the needs of the target text addressee and adapts to those needs as much as necessary. Newmark himself seem to have preferred semantic translation. (Pym 2010: 31–32.)

Large directional polarizations can also be based on the way a target text represents the source text (Pym 2010: 32). Juliane House uses the terms *overt translation* and *covert translation*. In overt translation, the source text is tied in a specific way to the source language culture, and historically-linked texts (e.g. political speeches, religious sermons) and timeless texts (e.g. works of art, aesthetic creations) are, therefore, overt translations. A covert translation is a translation where the source text is not tied to the source language culture; a source text and its covert translation are, thus, of equal concern for source and target language addressees. (House 1977: 188–189, 194.) On the basis of this polarization, House has created a model for assessing the quality in translation. In translation assessment, two kinds of mismatches can be found, these being *overtly erroneous errors* and *covertly erroneous errors*. Overtly erroneous errors can be wrong translations (i.e. substitutions consisting of either wrong *selections* or wrong *combinations* of elements), omissions (i.e. words and expressions which are not translated), additions (i.e. unnecessary words or information) and breaches of the target language system (i.e. cases of ungrammaticality or breaches of the “norm of usage”). (House 1977: 57.) On the basis of this categorization, it becomes evident that translationese and overtly erroneous errors can be seen to have similar definitions.

Martin Gellerstam is one of the few scholars who has used the term *translationese* itself and has studied *translationese* in Swedish novels that are translated from English. He has defined *translationese* as systematic influence of the source language on the target language (1985: 88). Peter Newmark views *translationese* more negatively as he defines *translationese* as “interference that distorts the intended sense of an original” and *translatorese* as “the unthinking use of the primary sense of a group, word or collocation, when another sense is more appropriate” (1993: 141). These definitions of *translationese* indicate that although House has not used this term, she has systematically analysed what consists of *translationese*. Scholars sometimes resist the entire term *translationese*, and, for example, Gellerstam remarks that he is using the term *translationese* in his study “for lack of a better term” (1985: 88).

Whereas House merely analyses the interference of the source language on the target text, Andrew Chesterman has taken a prescriptive approach by introducing different tools that can help the translator to avoid *translationese*. He does not use the term itself, but refers to inadequate translations that could easily be improved. In his article *Psst! Theory Can Be Useful!* (1996), Chesterman introduces four different tools for improving the quality of a translation. These are *transposition*, *deverbalization*, *iconicity* and *relevance*. *Transposition* refers to changing the word class: it is not necessary to translate, for instance, nouns strictly into nouns because there are differences in the noun usage between different languages. *Deverbalization* means that a translator needs to be able to go beyond the surface structure of the source text, to understand the intended meaning and to be able to express the meaning fluently in the target language. *Deverbalization* is, thus, a technique that can be used to avoid unwanted formal interference. *Iconicity*, then, means matching the form and meaning so that the form reflects the meaning or the experience that is being described. *Iconic* expressions are easier to process than non-*iconic*. *Iconicity* refers, thus, to information structures. Last but not least, *relevance* is a concept which refers to occasional additions and omissions as the translator does not need to systematically translate everything but s/he should be aware of the target audience of the translation and translate only what is relevant. (Chesterman 1996: 4–5.)

Although the term translationese is seldom used in translation studies, it is evident that the interference of the source language on the target text has been of interest for many scholars though it has been approached differently. Translationese should be avoided because it can make the target text heavy to read and, thus, difficult to understand. There are no previous studies that would have directly combined the study on translationese and ELF probably because they are likely to be seen as different phenomena. In addition, ELF is commonly applied to spoken interaction and not to written communication, whereas translationese is a phenomenon of written language. Certain features of ELF are common regardless of the mother tongue of the speaker, whereas translationese is always language-specific. Features of ELF and translationese are avoided in published written language, but both are, nevertheless, relatively common on the corporate websites. These features are analysed in the present study.

1.2 Selecting the companies

All English websites of Finnish export companies are not translations, and some are, rather, independent texts with maybe only little resemblance to the Finnish websites. Particularly large companies¹, which are often also multinational, seem to use completely different strategies in constructing their Finnish and English websites. As the Finnish and English websites of these companies include completely different information, translational study is not relevant or even possible there. Small Finnish companies² do not necessarily have English websites at all, or they may have translated only small parts of their websites into English. Moreover, they are only rarely concerned with exporting as the majority of their clientele usually consists of people living in Finland. It is, therefore, usually sufficient for them to have websites only in Finnish. The situation

¹ A large company is a company of which annual turnover is more than 43 million Euros and the number of employees over 250 (Yritystukitilasto, company support statistics 2008, my translation).

² A small company is a company whose annual turnover remains under 10 million Euros and the number of employees under 50 (Yritystukitilasto, company support statistics 2008, my translation).

is, however, different within medium-sized companies³ as they use more often the Finnish website as the source text for their English websites. Small and medium-sized companies are often referred to with the abbreviation SMEs. All the companies, whose websites were studied in the present study, can be categorised as medium-sized companies.

In the present study, five Finnish medium-sized export companies, Iivari Mononen Oy, Laine-Tuotanto Oy, Merivaara Oy, Suomen Kuitulevy Oy and Vexve Oy, were chosen as material on the following criteria. All the five companies are founded in Finland, and their headquarters and production lines are located in Finland as well. This has been an important selection criterion. It is sometimes difficult to define whether a company with a Finnish name is actually Finnish when its headquarters and production lines are geographically located somewhere else. It is, however, common that Finnish export companies have subsidiaries in their export countries, but if the headquarters are located in an English speaking environment, features of ELF and translationese would not probably occur on the corporate websites as the creators of the English websites can even be native speakers of English.

Iivari Mononen Oy, whose headquarters are located in Joensuu, in the East of Finland, manufactures impregnated wood products used, for instance, in infrastructure (IM 2011). Suomen Kuitulevy Oy produces hardboard products used in building and in door and furniture manufacturing. The headquarters of the company are located in Heinola, in the South of Finland. (SK 2011.) Laine-Tuotanto Oy, located in Vaasa, on the West coast of Finland, manufactures different mechanical engineering and electro-technical products (LT 2011). Vexve Oy, whose headquarters are located in Sastamala, in the South of Finland, manufactures different valves used in district heating and cooling (VX 2011), and Merivaara Oy manufactures and sells different medical equipment. The headquarters of the company are located in Lahti, in the South of Finland (MV 2010).

³ A medium-sized company is a company of which annual turnover remains between 10 and 43 million Euros and the number of employees between 50 and 249 (Yritystukitilasto, company support statistics 2008, my translation).

The websites of the above mentioned companies were chosen as the data for the present study because they met the selection criteria, that is, their headquarters and production lines are located in Finland, they are medium-sized export companies, and their Finnish and English websites contained similar information. When searching for appropriate research material, the city website of Vaasa, which listed the export companies in the Ostrobothnian area, was visited in order to find companies that would meet the above mentioned criteria. However, the only company listed on the Vaasa city website, who met the criteria, was Laine-Tuotanto Oy. Many of the companies listed were large companies or their headquarters were located abroad. It was, therefore, inevitable that the geographical location of the company could not be the selection criteria. For this reason, the website of *Kauppalehti*⁴ was visited. This website listed all the successful Finnish export companies. The four other companies (IM, MV, SK and VX) were listed on this website and since they met the selection criteria, their websites were regarded as suitable material for the present study.

All the companies, whose websites were included in the data, are regarded here as export companies although the proportion of exports from the annual turnover differs significantly between the companies. Approximately 12 % of the annual turnover of Laine-Tuotanto in 2010 came from exporting (Laine 2011). The proportion of exports from the annual turnover was significantly higher for Merivaara Oy as approximately 85 % of their annual turnover came from exporting (Könönen 2011). The proportion of exports from the annual turnover was also relatively high for Vexve Oy: 80 % of the annual turnover comes from exports (Huhtala 2011). The proportion of exports for Iivari Mononen is approximately 50 % from the annual turnover (Monni 2011), and the corresponding number was approximately 60 % for Suomen Kuitulevy Oy (Lind 2011). In what follows, the corporate websites forming the data of the present study are introduced.

⁴ Kauppalehti is the largest commercial economic medium in Finland that informs of and analyses current economic occurrences (Kauppalehti 2012, my translation).

1.3 Material

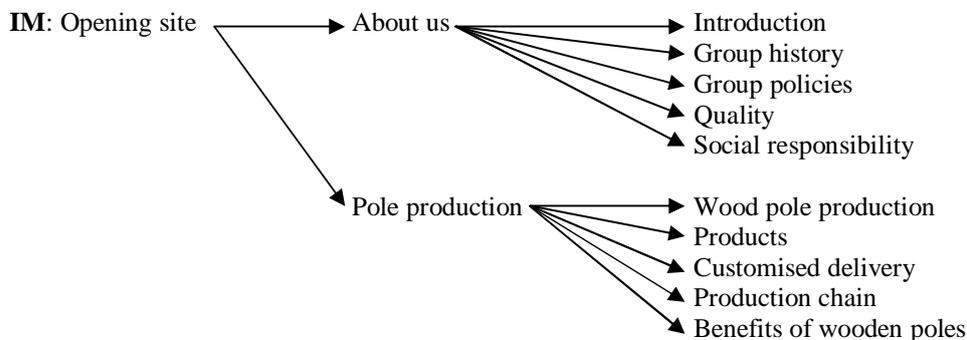
Four of the companies, Iivari Mononen Oy, Laine-Tuotanto Oy, Suomen Kuitulevy Oy and Vexve Oy had used the Finnish website as the source text for their English websites (Huhtala 2011; Laine 2011; Lind 2011 & Monni 2011). The company Merivaara Oy had used a reversed order, and informed, however, that their English websites were only loosely used as the source text for their Finnish websites, and the aim had not been to strictly translate every piece of information on the English websites into Finnish (Könönen 2011). The websites of this company were, however, included in the present study because the creator of the English websites had Finnish as her mother tongue, and a study on the features of ELF was, therefore, feasible. The websites of the four other companies form a possible setting for both ELF and translationese.

The material of the present study consists of the opening sites, the sites offering information about the companies, and the sites that contain information about the production lines and the products of the companies. These three parts of the websites were chosen because they appeared on each company's Finnish and English websites and they are likely to be visited more often by potential new customers as well, assuming that the main interest of the clientele is on the organisation and its products.

Unlike the websites of the other companies, the primary opening site of Laine-Tuotanto Oy contains no text but only the possibility to select the language, either Finnish or English. By choosing the language, the visitor opens the actual opening site containing the company introduction. As the structure of the websites of Laine-Tuotanto Oy differs here from those of the other companies, the opening site of Laine-Tuotanto Oy is regarded as being the site which opens after choosing the language. Its two subsections, *History* and *Values*, are referred here as the company information sites. The company information site of Merivaara Oy, titled simply as *Company*, contains four subsections of which three are included in the present study. The company information site of Vexve Oy is titled also as *Company*, but contains only a single article. A news article *Vexve celebrated its 50th year anniversary*, to which there is a link on the opening site,

is regarded here as a part of the company information site. This was partly to collect the same amount of data from each company's websites. The company information site of Suomen Kuitulevy Oy, titled as *Finnish Fibreboard Ltd.*, is further divided into six subsections, and all of them were included in the present study. Finally, the company information site of Iivari Mononen Oy, titled as *About Us*, has six subsections of which five were studied.

The product information site of Laine-Tuotanto Oy is titled as *Production*, and is divided into four subsections. The product site of Merivaara Oy is titled as *Products*, and is further divided into eight subsections. The product information site of Vexve Oy, titled as *Products* as well, is formed by seven subsections. The product site of Suomen Kuitulevy Oy, titled also as *Products*, is further divided into four subsections on the English websites, although there are five subsections on the Finnish websites. As one section has not been translated, only the four sections found also on the English websites are studied, these being *LION Building boards*, *LION Furniture boards*, *Other applications* and *Technical Information*. The product information site of Iivari Mononen Oy is titled as *Pole production* and has five subsections on the English website and six sections on the Finnish websites. The five subsections found on both websites are studied in the present study, these being *Wood pole production*, *Products*, *Customised delivery*, *Production chain* and *Benefits of Wooden Poles*. The following figure illustrates the structures of the English corporate websites and the data of the present study.



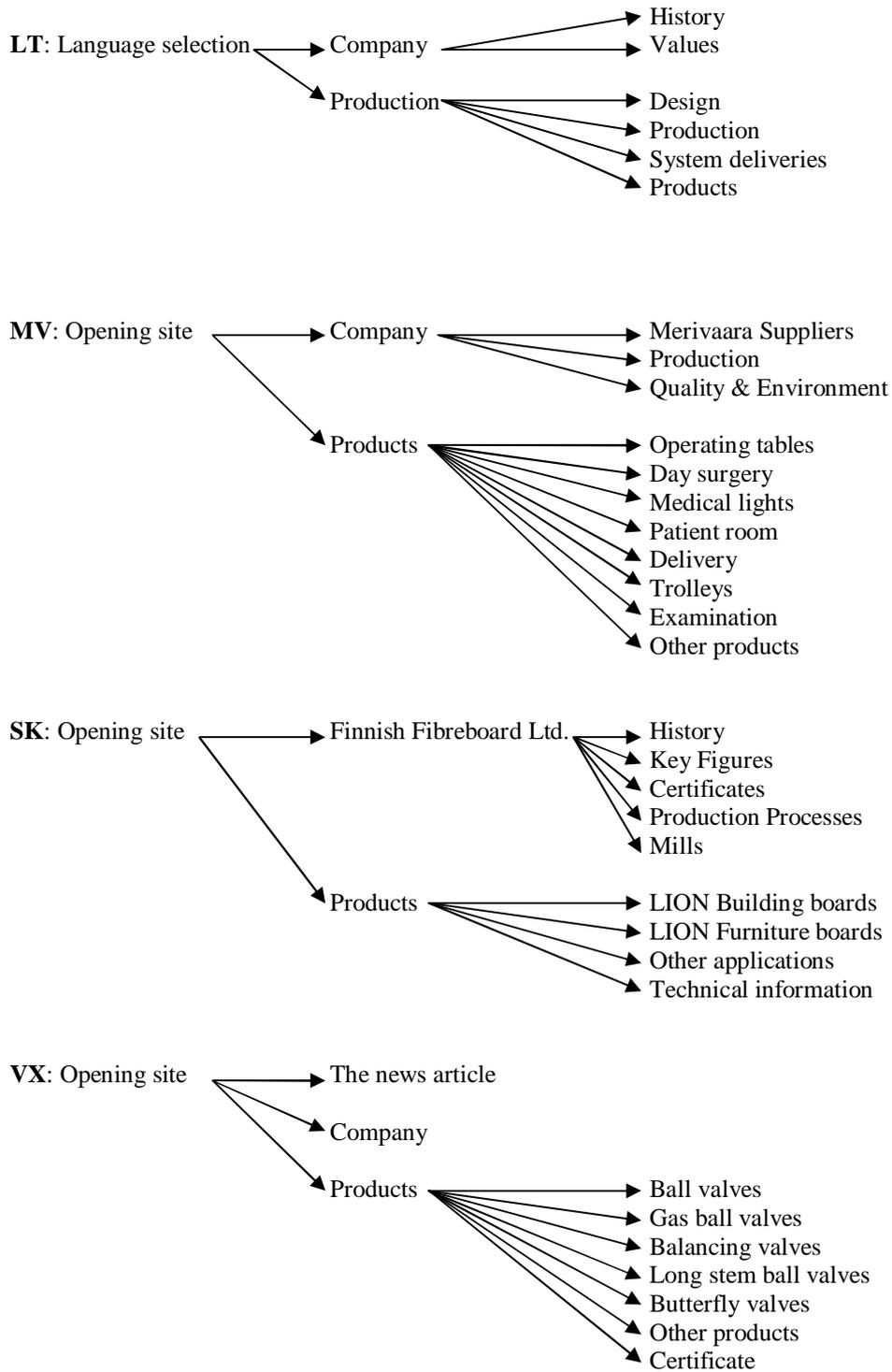


Figure 1. Structures of the corporate websites

Offering corporate websites in different languages illustrates that the websites of the export companies are targeted at an international audience, and corporate websites of Finnish export companies form, therefore, a good setting for ELF and translationese. Moreover, language options on the corporate websites often reflect the primary export countries and foreign partnerships of the companies. The number of language options on the corporate websites varied between the companies in this study. Vexve Oy had their websites in Finnish, English, Swedish, German and Russian. Merivaara Oy offered various language options as well, with Finnish, English, Swedish, Norwegian, and Russian websites. The other three companies provided websites in fewer languages: Suomen Kuitulevy Oy had their websites in Finnish, English and Swedish, and Iivari Mononen Oy and Laine-Tuotanto Oy had only Finnish and English websites.

The primary export companies of Laine-Tuotanto Oy are Estonia, Norway, New Zealand, Lithuania and the Czech Republic, but they also have clients in other European countries and in Asia. Significantly, Laine-Tuotanto Oy did not see any relevance in having their websites in Swedish, regardless of the location of the company in a strongly bilingual Ostrobothnian area. Although Sweden is one of the company's export countries, in a business setting, English is widely used and understood, and Swedish websites were not considered necessary. (Laine 2011.) The clientele of Merivaara Oy, then, consists of over 100 countries, which explains why the company had chosen to offer various different language options on their websites. The export companies include, for instance, the United Kingdom, the United States, Russia, various Baltic countries, and countries in Asia and in Latin America (Könönen 2011). The main export country of Suomen Kuitulevy Oy is the United Kingdom, but also Sweden, various countries in the Middle East, Australia and Malaysia are important export countries for the company (Lind 2011). Iivari Mononen Oy exports to Sweden, Norway, the United Kingdom and various countries in the Middle East and in North Africa (Monni 2011).

1.4 Method

The aim of the present study is to investigate what unconventional linguistic features can be identified on the corporate websites of five Finnish medium-sized export companies. These unconventional features are identified as features of ELF and translationese, either lexical or syntactic. It is of further interest whether these linguistic forms can cause difficulties in understanding, and this is further supplemented by investigating if the English language on the corporate websites follows the guidelines of Plain English.

Different translation strategies approach equivalence with the source text differently. When the target text is overtly loyal to the source text, and the level of equivalence with the form is as high as possible, often the fluency of the target language suffers. When an overtly literal translation strategy has been adopted, occurrences of *translationese* usually emerge. Translationese is not necessarily incorrect translation, but systematic interference of the source language in the target text (Gellerstam 1985: 88). In the present study, *lexical translationese* that occurs in words, terms and idioms, and *syntactic translationese* that occurs in clauses, sentences and word order, have been studied. Translation scholars do not divide translationese in this way, but I have used this division because it illustrates that translationese can occur on different levels and should not be regarded as a one-dimensional phenomenon. Translationese has been identified by comparing the Finnish source texts and the English target texts in great detail. When providing examples of lexical and syntactic translationese from the material, both Finnish and English versions are, therefore, given. Back-translations are provided when considered necessary.

House's definition of *overtly erroneous errors* (1977: 57) has been used to identify and analyse translationese. She has divided overtly erroneous errors into *wrong translations* which are substitutions consisting of *wrong selections* or *wrong combinations of elements*, *omissions* that are words and expressions that are simply left untranslated, *additions* in which unnecessary additional words or information is given, and *breaches of*

the target language system (i.e. cases of ungrammaticality and cases of dubious acceptability) which are deviations from the norms and syntax of the target language.

House has analysed and categorised translation errors in great detail, but Chesterman (1996: 4–5) has taken a different approach to the errors and has outlined different translation procedures which can help making a translated text more fluent, that is, to avoid overtly erroneous errors. He has introduced four techniques for improving quality in translation which are employed when suggesting more fluent translations in cases of translationese on the corporate websites. The technique of *transposition* refers to choosing a different word class in the target text than was used in the source text, and *deverbalization* refers to the idea that in order to avoid unwanted formal interference, the translator needs to express the meaning of the source text in her/his own words, and this requires that the translator is able to fully understand the source text. *Iconicity*, then, refers to the information structure in the target text: a text is easier to process when the new piece of information is given after information with which the reader is already familiar. *Relevance* can be seen as a concept to which the techniques of adding and omitting information belong. The translator needs to keep the target audience in mind during the translation process, and s/he is allowed to add necessary and omit unnecessary information.

Translationese emerges when the target language is being looked at with the source language eyes, and it can, therefore, make a translated text seem absurd or heavy as it can fail to transmit the tone and mood of the source text by diverting the reader from its message (Hatim & Munday 2004: 12). For instance, on one of the websites, the phrase *kuitulevyn perusidea* has been translated into *basic principles of hardboard* (SK 2011). This is a typical example of lexical translationese: the word *perusidea* can be translated into *basic principle* or *basic idea* when using a literal translation strategy, but in this case, *basic principles* refer to a lifeless noun, *hardboard*, and it would seem awkward to state that hardboard would have principles. A better translation would then be, for instance, *basic characteristics of hardboard*.

When translationese occurs on the syntactic level, the sentence pattern of the source language has been used in the target text. For instance, the sentence, *[sic] Proof of this is [sic] the long-term relationships with industrial end users and builders [sic] merchants*, is a literal translation from *Tästä ovat osoituksena pitkäaikaiset asiakassuhteet teollisten loppukäyttäjien ja rakennustarvikekaupan kanssa* (SK 2011). The word order in Finnish is more flexible than that in English as in Finnish, it is not obligatory that the subject is followed by the verb and the verb by the object, this being the case in English. In the above example, however, the object is followed by the verb, and the subject is mentioned last. The example above illustrates the problems that relate to translationese: something that is acceptable in the source language is not necessarily natural language use in the target language. Translationese can make the target text relatively heavy to read especially when it occurs on the syntactic level.

As the aim of the present study is two-fold, and deviations from the standard language are not studied only from the viewpoint of translation but also as a phenomenon deriving from the use of ELF, the aim is also to identify features of ELF on the English websites. Seidlhofer (qtd. in Jenkins 2004: 64) has singled out typical features of ELF, and these ELF features are used as the basis for identifying ELF in the present study. Seidlhofer's model is, then, complemented with Jenkins' (2004), Aaltonen's (2006) and Ranta's (2006) research findings on ELF.

English as a Lingua Franca, (ELF), is a way of referring to communication in English between speakers who have different first languages. It is a contact language between people who share neither the common native language nor a common national culture, and for whom English is an additional language. There are various features typical for ELF. For instance, the novel use of morphemes (e.g. *angriness*, *importancy*) and shifts in using indefinite and definite articles are features that occur in ELF. (Seidlhofer qtd. in Jenkins 2004: 64.) For example, the adjective *error-free* occurred on the corporate websites. This adjective can be understood without any difficulty by both native and non-native speakers of English although it deviates from the standard language use. The correct word would be *flawless*. ELF refers, therefore, to the form of English in which de-

viations from the standard language occur but do not cause difficulties in understanding. ELF is traditionally seen as a phenomenon of the spoken language, but all changes in the language emerge first in the spoken form and only after that in the written form. The Internet is the first medium in which ELF is to occur because it remains as an intermediary between the spoken and published written language.

Features of ELF and those of translationese are deviations from the way native speakers of English use the language, and in the present study, ELF and translationese are analysed in their relation to Plain English. The main aim of Plain English campaigns is to attack the use of unnecessarily complicated language (sometimes called “gobbledygook”) by government departments, businesses and any other group or organisation who are in linguistic contact with the general public. Application forms, safety instructions, official letters, licences, contracts, insurance policies, guarantees and other documents should be presented clearly, using language that people are able to understand without difficulties. (Crystal 1988: 266.) Plain English is, thus, a simplistic form of standard language. There are a few rules of thumb in Plain English: preferring short words and paragraphs, using concrete rather than abstract words and avoiding the passive voice (Crystal 1988: 266, 269–270). For instance, a case of translationese on one of the corporate websites, [...] *the main end uses for [sic] which are the [sic] building, door and furniture industries* (SK 2011), is a clear deviation from the norms of standard language and from the guidelines of Plain English as a relatively complex sentence structure has been used.

Moreover, the above example illustrates that translationese and ELF cannot always be easily separated from each other as there are two deviations from the standard language in the above example that could be categorised as features of ELF: the misuse of the preposition *for*, and the unnecessary use of the definite article *the*. It is, however, clear that whereas translationese can appear on the lexical and syntactic levels, ELF appears only on the lexical level. In the present study, a linguistic deviation is regarded as a feature of ELF when there is no corresponding feature in the source text. When a clear corresponding feature can be identified in the source text, this is seen as translationese. For

instance, if a progressive form is unconventionally used in the target text but does not occur in the source text, this is regarded as a feature of ELF, but if it is used also in the source text, its occurrence in the target text is regarded as translationese.

1.5 Interviews with the company representatives

Telephone interviews with the company representatives were conducted on the 9th of February, 2011 and on the 25th of May, 2011 to acquire specific information regarding the creation of the corporate websites. The company representative of Laine-Tuotanto Oy (Tiina Laine, marketing assistant) and Vexve Oy (Outi Huhtala, marketing and communications assistant) were interviewed on the 9th of February, 2011, whereas Maarit Könönen (marketing co-ordinator, Merivaara Oy), Peter Lind (sales manager, Suomen Kuitulevy Oy) and Janne Monni (development manager, Iivari Mononen Oy) were interviewed on the 25th of May, 2011. When asked from the company representatives, all of them informed that the main motivation for having their websites in English was to market the companies and their products for the present and potential new customers and interest groups abroad, and to report about the topical events to the global audience, when considered relevant (Huhtala 2011; Könönen 2011; Laine 2011; Lind 2011; Monni 2011). It was also mentioned that corporate websites were regarded as an inexpensive means of marketing the company and its products, and English websites were seen as a necessity for operating in the global markets (Könönen 2011).

The interviews revealed that different companies approach the status of the English language differently, and both EFL and ELF can be present on the corporate websites. For some, the English language is strongly associated with the cultures of the UK and the USA (i.e. EFL setting), but for some, English is regarded merely as a neutral way of communication in a business setting between people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (i.e. ELF setting). Vexve Oy and Laine-Tuotanto Oy informed that they did not attempt to use strictly either British or American English (Huhtala 2011; Laine 2011), and the company representative of Suomen Kuitulevy Oy was not sure, which

form of English the company favoured (Lind 2011). The representative of Merivaara Oy informed that they aimed at using British English on their corporate websites because particularly British English was considered to convey a more conservative and reliable company image (Könönen 2011). The company representative of Iivari Mononen Oy also mentioned that they favour the use of British English because it was seen as a more appropriate choice than American English in conveying a more reliable company image (Monni 2011).

In addition to the interviews, the way language options are inserted on the corporate websites gives valuable information on the status of the English language. It is noticeable that on the English websites of Laine-Tuotanto Oy, the flag of the United Kingdom gives access to the English websites although the company does not prioritise strictly British English. Laine-Tuotanto Oy was not, however, the only company to use the flag of the United Kingdom as the link to the English websites as this was also the case with Merivaara Oy. Vexve Oy, Iivari Mononen Oy and Suomen Kuitulevy Oy used, however, the phrase *In English* as the link to their English websites, but English can refer to both American and British English. This indicates that for some of the companies, the English language is still strongly associated with the British culture which would refer to the use of EFL, whereas others regard it as a neutral way of communicating which would, then, refer to the use of ELF.

In addition, it became evident in the interviews that the companies had aimed at using flawless and clear standard language on their websites because it is seen to convey a positive and credible image of the company (Huhtala 2011; Könönen 2011; Laine 2011; Lind 2011; Monni 2011). It is also often the case that companies aim at using simple language on their websites so that the customers can get the information they are looking for without difficulties (Huhtala 2011; Könönen 2011; Laine 2011; Lind 2011; Monni 2011), which was considered important, for example, when dealing with potential clientele in the countries of the Eastern block (Könönen 2011). This indicates the use, or attempt to use, Plain English on the corporate websites. Crystal states (1997: 23) that, for example, in the states of the former Soviet Union, English has a limited pres-

ence and has only recently gained popularity in foreign language teaching. The use of Plain English is, therefore, an advantage when the target audience consists of people with varying degrees of competence in English. An additional reason for the use of simple and clear language in general on the corporate websites was the relatively difficult terminology. (Könönen 2011; Monni 2011). The interviews revealed that the target audiences of the corporate websites consist also of non-native speakers of English. This, thus, suggest an ELF setting as the companies anticipated.

What differentiates website translation from, for instance, literary translation, is the anonymous and unmonitored nature of the Internet: although translationese and particularly features of ELF are avoided by translation professionals, they do occur relatively frequently on the corporate websites. This would indicate that texts published on the corporate websites are often created by people with no actual language training. Some companies had their English websites created by a translation agency (Huhtala 2011; Lind 2011; Monni 2011), and by outsourcing the translation of their websites, the companies have probably aspired grammatically correct, fluent and readable English on their websites, and this also suggests that the linguistic aims of the companies have been EFL and Plain English. It remains, however, unclear whether everything on the websites had been translated by language professionals as websites usually require frequent updating, and it might seem to be an easier option to translate at least some parts of the websites inside the company than to consult translation agencies every time new information is put on the websites.

The English corporate websites of Iivari Mononen Oy were conformed to have been translated both by a translation agency and by the company employees: when large parts of the websites needed to be translated, the translation was outsourced to an agency, but when only small parts of text needed to be translated or only minor updating was needed, this was done by the employees of the company (Monni 2011). Merivaara Oy informed that their website translations were done inside the company. It was added that corporate websites and websites in general are an important marketing tool for any company, and more attention should be used to create good websites, both in Finnish

and English. (Könönen 2011.) The representative of Laine-Tuotanto Oy told that their websites as a whole had been created in close cooperation with an advertising agency, and the company representative was not sure whether the advertising agency had used the help of translation agencies in translating the Finnish websites into English, but revealed that their overall aim had been to translate the Finnish websites into English as literally as possible (Laine 2011).

In the following chapter, the spread of the Internet and the corporate websites as contemporary marketing tools are discussed as well as the status of the English language on the Internet.

2 THE INTERNET AS A CONTEMPORARY MEDIUM

Regardless of the relatively short history of the Internet, it has quickly become a global medium. In this chapter, the origins of the Internet in the English-speaking environment are first presented. After this, the dominant role of the English language in this contemporary medium is described, and finally, the role of corporate websites as promotional tools is discussed.

2.1 Spread of the Internet

The Internet was created in an ENL (English as a Native Language) setting as its origins lie strongly in the English-speaking environment, in the USA. According to Michael Specter,

“The Internet started in the United States, and the computer hackers whose reality has always been virtual are almost all Americans. By the time the net spread, its linguistic patterns – like its principal architecture and best software – were all Made in the USA.” (qtd. in Crystal 1997: 111.)

The predecessor of the Internet, the ARPANET, was created by the U.S. Department of Defence’s Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) already in 1969. The ARPANET was a significant invention because it had no central hub, switching station or central authority. As the ARPANET became overloaded, it was later divided into two different networks; MILNET was intended for military and ARPANET for non-military use, mainly for academics in science and mathematics. By 1980, the network had continued to grow, and universities replaced mainframes with UNIX workstations. When a major structural change to ARPANET was needed, the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) developed NSFNET, which forms a large part of the backbone of the Internet, which used to develop education and research work. The commercial growth of the Internet can be attributed to the advent of the Commercial Internet Exchange (CIX) in 1991. Of all the Internet applications, probably the one currently drawing most attention

is the World Wide Web, which was created by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN, the European Particle Physics Laboratory in Geneva, Switzerland. (Cameron 1994: 10–11, 55.)

As the origins of the Internet are deeply rooted in the ENL setting, it is not surprising that the English-speaking countries still have the highest number of people with Internet accesses. In the UK, 82.5 % of the population are able to access the Internet, the corresponding figure in the USA being 77.4 %, in Australia 80.1 %, and in Canada 77.7 %. Interestingly, the percentage values in the numbers of Internet accesses are high also in various Asian countries, for instance, in Japan (78.2 %), South Korea (81.1 %) and Taiwan (70.1 %) (Internet World Stats 2010.) which indicates that the Internet forms a fruitful source for ESL, EFL and ELF studies.

The Internet quickly became a multinational medium. In 1985, it was estimated that there were approximately 1 000 computers connected to the Internet, whereas the corresponding number nine years later, in 1994, was 3.2 million. During a decade, the growth rate had been significant, estimated at some 15 % per month. (Cameron 1994: 55.) The growth rate has been so remarkable during the last 15 years that it is difficult to give a concrete number of the computers with an access to the Internet. In 2000, there were 360,985,492 users of the Internet, whereas the corresponding number 11 years later was 2,095,006,005 (Internet World Stats 2011). These numbers illustrate that the Internet has quickly become a global medium and has a significant number of users also outside the English-speaking countries.

2.2 The Status of English on the Internet

44.8 % of the users of the Internet live in Asia and 22.1 % in the Europe (Internet World Stats 2011) which suggests that the majority of the Internet users do not speak English as their native language. Regardless of this geographical distribution, the English language still has a firm foothold on the Internet as the texts on the Internet are dominated by the English language (Aaltonen 2006: 195). According to Crystal (1997: 105), ap-

proximately 80 % of the world's electronically stored information was in English 15 years ago. Nowadays, 68.4 % of the websites are in English, the total number of websites being approximately 313 billion. Other languages are represented only marginally on the Internet as, for instance, 5.9 % of the websites are in Japanese, 5.8 % in German and 3.9 % in Chinese. (Online Language Website Content Statistics 2011.) These figures illustrate that although the users of the Internet include various different nationalities to which English is not the mother tongue, a great majority of the material on the Internet is still in English.

The English language has obviously a strong status on the Internet, and deSwaan (qtd. in Aaltonen 2006: 195) gives a reason for the dominance of the English language. He suggests that the central status of English is due to the fact that people who want to learn a foreign language expect that English is the language others will want to learn as well, and they choose, therefore, particularly English instead of any other language. Aaltonen argues (2006: 195) that this idea applies to business setting as well: companies choose English because they assume that other companies will choose it as well. The dominance of the English language on corporate websites lies, therefore, in "the domino effect": when large export companies have chosen the English language, medium-sized and small companies have no other choice but to choose English as well. As Crystal (1997: 81) notes, regardless of the geographical location of an organisation, English is used as the chief auxiliary language. It is likely that if the English language was not the lingua franca, people would acquire some other language instead, because in the business setting, it is important to be able to communicate by using a common language.

English also serves a symbolic function quite apart from the pragmatic reasons. The English language is often associated with relatively positive qualities such as modernity, internationalism, cosmopolitanism, trendiness, success, democracy and consumption (Kelly-Holmes 2005: 104), and this is probably one of the reasons for the dominance of English as well. English advertising slogans in non-native speaker settings are undoubtedly used to convey the image of trendiness, and the same principle can also apply to some extent to English corporate websites, since websites are a strong promotional me-

dium. It seems that via the use of English, the companies aim at creating a company image that refers to the above mentioned qualities.

2.3 Websites as a channel of communication

The Internet is a contemporary electronic mass medium that differs significantly from other forms of mass media: it is a decentralised, internationally operating network of computers that share a communication protocol which facilitates the exchange of information (Janoschka 2004: 47). In online communication, a message is digitally transferred to a large global audience, for instance, via corporate websites. When producing a message on the Internet, the senders need to take the possibility of the addressees' feedback into account. Unlike any other form of mass media, information on the Internet is not passively received but rather, interactively used. For instance, in order to find the information needed, users *perform a search* and then *choose* the right piece of information from the vast array of offers. An important issue within websites is, thus, the way in which individuals actually use the Internet: unlike television or magazines, where viewing the advertisements is simply part of the experience of the medium as a whole, on the Internet, the advertisee has to come to the advertiser, and s/he has to visit the website. (Janoschka 2004: 98, 105, 108.)

To encourage repeated visits, websites must, then, be well-designed, rich in information, they should be regularly updated, and the navigation paths on the sites should be clear (Kotler & Keller 2012: 564; Aaltonen 2006: 197). In addition, Addison suggests (2004: 34) that websites should not contain too much information because browsers do not systematically read everything found on the sites. As users of the Internet can choose what websites they visit and what information they choose to read there, it is important that also the language on the sites is easy to read. This justifies the use of Plain English. In addition, as it is always about competition in the business world, readability is an essential factor on corporate websites. Crystal (1988: 268) argues that clear language does not simply benefit the recipient, but it can also save organisations time

and money. He points out that there have been cases in which unclear information has led to so many complaints and questions that extra staff had to be specially employed to answer them. For this reason, the companies aim, or at least should aim, at the direction of Plain English, either consciously or unconsciously.

Moreover, Young states (2002: 504) that when setting up websites, attention should be paid to the main target group of the websites. Within corporate websites, the visitors can be other companies, customers, employees and resellers. Visitors of corporate websites can also represent various different nationalities and languages. It can, therefore, be difficult to define the exact target group of the websites. For example, the corporate websites of Laine-Tuotanto Oy and Suomen Kuitulevy Oy are targeted to resellers, and not directly to individual customers (Laine 2011; Lind 2011). Resellers can, however, represent various different nationalities and linguistic backgrounds and this is to be taken into consideration when choosing the languages in which companies offer their websites. As the companies whose websites form the data of the present study are export companies who sell their products to different countries, they have chosen to have English websites.

2.4 Websites as promotional tools

Although the Internet has made its breakthrough into the business world as recently as in the late 1990s (Yli-Jokipii 2000: 104), it has established its position also as a significant marketing platform during the last fifteen years or so. The Internet is a major focus for many advertisers and marketers because of the various possibilities it offers when compared with other media. For example, advertisements on the Internet can be viewed in different countries, at different times and in different contexts. Greg Myers (qtd. in Kelly-Holmes 2005: 79) has identified various ways in which advertisers may approach websites and what they hope to achieve by using them. Websites can be, for instance, electronic catalogues that enable direct sales, they can enhance the brand of a particular product, they can be used simply as a poster, or they can be set up primarily to provide

information about local outlets and to support the activities of these. As corporate websites aim at promoting companies, they are clearly a means of advertising (Janoschka 2004: 44).

Significantly, the first websites on the Internet at the beginning of the 1990s were corporate websites. Most of them were electronic catalogues and counterparts of their printed versions, and many corporate websites used their brochure or add as HTML-formatted copy on the Internet. (Janoschka 2004: 48.) The situation has changed significantly since the first corporate websites, and the value of well-designed websites as business-promoting tools has been understood. Nowadays, websites are an important marketing tool for different companies as various companies use their websites to distribute specific information about their products, to enhance the brand of that particular product, and to distribute relevant information about the company itself to potential customers, not just in the home country, but also on a global scale, and to encourage customer feedback and interaction. (Kelly-Holmes 2005: 79; Hamill 1997: 310.)

Websites are not, however, important only for export companies, but the benefit of websites as a promotional tool is indisputable also within domestic markets as corporate websites are an important means of business promotion in general. According to Kelly-Holmes (2005: 80), the most important function of various websites for companies that are not concerned about the direct sales model is the respectability factor: in order to be a *credible* brand, company, service or organisation, is to have a website. Having corporate websites offers a competitive advantage in the global market, and the websites may function as the bridge especially for SMEs to global markets. Without the help of the Internet and corporate websites, global markets would probably stay beyond the reach of the SMEs.

The overall benefit of having corporate websites is indisputable, but export companies in minority language areas in particular need to consider which languages they offer on their websites. Kelly-Holmes (2005: 80) states that apart from being a promotional tool, the website also functions as a 'mission statement'. Websites can offer a company the

opportunity to say what they are and what they stand for, either explicitly or implicitly. Significantly, part of this statement of identity is the language, and the language choice can either complement or contradict the company image. In addition to this, the language choice can either challenge or reinforce the common-sense assumptions about which languages and speakers are taken seriously by the market and which are not. (Kelly-Holmes 2005: 80.)

Kelly-Holmes (2005: 83) further argues that the language choice, or language policy on the corporate website, suggest that the company sees certain languages as having linguistic capital and the speakers of certain languages as 'worthy' advertisees, whereas the others are regarded as the opposite. Significantly, two of the companies (LT and IM) whose websites were studied in this thesis, offered their websites in Finnish and English, but the option of Swedish was missing, regardless of the official status the Swedish language in Finland. One of the companies (SK) offered its websites in Finnish, English and Swedish, and two of the companies (MV and VX) had included five language options: Finnish, English, Swedish, Norwegian and Russian (MV) and Finnish, English, Swedish, German and Russian (VX). Kelly-Holmes (2005: 84) suggests that by making language policy choices on its websites, a company gives the appearance of following a particular brand of geo-politics. She gives an example in which an Israeli website was entirely in Hebrew, and in which Arabic was not used regardless of its status as an official language in Israel. This statement about geo-politics may apply to some areas, but the main export areas of the companies have been most likely to determine the language policies of the companies. The two companies did not include Swedish websites because they had assumed that the Swedish speaking target audience is able to understand their English websites because English is the language of the business world (Laine 2011). This, then, highlights the status of English as a global lingua franca on the Internet: it is often taken for granted that people who speak minority languages are able to understand also English. It can also be the case that the companies have decided to offer fewer language options in order to reduce translation costs.

On a global scale, it is evident that English is the dominating language on the Internet as 68.4 % of the websites on the Internet are in English (Stapleton 2005). This can be a challenge for companies in which English is not used as the official language but rather, as the second language. Finland is known as a small nation, a small language area and a small market area, and therefore, it is not an easy task for Finnish medium-sized companies to reach the global markets. Having websites only in Finnish cannot obviously attract or benefit the attention of their potential foreign clients. As the aim of Finnish export companies is to have access to the global markets, it is essential that they have their websites also in English. Without English websites, a Finnish company can, maybe, retain its current customers because the business partnerships have already been formed, but acquiring new customers on a global scale without English websites is challenging if not impossible because websites are often the first source of information for the clientele when seeking information about the company and its products.

In the following chapter, the English language and its different forms on the Internet are described in detail.

3 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ON THE INTERNET

Languages influence each other and live in constant, though relatively slow, change. According to Crystal (1997: 19), the emergence of the English language can have an influence on the structure of other languages especially because it forms a source for loan words. This argument holds undoubtedly true, but the linguistic influence works also the other way around as other languages have an effect on the way English is used as well. Crystal stresses (1997: 133) that there are different kinds of Englishes in the Expanding and Outer Circles, that is, countries in which English is spoken as the second or foreign language, (Kachru qtd. in Jenkins 2003: 16) in the world which could be regarded as dialects, except that they are used on an international scale, applying to entire countries or regions. Crystal considers these *new Englishes* an inevitable consequence of the spread of English on a global scale. Although there are differences between the new Englishes in their oral form, they are linked together by the existence of a common writing system. (Crystal 1997: 133–134.)

When a language changes, the change is more rapid and more easily observable in speech than in writing, because different speakers affect each other's language usage in face-to-face interaction. Such a principle of negotiation is largely lost in writing, particularly in published varieties, where different gatekeepers, for instance, editors and publishers, remove unconventional non-standard forms. Writing has, however, undergone major changes since the Internet revolution, and the web is, therefore, a fruitful source of all kinds of Englishes in an unrestricted mixture. (Mauranen 2006: 148.) It can be suggested that the Internet is the medium in which the first changes to the written language occur. Corporate websites form, therefore, a good object of linguistic research as the Internet represents a setting which is more tolerant to new forms of language than traditional writing.

Crystal has made a similar finding and states (2001: 17) that the languages on the Internet stand somewhere between spoken and written language, and Elmer-Dewitt (qtd. in Crystal 2001: 25) uses the term *written speech* to describe the language used on the In-

ternet. Due to the intermediate nature of the Internet language, it is more prone to change than traditional written language. Crystal (2001: 23) uses the term *Internet Language* in his book, *Language and the Internet*, to refer to the language employed in various different texts written online (or e-discourses), these including e-mails, chat group discussions, virtual worlds, and various different websites. He concludes, however, that these five contexts are not entirely mutually exclusive as there are sites in which all elements are combined and sites in which one situation is used within another.

Moreover, Crystal (2001: 17) introduces the term *Netspeak* which is an alternative term to Netlish, Weblish, Internet language, cyberspeak, electronic discourse, electronic language, interactive written discourse and computer mediated communication (CMC). Each of these terms has, however, a different implication. For instance, Netlish derives from the word *English* and is, according to Crystal, of decreasing usefulness as the Net becomes more multilingual, and electronic discourse, in turn, emphasises the interactive nature of the Internet language. Netspeak has features of both speech and writing, and at one extreme there are websites in which many of its functions are no different from traditional writing, and, at the other end, there are sites that bring online texts much closer to the kind of interaction more typical of speech. (Crystal 2001: 28). In this respect, corporate websites are relatively close to traditional writing as no such things as abbreviations, emoticons or the like can usually be found on corporate websites nor are they spontaneous as the language in some of the above contexts.

In what follows, different forms of English appearing on the Internet (ENL, ESL, EFL and ELF) are outlined.

3.1 The relationship between ENL, ESL, EFL and ELF

Users of the Internet are geographically located in different areas of the globe. However, a mutual language brings users often together. It is estimated that the proportion of the world's native speakers of English is 350 million and that there are approximately

1900 million competent speakers of English in the world (Doms 2003: 2). Crystal has estimated (1997: 61) that there were 670 million people with a native or native-like command of English in 1997. If the criterion was, according to Crystal (1997: 61), instead of 'native-like fluency', 'reasonable competence', the number would be much bigger, approximately 1800 million, when the proportion of native speakers of English (the Inner Circle) and that of the non-native speakers of the Expanding Circle were summed up. This can be seen, for example, in the often-cited model by Kachru (qtd. in Jenkins 2003: 16). Kachru divides world Englishes into three circles, which are *the Inner Circle*, *the Outer Circle* and *the Expanding Circle*. The three circles represent the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts. The three-circle model of World Englishes is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

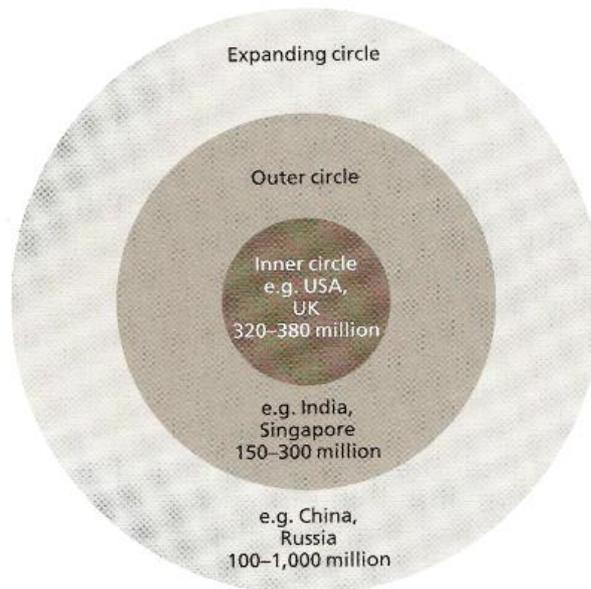


Figure 2. The three 'circles' of English (Crystal 1997: 54)

The model illustrates well the relationship between English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

ENL countries form the Inner Circle which is *norm-providing*, and the Outer Circle is formed by ESL countries which are *norm-developing*. The EFL countries form the Expanding Circle which is, then, *norm-dependent*. In other words, English-language standards are determined by the speakers of ENL (the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), and while the ESL varieties of English (e.g. Bangladesh, Ghana, India and Kenya) have become institutionalised and are developing their own standards, the EFL varieties (e.g. China, Japan and Taiwan) are regarded in Kachru's model as performance varieties without any official status. They depend, therefore, on the standards set by native speakers of the Inner Circle. (Kachru qtd. in Jenkins 2003: 15–16.) On the basis of this division, Finland can be seen to belong to the Expanding Circle, and the form of English taught in schools is EFL, following the norms of ENL.

English has no official function within the countries of the speakers of English as a Foreign Language (The Expanding Circle). There are approximately one billion speakers of EFL and the proficiency levels of these speakers of English range from reasonable to bilingual competence. Speakers of EFL are distinguished from speakers of English as a Second Language (ESL) for whom English serves country-internal functions. Since the mid-1990s, it has become increasingly common to find EFL speakers referred to as speakers of English as an International language (EIL) or as speakers of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), reflecting the fact that these users of English from, for example, various European countries, speak English more frequently as a contact language with other Europeans than with native speakers of English. (Jenkins 2003: 4.)

Companies aim at flawless and conventional use of the English language on their corporate websites as interviews with the company representatives revealed. It can, therefore, be assumed that the linguistic aim of the companies has been to use EFL, and the Plain English variety of it. Deviations from the norms of EFL were, however, relatively common on the corporate websites, these being features of ELF. In the following subsection, ELF and its features are further discussed.

3.2 English as a Lingua Franca

In order to understand the relationship between ELF and standard language, a definition is needed to differentiate between them. Speakers of EFL use English mainly to communicate with native speakers (NSs) of English, usually in a native speaker setting, whereas ELF is primarily used between non-native speakers (NNSs) of English, typically in non-native speaker settings. (Jenkins 2004: 63.) The linguistic aim of the companies has been to use EFL on their corporate websites, but features of ELF are, however, relatively frequent there, too.

Significantly, Aaltonen states (2006: 211) that the geographical location of the customers and foreign partnerships are the most important features that can be used to distinguish between the NNSs and NSs settings. If the main export partners of a company are included in countries where English is the native language, such as the UK or the USA, it is likely that the form of EFL has been adopted as the purpose is to blend in the NS setting and to create an image of the company as a credible business partner. If the main exporting area consists of countries where English is not spoken as the native language, features of ELF are more likely to occur on corporate websites. ELF can be regarded as 'incorrect' language usage because it violates certain grammatical rules of the English language. Therefore, features of ELF are traditionally being eliminated from the written English in the Expanding Circle English teaching, and the use of EFL is favoured, but it seems that the Internet is the first medium to offer a setting also to ELF due to its status between oral and written language.

ELF is regarded as inferior to ENL and the reason for this can be found in the setting (Jenkins 2004: 64). The major difference between NNSs and NSs in relation to the English language lies in the authority to change the language. Jenkins (2004: 64) refers to this feature as *creativity*. When NSs innovate within the language, these innovations are often rejected at first but can eventually become accepted. For instance, it has become acceptable to order *two coffees* instead of *two cups of coffee*. However, according to her, when NNSs of English try to be innovative by using the same pattern, the result is al-

most without exception disapproved of and regarded as a grammatical error or as interference from the speaker's native language. For instance, forms such as *staffs* and *furnitures* are regarded simply as grammatical errors. Crystal's claim (1997: 138) that there is no feature in Expanding Circle English that has become part of the standard US or UK English supports this, but he also argues that as the balance of speakers changes, there is no reason for these features not to become part of a new form of English which he calls WSSE, *World Standard Spoken English*. This would be especially likely if there were features which were shared by several (or all) varieties of English spoken in the Expanding Circle.

Although the example above illustrates the different relationships that ENL and EFL speakers have towards the English language, it should be borne in mind that although ordering *two coffees* is acceptable *in speech*, it is still without exception regarded as an error if written, be it used by an ENL or ELF speaker. Crystal has obviously taken this into consideration since the concept he uses includes the word *Spoken* in the name for the new variety. It can, however, be that what is originally considered a grammatical error in NS English, can eventually become acceptable though a change in Standard English is likely to take a long time.

ELF has several other distinctive features. The following are regarded as the backbone of ELF because they are common in non-native speaker language usage between people who speak different native languages. Seidlhofer (qtd. in Jenkins 2004: 64) classifies the following features as typical for ELF:

- Omission of the third person present tense *-s*
- Confusion between the relative pronouns *who* and *which*
- Omission of definite and indefinite articles in cases in which they are mandatory in NS English and inserting them in places where they do not occur in NS English
- Errors in tag questions
- Inserting unnecessary prepositions
- Overuse or exaggeration of verbs with high semantic generality such as *do*, *have*, *make*, *put*, and *take*

- Replacement of infinitive constructions with *that*-clauses
- Exaggerated explicitness

It is important to take into account that these features occur more easily in spoken than in written English, and as the corporate websites aim at EFL, not all of these features may be identified in the present study. It is more likely that the ELF features that occur on corporate websites include errors in article usage, relative pronouns and prepositions rather than, for instance, errors in tag questions because these are not usually used in writing.

Aaltonen (2006: 211) has identified the following features in her study as ELF: mixing British and American English, innovative use of English modifiers and qualifiers, and deviation in word choice or concord between subject and verb. It is, however, difficult to decide whether the mixing of British and American English can be labelled simply as a feature of ELF because the situation can be different between different countries, and not in every European country do the British and American English coexist as they do in Finland. Innovative use of English modifiers and qualifiers, then, can be a cause of using an overtly literal translation strategy. Moreover, deviations in word choice or concord between a subject and a verb can be a cause from following overtly literal translation strategy. It is more likely that this feature is caused by the interference of the source language, that is, translationese.

Ranta (2006: 95–116) has studied *the progressive form* of the specific features of ELF in order to find out whether the use of the progressive is extended in ELF settings, and whether it causes problems in communication. Explanations for overusing the progressive are usually sought in three areas: interference from learners' native languages, gaps in the learners' knowledge of the target language system, or in factors having to do with the input that the learners have been subjected to either in the target language environment or in the foreign language classroom. (Ranta 2006: 95.) Translationese can also be regarded as interference from learners' native languages and as gaps in the learners' knowledge of the target language system. This illustrates the close relationship between

translationese and ELF. Significantly, Ranta concludes (2006: 113) that the extended use of the progressive form could well be regarded as a characteristic feature of English as a Lingua Franca, and it does not cause any obvious misunderstandings or communication breakdowns. Instead, it is often used as ‘attention-catching form’.

In the contemporary European setting, one does not need to travel to an English speaking country in order to speak English, and, according to Erling and Bartlett (2006: 15), English is often seen as the language of the international younger generation. They encounter English so often and regularly that it has become an established feature of their everyday life. In an NNS (non-native speaker) setting, interaction between speakers with various different first languages results in the increasing use of English as a Lingua Franca. Erling and Bartlett (2006: 9–40), who have conducted a study of the attitudes and motives of students studying English at the Frei Universität Berlin (FUB), suggest that changing opinions of national (the US and the UK) standards and the emergence of the ‘New Europe’ represent mutually reinforcing conditions for the deliberate adoption of an Europeanised English as a Lingua Franca. According to Erling and Bartlett’s study, students of English do not aim at acquiring a particular native model of English, but their aim is to be fluent users of the English language in general. The study discovered that students did not feel a connection to any English-speaking culture and regarded English as a useful tool barely for communicative purposes. In the study, students considered English a neutral way of communication. (Erling & Bartlett 2006: 9–40.)

According to Crystal (1997: 76), English has been chosen as the official language in various Outer Circle countries because it is perceived to be a ‘neutral language’, and by giving English the status of an official language, the problem of having to choose between competing local languages has been avoided. Significantly, interviews with the company representatives revealed similar purposes, and many of them stated that they did not aim particularly at either British or American English on their corporate websites, but their intention was only to use flawless and understandable English. It is, thus, often the case that English is regarded more as a neutral medium of communication, and the purpose of its use is to understand and to be understood by those speaking different

native languages. When English is used in this way, grammatical and lexical errors are regarded as unimportant.

Features of ELF are traditionally considered linguistic errors and breaches of the standard language norms, but they can lead into changing the English language. According to Kachru (qtd. in Jenkins: 35), any lexico-grammatical difference from an NS variant is by definition an error, and Prodromou (qtd. in Jenkins 2007: 35) uses the term SUE (Successful User of English) to refer to a person who is fluent in English, and states that s/he has a virtually flawless command of grammar and vocabulary, that is, *flawless* in relation to the norms of standard language. Jenkins (2004: 64–65) regards, however, certain errors as innovations and transfers from the mother tongue as creativity. She argues (2007: 82) that ELF innovations should be accepted, and as a representation of language change, ELF would be an entirely natural phenomenon, while attempts to hold it back are unnatural. Crystal shares this opinion and sees (1997: 133) this as an inevitable consequence of the spread of English on the global scale.

Although Prodromou (qtd. in Erling & Bartlett 2006: 31) emphasises the virtually flawless command of grammar and vocabulary as the criterion for successful usage of English, he appears, however, to share Jenkins' opinion at least to some extent and argues that although even the most successful NNSs of English use the language differently than NSs, it does not necessarily imply that the quality of their English would be poor. Prodromou further claims that NNSs have often advantageous linguistic skills that NSs lack. For instance, speakers of ELF can mediate between global and local languages and cultures at the linguistic level, an ability which can enhance their capability to negotiate on wider intercultural issues.

3.3 Translationese

All deviations from the standard language norms cannot be, however, considered features of ELF because the majority of the data of the present study consists of corporate

websites which are translations from the Finnish versions. Especially deviations from the standard language norms on the *syntactic* level illustrate that some of the deviations can be explained by following an overtly literal translation strategy which has resulted in the occurrence of translationese.

Baroni and Bernardini (2005: 3) state that when reading translations, it is common to feel that they are written in their own peculiar style. Translation scholars even speak of the language of translation as a distinct “dialect” within a language, called the *third code* (Frawley 1985) or *translationese* (Gellerstam 1985). Similarly, Munday and Hatim (2004: 352) define translationese simply as “peculiarities of language use in translation”, and regard it as a pejorative term for the language of translation used to indicate a stilted form of the target language from calquing source text lexical and syntactic patterning. Translationese is related to translation universals since the characteristics mentioned above may be due to common translation phenomena such as simplification, explicitation and normalisation (Puurtinen 2003: 148).

Spivak (qtd. in Munday & Hatim 2004: 12) uses an alternative term, *translatese*, to refer to a lifeless form of the target language, and Newmark (qtd. in Munday & Hatim 2004: 12) uses the term *translatorese* by which he means the automatic choice of the most common dictionary translation of a word where, in context, a less frequent alternative would have been more appropriate. Translationese is, therefore, a feature referring to a set of fingerprints that one language leaves on another in cases in which a text is translated (Gellerstam qtd. in Baroni & Bernardini 2005: 6). In his article, *Translationese in Swedish Novels Translated from English*, Gellerstam (1985) identifies these fingerprints of English on Swedish texts with the aim to describe the Swedish language variety used in translations from English, and refers to translationese in reference to what is meant to be systematic influence on target language from source language. He uses the term “translational Swedish” to describe Swedish translations which follow the linguistic patterns of the English language. Significantly, the term *translatorese* suggests a translator-oriented perspective, whereas *translationese* refers clearly to a translation-oriented point of view. In *translatorese*, the source of the inadequate translation is seen to derive

from the translator whereas that in translationese is more neutral, the focus being on the translation process. As the term *translatorese* refers to the inadequate choice of a word, I have preferred the term *translationese* which is seen to be more comprehensive and include also the concept of *translatorese*.

Translationese as a term has been used relatively seldom in translation studies. This does not, however, mean that the interference of the source language on the target text has not been previously studied, but quite the opposite. House (1977) has created a model for assessing quality in translation. Her starting point has been to divide translations into *overt* and *covert* translations. An overt translation does not purport to be original. According to House (1997: 66), “an overt translation is one in which the addressees of the translation text are quite ‘overtly’ not being actually addressed.” Texts that are tied to a particular source culture, time and historical context are examples of overt translations because their function cannot be the same for target text and source text readers since the discourse worlds in which they occur are different. A covert translation “is a translation which enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture” (House 1997: 69). The function of a covert translation is to re-create, reproduce or represent in the translation the function the original has in its lingua-cultural framework and discourse world. For instance, a tourist information booklet is covert translation because its function is the same for source text and target text readers. (House 1997: 69.) According to House’s account, it can be claimed that if covert and overt translations represent different ends of the translation continuum, website translations would be closer to covert translation because their function is usually the same for the source and target text readers.

On the basis of the division into overt and covert translations, House has defined (1977: 56–57) different translation errors by dividing them into *overtly erroneous errors* and *covertly erroneous errors*. Overtly erroneous errors of the target language system can be further divided into *wrong translations* (i.e. substitutions consisting of either *wrong selections* or *wrong combinations* of elements), *omissions* (i.e. words or expressions that are left untranslated), *additions* (i.e. unnecessary words or information) and *breaches of*

the target language system which can be subdivided into *cases of ungrammaticality*, that is, clear breaches of the target language system, and into *cases of dubious acceptability*, that is, breaches of the “norm of usage” which House has defined as linguistic rules which underlie the actual usage of language as opposed to the target language system which is concerned with the possibilities of the language. (House 1977: 57.) When overtly erroneous errors are categorised in this way, it becomes clear that translationese and overtly erroneous errors have similar features. House has actually categorised different features of translationese in her model of overtly erroneous errors.

Translationese cannot be regarded as a “good” translation, because it deviates from the target language system. According to White (qtd. in Bell 1991: 11), in a good translation,

“the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.”

On the basis of this definition, three translation norms can be drawn. Firstly, a good translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the source text. Secondly, the style and manner of the target text should remain the same as in the source text, and thirdly, a good translation should have all the ease of the source text (Bell 1991: 11). Features of translationese clearly deviate from these norms.

Although Chesterman (1996: 4–5) does not use the term translationese as such in his article *Psst! Theory can be useful! Human or machine?*, it is evident that he is approaching it from a different angle by introducing different procedures that can make a translation more fluent. These procedures are transposition, deverbalization, iconicity and relevance. *Transposition* is using a different word class in the target text than is used in the source text in order to make the text more fluent. This means, for instance, replacing a noun in the source text by a verb. This procedure is important when the

translator works with languages that are structurally distant from each other. For instance, non-finite clauses are more common in English than in Finnish, and thus, a more fluent English translation can often be achieved by altering the word and sentence structures of the Finnish text. *Deverbalization*, then, refers to the idea that the translator needs to arrive at the intended meaning of the source text, and then express the intended meaning in the target text in her/his own words. Deverbalization is a means to avoid unwanted formal interference. Using this technique means that the translator needs to be able to completely understand the source text. Significantly, using deverbalization seems to strongly lead to the direction of Plain English as its aim is to reduce difficult and complex linguistic expressions. Plain English is further addressed in the following subchapter (3.4.).

Iconicity is a technique that refers to the information structure in the target text. It means matching the form and meaning so that the form would reflect the meaning or the experience that is being described. (Chesterman 1996: 4.) In other words, with what the reader is already familiar, should be mentioned before introducing new information. By using this technique, the translator is creating readable texts that can be understood at first reading. In his article, Chesterman gives a concrete example of the correct order of information: the clause *Switch on after plugging* is not an iconic expression, whereas the clause *Plug in before switching* is iconic because the order of the information in the sentence matches the order of the described events. (Chesterman 1996: 4.)

Relevance, then, is a broad concept to which techniques such as adding and omitting belong. This means that the translator needs to take the target audience into account and then to decide, what information is relevant for that specific audience. The translator is, thus, allowed to make occasional additions and omissions. (Chesterman 1996: 5.) Using this tool is not, however, always straightforward in translations as it can be difficult to define the exact target group. The translator should, therefore, be cautious especially in omitting information.

3.4 Plain English

An important linguistic concept within the framework of the present study is *Plain English*. Crystal (1988: 266) states that one of the most important trends in contemporary language use is the move towards developing Plain English in official speech and writing. According to Cutts (2004: 4), Plain English can be described as the kind of written language which a cooperative, motivated person can understand in the same way as it was intended to be. Plain English does not, however, refer to just writing simple language but also to an understandable style which does not lead into misinterpretation (Aittokoski 2009: 23). The main aim of the Plain English campaigns in the UK and the USA is to attack the use of unnecessarily complicated language by government departments and businesses and any other group whose role puts them in linguistic contact with the general public (Crystal 1988: 266). In this respect, it is evident that also the language used on corporate websites is aimed at being clear, using language that people are likely to understand at first reading, as the interviews with the company representatives revealed.

The movements towards Plain English are relatively recent as they first emerged in the late 1970s. Plain English has played an essential role in promoting public awareness of the problems caused by the use of complicated language, and it has helped to form an atmosphere of opinion which has led several organisations to change their practices. In the UK, the Plain English campaign was launched in 1979 by a ritual shredding of some government forms in Parliament Square. By 1985, over 21 000 forms had been revised, and a further 15 000 withdrawn. In the USA, President Carter issued an order in 1978, requiring that regulations should be written in Plain English. (Crystal 1988: 266.) This illustrates that Plain English has a central role even in native speaker settings, and the benefits of using it also in non-native speaker settings are undisputed: as the use of highly formal language in native-speaker settings leads into difficulties in understanding, it is self-evident that non-native speakers would have even greater difficulties in understanding it.

According to Crystal (1988: 267), it is difficult to give precise and consistent guidelines for writing in Plain English as several scholars disagree as to what counts as Plain English. He gives, however, certain recommendations, such as the preference of short words and paragraphs, the use of concrete rather than abstract words, and the avoidance of the passive voice. (Crystal 1988: 270.) 21 concrete guidelines for writing in Plain English are, however, outlined in *Oxford Guide to Plain English* of which six are used as the basis of the analysis in the present study. The guidelines are divided into six sections, which are *Style and Grammar*, *Preparing and Planning*, *Organizing the Information*, *Management of Writing*, *Plain English for Specific Purposes: emails, instructions and legal documents* and *Layout*. In what follows, the guidelines are introduced, and those relevant for the present study are marked with bold type and discussed in more detail as well as illustrated with examples from the material of the present study.

The section *Style and Grammar* contains thirteen guidelines which are:

1. **Over the whole document, make the average sentence length 15–20 words.**
 2. Use words your readers are likely to understand.
 3. **Use only as many words as you really need.**
 4. **Prefer active voice unless there's a good reason for using the passive.**
 5. **Use clear, crisp, lively verbs to express the actions in your document.**
 6. Use vertical lists to break up complicated text.
 7. Put your points positively when you can.
 8. Reduce cross-references to a minimum.
 9. Try to avoid sexist usage.
 10. In letters, avoid fusty first sentences and formula finishes.
 11. **Put accurate punctuation at the heart of your writing.**
 12. Avoid being enslaved by writing myths.
 13. You can be a good writer without learning hundreds of grammatical terms.
- (Cutts 2004: 17–18.)

As the thirteen guidelines listed above illustrate, the main aim in writing in Plain English is to use clear and simple sentence structures and understandable terminology.

One of the most significant guidelines from the reader's point of view is likely to be the one concerning the sentence length. It is important to pay attention to the sentence lengths particularly on websites as the browsers do not systematically read everything

on websites. It is, however, important to bear in mind that it is not always necessary to keep the sentence length strictly between 15 and 20 words: some sentences can be shorter, consisting of only few words, and others may consist of more than 20 words and still be understandable and easy to read. The key word is, therefore, *the average*. If a text is throughout formed by long sentences, the readability of the text is likely to suffer. The following example (1) illustrates a case in which the average sentence length has been exceeded, which could lead into difficulties in understanding.

- (1) Expertise is our critical success factor achieved through the *[sic]* dynamic communication with our customers and forest owners and **feeding back their needs into our continuous improvement and research programmes** (IM 2011/Company Information).

Example (1) consists of 29 words which significantly exceeds the recommended sentence length (by 9 words). Particularly the latter part of the sentence, which is marked with bold type, makes the text relatively difficult to understand because the relation between *expertise* and *feeding back their needs* is not clear. The latter part of the sentence seems, thus, unconnected.

According to the 3rd guideline of Plain English, a text should not include unnecessary words. The example sentence (2) illustrates an extract from the material of this study in which a deviation from this guideline occurs.

- (2) We comply with all **environmental protection and work safety regulations**, and **other acts, ordinances and official regulations** relating to our business in an effort to minimize any detrimental impacts on nature, humans or ethical values (LT 2011/Company Information).

In Example (2) above, different synonyms and hyponyms for *regulation* have been used. The terms listed have somewhat similar meanings, and the word *regulations* has

even been mentioned twice in the sentence. In the Finnish source text, three different words were given, these being *lait* (*paragraphs of law*), *asetukset* (*regulations*) and *viranomaismääräykset* (*official regulations*). This indicates that often deviations from the 3rd guideline of Plain English result from systematically translating every word given in the source text.

According to the 4th guideline of Plain English, the active voice should be favoured. This does not mean that it would be relevant to eliminate all the passives in a document because the passive voice has a useful function when, for instance, an objective voice is needed or the agent is not relevant. Counting the passive percentage of the instances of the passive voice occurrences is merely a suggestion on how to create clearer documents for different readers. Example (3) below illustrates that using the passive may cause difficulties in understanding a sentence.

- (3) **Training is also used** to provide the prerequisites for improving quality (LT 2011/Company Information).

In Example (3), it remains questionable who is actually training whom. The passive voice can lead into misinterpretations especially when it is interference from the source language because the passive is used differently in Finnish and English⁵.

According to the 5th guideline of Plain English, one should prefer using lively verbs that can express well different actions. Lexical translationese in verbs and using verbs with a highly general semantic meaning may result in deviations from this guideline, as the following Example (4) illustrates.

⁵ In Finnish, both transitive and intransitive verbs can occur in the passive, whereas in English, only transitive verbs can take the passive. Moreover, the Finnish passive has an object in the accusative, not a subject in the nominative as in English. (Crystal et al. 1990: 109–110.) These are to mention only few differences between the Finnish and English passive.

- (4) The most recent expansion of the pole business **was** in spring 2008 when Iivari Mononen purchased the pole business of Pylväsjaakko Oy at Ylämylly (IM 2011/Company Information).

In example (4), the verb *be* is used which bears semantically a highly general meaning. This illustrates that even the word choice can affect readability, and verbs with concrete and clear meanings should be favoured in order to express actions explicitly.

Using accurate punctuation makes a text easier to read and to follow, and deviations from the 11th guideline can, therefore, affect readability. Grammatically correct punctuation, and especially the use of commas, is challenging when translating texts from Finnish into English because the rules concerning the use of commas differs significantly between the two languages. In Finnish, the correct way of using commas is strictly governed by syntactic rules, but in English, a comma is used when there would be a small pause in speech (Chesterman, Korpimies, Lento, Sandlund, Varantola, Binham & Rantanen 1990: 7). The example sentence (5) illustrates that errors in the use of commas may slightly affect readability.

- (5) Towards the end of the 1940's [*sic*] the rebuilding of post war Europe increased the demand for timber from Finland (IM 2011/Company Information).

In Example (5), a comma is missing after the introductory phrase *Towards the end of the 1940's*. It is, however, important to note that inserting a comma after an introductory phrase is not a definite rule in English, and it cannot, therefore, be regarded as a major breach of the target language system, but using the comma in this case can ease the reading process as the introductory phrase is relatively long.

There are several other guidelines in the section of *Style and Grammar* which are not relevant for the present study because deviations from them are not considered to be in

connection with translationese or ELF. Deviations from the 2nd guideline (*Use words readers are likely to understand*) are not studied as it would have been difficult, if even possible, to define and limit the exact target group of the corporate websites, and it is not, therefore, possible to estimate which words could be misunderstood by the readers because familiarity with different specific terms is likely to vary between the readers. Furthermore, the remaining eight guidelines in this section relate to the style and not to the grammar, and they are not, therefore, of further interest in the present study.

The section *Preparing and Planning* contains the 14th guideline which is “Plan before you write.” (Cutts 2004: 17–18). Planning is important before starting the actual writing process, and this guideline applies also to any translation process. This guideline is not, however, of further interest in the present study. Section *Organizing the Information* consists of two guidelines of which the 15th guideline is, however, of interest in this study.

15. **Organize your material in a way that helps readers to grasp the important information early and to navigate through the document easily.**
16. Consider different ways of setting out your information. (Cutts 2004: 17–18.)

Deviations from the 15th guideline are of interest when they occur on the syntactic level, that is, mainly in the word order in a sentence. There are significant differences in the word order between Finnish and English⁶, and when the word order of the Finnish source text has been used in the English target text, the readability of the text may suffer. Such a case is illustrated in Example (6) below.

⁶ In English, the basic word order is Subject – Verb – Object / Complement – Adverbial (though the place of the adverbial can alter (Chesterman et al. 1990: 13). In Finnish, word order expresses different nuances and emphases without changing the meaning of a sentence (Nykyajan kielenopas, Contemporary language guide 2012).

- (6) Proof [*sic*] of this is the long-term relationships with industrial end users and builders [*sic*] merchants (SK 2011/Company Information).

In the example sentence (6), the word order of the Finnish source text has been followed, and this had resulted in an awkward information structure in a sentence which may have a negative effect on readability of the sentence because the object precedes the verb (*is*) and the subject (*the long-term relationships with industrial end users and builders [sic] merchants*).

The remaining sections of Plain English guidelines include *Management of Writing* (the 17th guideline), *Plain English for Specific Purposes: e-mails, instructions and legal documents* (the 18th, 19th and 20th guidelines) and *Layout* (the 21st guideline). These are:

17. Manage colleagues' writing carefully and considerately to boost their morale and effectiveness.
18. Take as much care with e-mails as you would with the rest of your writing.
19. Devote special effort to producing lucid and well-organized instructions.
20. Apply Plain English techniques to legal documents such as insurance policies, care-hire agreements, laws and wills.
21. Use clear layout to present your plain words in an easily accessible way. (Cutts 2004: 17–18.)

The above mentioned guidelines are not of further interest in the present study because they are relatively abstract and do not give any concrete instructions for writing in a simple and understandable manner. Although deviations from the 21st guideline are not included in this study, it is important to note that a meaningful layout is essential, particularly on websites because reading habits differ between reading printed and online material as when reading material online, browsers do not usually systematically read everything but choose the needed information (Addison 2004: 34).

In the following chapter, the features of ELF and translationese on the corporate websites are analysed, and the resulting texts are compared with the six guidelines of Plain English considered relevant for the present study. When suggesting more fluent translations in cases of translationese, Chesterman's (1996) translation techniques are employed.

4 ELF AND TRANSLATIONESE ON THE CORPORATE WEBSITES

In the present study, features of ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) and those of lexical and syntactic translationese on the websites of five Finnish medium-sized export companies (*Iivari Mononen Oy*, *Laine-Tuotanto Oy*, *Merivaara Oy*, *Suomen Kuitulevy Oy* and *Vexve Oy*) have been identified and analysed. It can be assumed that the linguistic aim of the companies has been to reach the form of EFL (English as a Foreign Language), that is, native-like language usage, and follow the guidelines of Plain English on their corporate websites, but deviations from these have, nevertheless, occurred, these being features of translationese and ELF.

Seidlhofer's model (qtd. in Jenkins 2004: 65) was used as the backbone for identifying the features of ELF on the corporate websites. The model was complemented with Jenkins' (2006: 64), Aaltonen's (2006: 211) and Ranta's (2006: 95–116) research findings: Jenkins considers also creativity, and Aaltonen regards the innovative use of English modifiers and qualifiers as features of ELF. In addition, Ranta regards the exaggerated use of the progressive form as a feature of ELF.

House's model (1977: 57) of overtly erroneous errors was, then, used for identifying translationese on the lexical and syntactic levels. Distinguishing ELF and translationese can be difficult, but a feature was considered an ELF feature when a corresponding feature did not occur in the Finnish source text but as separate from the source text, and it could not, therefore, be regarded as translationese. The features of ELF and translationese were, then, compared with the six Plain English guidelines considered relevant for the present study. When cases of translationese are discussed, more fluent translations are provided using the translation techniques introduced by Chesterman (1996: 4–5).

Features of ELF on the corporate websites are discussed in subchapter 4.1, and translationese is, then, discussed in subchapter 4.2. Features of ELF and translationese in relation to Plain English guidelines are discussed in subchapter 4.3. Chapter 4.1 is further

divided into subsections depending on the complexity of the features of ELF, that is, the level of deviation from the standard language norms. Some features are only slight deviations from Standard English, whereas others are more severe, that is, they are more likely to lead into difficulties in understanding. For instance, the misuse of articles is a relatively minor deviation from the rules of standard language and does not lead into difficulties in understanding, whereas, for instance, the misuse of the progressive form can, in some cases, cause difficulties in understanding and is, therefore, analysed separately. Chapter 4.2 is equally further divided into two subsections as lexical and syntactic translationese are discussed separately. Chapter 4.3 is also divided into two subsections of which ELF features in relation to Plain English are discussed in the first section and cases of translationese in the latter section.

The opening sites, the company information sites and the product information sites have formed the data of the present study and the subchapters are, therefore, constructed so that it has been possible to make systematic comparisons between different pages on the corporate websites throughout the analysis. The aim of the opening sites is to briefly introduce the company, its business idea(s) and the products the company manufactures and sells. The opening sites consisted, thus, of only small amounts of text, and it is not, therefore, surprising that only a few cases of ELF and translationese could be identified in these parts of the websites. Moreover, it has been assumed that the opening sites are the main focus of investment for the companies, and more attention is paid to the language used on them than to that used on the other sites because it is mainly the opening site that aims at giving a positive first impression of the company to potential customers: if information on the opening sites is clearly presented and well-organised, the customer is more likely to become interested also in the other parts of the websites. In addition, it is also likely that the opening sites do not require as frequent changes or updating to its contents as the other parts of the websites because business ideas, introduced often on the opening sites, undergo significant changes only rarely. ELF and translationese were, thus, significantly more common on the company information and product information sites than on the opening sites.

Although the contents of corporate websites vary, a webpage that contains a description about the company itself and about its historical framework can usually be found on all websites. This has also been the case with the material of the present study. The website that contains information about the company usually includes information about the development of the company, its origins, and the values of the company although there were some minor differences in the information and the layout between the websites. Whereas the opening sites were used as the catcher of attention and interest, the company information sites were used more as 'mission statement' (Kelly-Holmes 2005: 80). The function of particularly the company information sites is to state what the company represents and stands for, and it was often the case that a separate subsection had been devoted to introduce the values of the company.

The product information sites are, then, the most practical part of the corporate websites as their purpose is to provide detailed information about the products the company manufactures and sells. These sites are, therefore, used mainly as a promotional tool rather than as a mission statement because they often resemble printed brochures or catalogues of the products. These sites require frequent changes because they need to be updated every time the company adds new products, discontinues another product-line, or when something in the production processes changes. For this reason, it was assumed that particularly the product information sites are not always sent for a translation agency to be translated by language professionals, but are often updated by people working in marketing and communications departments of the company. The language on these sites often has only a minor role because the products are usually the main focus of attention: the texts on the product information sites are often list-like and consist, therefore, of incomplete sentences and of other deviations from the standard language norms. The English versions of the corporate websites were often constructed in cooperation with translation or advertising agencies and the employees of the company who have Finnish as their mother tongue. The corporate websites form, thus, a fruitful setting for the emergence of ELF and translationese.

4.1 Features of ELF on the corporate websites

ELF is mainly used as a neutral means of communication between non-native speakers of English, typically in non-native speaker settings. It has several distinctive features: the omission of the third person present tense *-s*, confusion between the relative pronouns *who* and *which*, errors in the usage of definite and indefinite articles, errors in tag questions, errors in the use of prepositions, overuse of verbs with high semantic generality, replacement of infinitive constructions with *that*-clauses and exaggerated explicitness (Seidlhofer qtd. in Jenkins 2004: 64). Moreover, Jenkins (2006: 64) includes creativity and Aaltonen (2006: 211) the innovative use of English modifiers and qualifiers as ELF features. Moreover, Ranta regards (2006: 95–116) also the exaggerated use of the progressive form as a feature of ELF.

Features of ELF occurred on two of the companies' opening sites, and altogether 7 cases of ELF were identified there. The misuse of a preposition, the misuse of an indefinite article and that of a definite article were the most common features of ELF identified on the opening sites, each occurring 2 times. In a single case, an innovative use of an English qualifier occurred, this being regarded here as a feature of ELF rather than as lexical translationese as there was no corresponding qualifier in the Finnish source text.

Features of ELF were significantly more common on the company information sites than on the opening sites, which is not surprising since the amount of text on the company information sites was notably higher. Different features of ELF were identified on all of the company information sites. Altogether 62 cases, in which different features of ELF occurred, were identified. The most common feature of ELF on the company information sites was the misuse of a preposition (in 20 cases), the second most common feature of ELF was the confusion in the usage of the definite article *the* (in 17 cases), and the third most common feature of ELF was the misuse of the indefinite article *a/an* (in 12 cases). The other features of ELF, identified on the company information sites, were more infrequent, and these included the misuse of the progressive, or *-ing* form (in

7 cases), and the usage of a verb with a highly general meaning (in 4 cases). In one case, what Jenkins has called *creativity* (2004: 64–65), occurred on the lexical level.

On the product information sites, different features of ELF were identified altogether in 106 cases. The number of ELF features varied, however, significantly between the websites of different companies. For instance, the misuse of the definite article occurred on all of the websites, varying between 2 and 26 cases. It is important to note here that there are differences between the product information sites between the companies: some provided only short lists of the available products (LT, VX), whereas others provided more detailed information (IM, MV, SK). The product information sites of some companies were list-like, whereas others had used complete sentences. In the latter case, features of ELF were notably more frequent. The misuse of the definite article was, however, the most common feature of ELF on the product information sites (identified in 37 cases), and the second most common feature was the misuse of the indefinite article (in 33 cases). The extended usage of the progressive form was also relatively common, occurring in 19 cases, and the incorrect usage of a preposition was more infrequent on the product information sites than on the company information sites, occurring only in 11 cases. The innovative usage of an English modifier or qualifier occurred in 4 cases, and lexical creativity was identified in 2 cases. Different features of ELF and their frequency on the corporate websites are outlined in Table 1 on the following page.

	Opening sites	Company information sites	Product information sites
Errors in the use of definite articles	2	17	37
Errors in the use of indefinite articles	2	12	33
Errors in the use of prepositions	2	20	11
Misuses of the progressive forms	-	7	19
Innovative uses of qualifiers/modifiers	1	-	4
Verbs with highly general meanings	-	4	-
Errors in the use of relative pronouns	-	1	3
Creativity	-	1	2

Table 1. Features of ELF on the corporate websites

When the findings in the different parts of the corporate websites are combined, it becomes evident that linguistic elements that are not present as such in the source language tend cause most of the deviations. For instance, articles are not used in the Finnish language, and instead of prepositions, noun cases are indicated by using different suffixes. It is, therefore, typical that the source language is reflected in the target text in different ways, either as features of ELF or as translationese. It is not necessarily easy to distinguish between the two. This is largely because the setting requirements cannot be determined according to those required to the occurrence of ELF and translation. Here, the model for features of ELF introduced by Seidlhofer (qtd. In Jenkins 2004: 64) has simply been followed.

4.1.1 Basic features of ELF

When the misuses of indefinite and definite articles are summed up, it can be said that *article misuse* forms unquestionably the most common ELF feature on the corporate websites (altogether in 96 cases). It is, however, important to note that there were signif-

icant differences between the companies' websites because the amount of text in general varied between different companies: some of the companies provided only basic information on their corporate websites, whereas others gave more specific information, and the amount of text was, therefore, higher on the websites of these companies. The misuse of the indefinite article *a* is illustrated in example (7), and example (8) illustrates a case in which the definite article *the* is missing in front of the noun.

- (7) Continual improvement is **a** [*sic*] cornerstone of our quality efforts (LT 2011/Company Information).
- (8) From 1998, \emptyset majority ownership of the Company has been in the hands of Management [...] (SK 2011/Company Information)

Examples (7) and (8) illustrate typical cases in which the incorrect article usages occur. As the example sentence (7) shows, the indefinite article *a* has been used in a case in which the definite article *the* would have been the grammatically correct choice. In example (8), then, the definite article *the* is entirely missing in front of the noun *majority*. Although these features are clear deviations from the grammar rules of Standard English, they are obviously too minor to make the texts difficult to understand as Jenkins (2004: 64) points out.

The second most common feature of ELF on the corporate sites was *the misuse of a preposition*. Such cases are illustrated in Examples (9), (10) and (11) below. On the opening sites, this feature occurred twice, on the company information sites in 20 cases and on the product information sites altogether in 11 cases. Although the amount of text on the product information sites varied between the companies, the number of misuses considering the use of a preposition remained relatively stable between the companies' websites.

- (9) We aim **for** [*sic*] using the best technology available in our production [...] (IM 2011/Company Information).
- (10) Vexve's valves are imported **for** [*sic*] over 30 countries around the world. (VX 2011/Company Information).
- (11) Ø Testing **of** [*sic*] the products, delivery to the final destination and [...] (LT 2011/Product Information).

As Example (9) illustrates, the preposition *for* is used when the grammatically correct preposition would have been *at*, since the verb that precedes the preposition is *to aim* which always requires the preposition *at*. It was relatively common that misuses of prepositions occurred in situations in which a verb that always requires the use of a certain preposition was used with an incorrect preposition. Particularly the verb *to aim* was often used on the corporate websites and preposition misuses occurred relatively often with this verb.

In Example (10), the preposition *for* is used when the verb used in the sentence is *import* and usually requires either the preposition *to* or *in* when the grammar rules of Standard English are followed. The example sentence (11), then, illustrates a case in which the preposition *of* is used when no preposition is required in the sentence. If the preposition *of* were used, it should have required the article *the* in front of the word *testing*. The mistake can thus have two explanations. The above examples illustrate that choosing the grammatically correct preposition is difficult for people who speak Finnish as their mother tongue because, instead of prepositions, different suffixes are used in the Finnish language to indicate the case of the noun. Regardless of these being instances of clear grammatical deviations, they are generally unproblematic and not usually obstacles for understanding the sentences (Jenkins 2004: 64) as only in one case, the misuse of a preposition could be seen to lead into a possible misunderstanding. This case is illustrated in the example sentence (12) below.

- (12) Vexve participates in this project as a one *[sic]* primary contributor, *[sic]* as freedom **of** smoke and cleanness are *[sic]* company's primary values (VX 2011/Company Information).

The above example sentence is taken from an extract in which one of the companies, Vexve Oy, describes the reasons for sponsoring certain projects. In this case, it remains unclear whether the company promotes the freedom to smoke or supports being a non-smoker. The correct preposition would have been *from*, or alternatively, the word *non-smoking* could have simply been used in this case. It should be, however, taken into account that when the misuse of a preposition occurs, it is usually the context that prevents any serious misunderstandings. There are, however, more complex features which might lead into misunderstandings or have at least a negative effect on readability. These are further analysed in the following subsection.

4.1.2 Complex features of ELF

Innovative use of the English modifiers and qualifiers can derive from following an overtly literal translation strategy, but the two following examples illustrate that the feature can, in some cases, be categorised as ELF although Jenkins (2004) does not single out this feature. On the opening sites, innovative use of the English modifiers and qualifiers occurred in one case and 4 times on the product information sites as illustrated in Examples (13) and (14):

- (13) Merivaara is well-known for its high quality products, **practical** usability and [...] (MV 2011/Opening Site)
- (14) [...] has created a whole new, **revolutionary** hospital bed with [...] (MV 2011/Product Information)

In Example (13), the noun *usability* bears a relatively concrete function in itself, and the adjective *practical* is, therefore, redundant. This cannot be categorised as lexical transla-

tionese in this case because the English websites of Merivaara Oy are not translations from the Finnish websites, and there is no corresponding sentence on the Finnish website. A similar feature is also illustrated in the example sentence (14) in which the qualifier *revolutionary* has been inserted before the noun *hospital bed*. This is a relatively strong collocation in this particular context and would hardly occur in a native-speaker setting. The above examples indicate that the innovative usage of the English modifiers and qualifiers can be seen as a feature of ELF when they are not translations from the Finnish source text, but more systematic studies are needed on the subject.

Although Seidlhofer (2004) and Jenkins (2004) do not categorize *the extended use of the progressive form*, or *-ing form*, as a feature of ELF, it is regarded as such in the present study when the progressive form does not occur in the Finnish version and cannot, therefore, be regarded as interference from the source text. Although all scholars do not regard it as a feature of ELF, Ranta (2006) considers it such. Significantly, the extended use of the progressive form was relatively frequent both on the company information sites (identified in 7 cases) and on the product information sites (in 19 cases). Examples (15), (16) and (17) illustrate cases in which they have occurred. Three examples are given here to indicate that the progressive serves several functions as it can be used, for instance, in front of a noun as an adjective, as a gerund, in non-finite clauses or as an aspect of a verb, indicating actions happening at the time of speaking (present progressive) or actions that were in progress at special time in past (past progressive) (Greenbaum & Quirk 1990: 53–54, 133, 286).

- (15) Vexve has earned its place on the [*sic*] top of the business area due to its innovative engineering and product development, **using** automatic product lines and **employing** professional staff (VX 2011/Company Information).
- (16) **Changing** bulb is quick and requires no tools (MV 2011/Product Information).

- (17) The presswork products **aid developing** our service vision and ensure flexible material flow in the assembly department (LT 2011/Company Information).

In the example sentence (15), two cases of exaggerated use of the progressive form occur in the latter part of the sentence. It remains questionable, whether the progressive forms are used because the phrase *due to* has been used in the main clause, or whether the latter part of the clause, *using automatic product lines and employing professional staff*, is intended to be understood as a separate non-finite clause. Whichever the original meaning, a more easily understandable choice would have been to simply omit the progressive verb forms, as in *Vexve has earned its place on top of the business due to innovative engineering and product development, automatic product lines and professional staff*.

The example sentence (16), then, illustrates a further case which could lead into slight difficulties in understanding. The progressive form *changing* has been used to inform the reader that the bulb can be easily replaced, but at first reading, the sentence could be understood as if the bulb would somehow change itself as the *-ing* form precedes the noun, *bulb*. Clearly this is not the intended meaning of the sentence but illustrates that using the progressive form could, in certain settings, cause slight misunderstandings. As ELF features “appear to be generally unproblematic and no obstacle to communication” (Jenkins 2004: 64), it remains debatable whether the extended use of the progressive could be included as a feature of ELF.

The extended use of the progressive form does not, however, automatically lead into difficulties in understanding as the example sentence (17) illustrates. In this case, the verb phrase *aid developing* has been used instead of the infinitive verb structure, *help to develop*. Although the progressive in this particular example is relatively unconventionally used, this does not mean that the sentence would be difficult to understand. It seems that the exaggerated use of the progressive form can cause difficulties only in certain contexts. Because the *-ing* form has several functions, it remains debatable whether it

can unambiguously be categorised as a feature of ELF in written contexts if the criterion is that it should not lead into difficulties in understanding.

Using a verb with a highly general meaning was also detected on the company information sites in 4 cases, but no such instances occurred on the product information sites. It is likely that the different forms and structures used on the product information sites explain why this feature did not occur: as described above in section 4, the product information sites consisted to a great extent of different product and product characteristics lists. According to Seidlhofer (qtd. in Jenkins 2004: 64), verbs such as *do*, *have*, *make*, *put* and *take* can be categorised as belonging to this verb group. On the corporate websites in the present study, the verbs that were regarded as bearing semantically high general meanings, included *use*, *be*, *have* and *go*. Although all of these are not the verbs Seidlhofer singles out, they were regarded as belonging to this group as well. The following two example sentences demonstrate this.

- (18) The most recent expansion of the pole business **was** in spring 2008 when [...] (IM 2011/Company Information).
- (19) [...] the company **had** its 50th anniversary and [...] (VX 2011/Company Information).

In the example sentence (18), the verb with a highly general meaning is *was*. An alternative verb with a more narrow semantic meaning could have been, for instance, *took place*. In the example sentence (19), the verb *have* has been used when a semantically more precise option could have been *celebrated*. This verb was, however, already used in the headline of the article in which the above sentence occurs, and the writer might have wanted to avoid repeating the same verb again in the text. Although these verbs carry a semantically general meaning, using them does not lead into misunderstandings.

Using these verbs cannot be regarded as lexical translationese either as there are no corresponding verbs used on the Finnish company information sites, but the influence of

the source language can still be detected in the above examples. The verb used on the Finnish website for Example (18) was *tapahtui* (*happened*) and the verb phrase used on the Finnish websites for Example (19) was *täytti 50 vuotta* (*turned 50*). Significantly, the verbs *be* and *have* both translate into the homonym *olla* in Finnish, and using them in the above example sentences would have been more acceptable in Finnish which can explain their occurrence on the English company information sites.

Although cases of using *lexical creativity* was a relatively rare feature on the corporate websites, it is discussed here because it became evident that there are two types of lexical creativity: in certain cases, the word was *transparent*, that is, although it is not used as such in Standard English, it is not difficult to understand the meaning of it, and in other cases, the word was *opaque*, that is, it is difficult to determine the meaning of the word without seeing the context. For instance, the words *error-free* and *shadowless* occurred on the corporate websites. Although these words are not used in Standard English, it is easy to see what is meant by them: *error-free* refers to *flawless* and *shadowless* to *the lack of a shadow*. *Machineability* is, however, an opaque word. This word was used as a subheading in a text (SK 2011) which made its meaning even harder to understand since the sentence context was missing. It referred to the property of a certain wood type which can be easily processed with different machines. These instances of lexical creativity illustrate that it can lead into misunderstandings when the word used is opaque.

Distinguishing ELF and translationese from each other can sometimes be difficult which is not surprising because the origins of both of the phenomena lie in the interference of the mother tongue of the speaker or, in this case, writer. A deviation from the standard language norms was classified as a feature of ELF when a corresponding feature did not occur in the Finnish source text. When a corresponding word or a form of sentence occurred in the source text, it was regarded as a result of following an overtly literal translation strategy, that is, translationese which is discussed in the following section.

4.2 Features of translationese on the corporate websites

Translationese derives from following an overtly literal translation strategy, and it refers to the interference or translucence of the source language in the target text (Gellerstam 1985: 88). Translationese is not incorrect translation as such since usually the reader is able to understand the intended meaning of a text, but it undoubtedly affects readability of a text by resulting in atypical target language words and sentence structures. In the present study, *lexical translationese* is defined as overtly literal or unorthodox translations of words, terms, and idioms, whereas *syntactic translationese* refers to following the sentence patterns and the grammar rules of the source language in the target text. Syntactic translationese affects, therefore, the fluency of entire sentences, whereas lexical translationese appears in smaller text units. Although the terms lexical and syntactic translationese are not used as such by translation scholars, I have used them to indicate that translationese can occur on two levels.

The cases of translationese were identified by using the model introduced by House (1977: 57) for overtly erroneous errors which can be *wrong translations* (i.e. substitutions consisting of either wrong *selections* or wrong *combinations* of elements, *omissions* (i.e. words or expressions that are left untranslated), *additions* (i.e. adding unnecessary words or information) and *breaches of the target language system* (i.e. cases of ungrammaticality or cases of dubious acceptability). When suggesting more fluent translations in the cases of translationese, the translation techniques of *transposition*, *deverbalization*, *iconicity* and *relevance*, introduced by Chesterman (1996: 4–5) are employed.

It was not unusual that lexical and syntactic translationese occurred in the same sentence, but it is relatively straightforward to separate them from each other. For this reason, lexical translationese is first discussed in subsection 4.2.1 and syntactic translationese in subsection 4.2.2. The subsections have been constructed in such a way as to make comparisons between different parts of the corporate websites (i.e. the opening sites, the company information sites and the product information sites). When providing

examples of translationese, the English target text version is given first, and the Finnish source text is given underneath it. The abbreviation TT refers to the target text and the abbreviation ST marks the source text. The abbreviation BT refers to my back-translations, and these are provided when necessary.

Altogether, lexical translationese occurred 107 times and syntactic translationese was identified in 26 cases. On the opening sites, lexical translationese occurred in 4 cases and syntactic translationese was identified in only one case; on the company information sites, lexical translationese was identified in 42 cases and syntactic translationese in 15 cases, and on the product information sites, lexical translationese occurred in 26 cases and syntactic translationese was identified in 10 cases. Cases of translationese were, thus, most common on the company information sites. This is not a surprising finding since the amount of text was highest on the company information sites. The product information sites consisted mainly of incomplete sentences as different product lists were common in these parts of the websites, and this further explains why syntactic translationese was not as frequent as it was on company information sites. The frequency of lexical and syntactic translationese is illustrated in Table 2 below.

	Opening sites	Company information sites	Product information sites
Lexical translationese	4	42	26
Syntactic translationese	1	15	10

Table 2. Features of translationese on the corporate websites

4.2.1 Lexical translationese

The cases of lexical translationese identified on the opening sites were lexical translationese in an idiomatic expression (in one case), in verb choice (in 2 cases) and in using

an unnecessary word in a noun phrase which was clear interference from the source text (in one case). On the company information sites, lexical translationese was identified in the verb choice (in 11 cases), in the noun choice (in 9 cases), in using unnecessary words in noun phrases (in 8 cases), in the verb tense (in 5 cases) and in the translation of modifiers and qualifiers (in 5 cases). On the product information sites, cases of lexical translationese were identified in the usage of unnecessary words (in 9 cases), in noun choice (in 7 cases), in verb choice (in 8 cases), in the translation of modifiers and qualifiers (in 3 cases) and once in an idiomatic expression as well as in the verb tense used. Different forms of translationese and their frequency is illustrated in Table 3 below.

	Opening sites	Company information sites	Product information sites
Translationese in idiomatic expressions	1	-	1
Translationese in verb choices	2	11	8
Translationese as unnecessary words	1	8	9
Translationese in noun choices	-	9	7
Translationese in verb tenses	-	5	1
Translationese in modifiers / qualifiers	-	5	3

Table 3. Different forms of lexical translationese on the corporate websites

Lexical translationese was most common in *the translation of verbs*. On the opening sites, this was identified in 2 cases. On the company information sites, this feature occurred in 11 cases, and on the product information sites, incorrect translation of a verb was identified in 8 cases. Such cases are illustrated in the example sentences (20), (21) and (22) below. Since verbs were the most common category of lexical translationese, I

have provided three examples where lexical translationese in verbs occurs in different contexts.

- (20) TT: Since those days, the company **has experienced** various expansions in addition to a name change [...]

ST: Noista ajoista yritys **on** nimenmuutoksen lisäksi **kokenut** monenmoisia laajennuksia [...] (LT 2011/Opening site.)

- (21) TT: The development of Vesiverto apartment-based watermetering system **started** in the early 1980s.

ST: Vesiverron vedenmittausjärjestelmien kehitystyö **aloitettiin** 1980-luvulla [...] (VX 2011/Company information.)

- (22) TT: The welding facilities, technology and machinery **grew** significantly, which [...]

ST: Hitsaukseen tarvittavat toimitilat, tekniikat ja konekanta **laajentuivat** merkittävästi ja [...] (LT 2011/Company Information.)

In the example sentence (20), the verb *kokea* has been translated into *experience*. Although the verb *kokea* can, in most cases, be translated into *experience*, in this particular context, the verb *undergo* would have been a more appropriate choice since the verb refers here to *a company*, which is an inanimate noun. A more fluent translation could, therefore, be *Since then, the company has undergone various expansions, and the name of the company has also been changed*. By employing the translation technique of deverbalization (i.e. expressing the meaning of the source text in one's own words), a more fluent translation can, thus, be reached, but as deverbalization is a more comprehensive technique, having an effect on the syntactic level, it is dealt more within syntactic translationese.

In the example sentence (21), the verb *aloittaa* has been translated into *start*. The verb *aloittaa* can, indeed, be translated with *start*, but when the context of the word is taken

into account, it becomes evident that in this particular case, the verb *begin* would have been a more appropriate alternative as there is, again, a slight difference in meaning between the two verbs. *Start* is usually used when describing the beginning of an activity or a movement, whereas *begin* is used when referring to taking the first step, for example, in a process (CDO 2011); *start* describes, thus, physical actions, whereas *begin* is used to describe more abstract functions. The choice between these verbs is difficult, and confusion between these verbs on the corporate websites was not unusual.

In example (22), the verb that is used is *laajentua* (*widen/extend*) and can, in certain cases, be translated also into *grow*. In this particular case, the words to which the verb refers are *the welding facilities*, *technology* and *machinery*, and the same verb cannot be used to refer to the expansion or development of all of these nouns. The verb phrase *expand* could be used in reference to *the welding facilities*, the verb *develop* with *technology*, and when referring to machinery, the phrase *the number of* should be inserted before the noun *machinery*, and the verb used should, thus, be *increase*. This illustrates that one verb cannot necessarily be used with different nouns. Although one verb is used in the source text when referring to all the nouns, the translator is allowed to make the target text more illustrative and fluent than the original. A more fluent translation could, thus, be *Since technology has developed, the welding facilities have been expanded and the number of machinery has been increased, [---]*.

On the basis of House's definition of overtly erroneous errors (1977), lexical translationese in verbs can be categorised as *wrong translations*, and more specifically, as wrong *combinations of elements* because the verbs used are not incorrect as such but cannot be combined with the nouns in the sentences. It can, therefore be argued that although lexical translationese in verbs can be regarded as translation errors, they do not usually cause difficulties in understanding the particular sentence. The high frequency of lexical translationese in verbs on the corporate websites illustrates that the translators are not necessarily familiar with the target language system. The context defines which word from a wide range of options is the best alternative. The prevailing and bothersome general assumption is that *knowing the language* is all one needs to be able to translate, but frequent cases of lexical translationese in the verb choice demonstrate that

this is not the case: translation is not just replacing the source text words with words in the target language, but knowledge of the underlying rules of the target language and understanding the context are also important in order to be able to translate fluently. This is the case especially when the target text is not the mother tongue of the translator.

In addition to lexical translationese in the translation of verbs, it also occurred in *the verb tenses* used on one of the companies' company information sites. This feature did not, however, occur on the opening sites and was identified only once on the product information sites. Lexical translationese in the verb tense occurred on two of the corporate websites, and it was categorised as confusion between the present and the future tenses in each case. In Finnish, the present tense can be expressed in the same way as the future tense as the example sentence (23) below illustrates, and for this reason, the confusion between the present and future tenses is regarded as lexical translationese.

(23) TT: We **will** in our business activities **minimize** any detrimental impacts on the environment, [...]

ST: **Minimoimme** toiminnassamme haitalliset vaikutukset ympäristöön [...] (LT 2011/Company Information)

Although it becomes clear from the context, it is not definite whether the tense in the Finnish source text is meant to be understood as the present or future tense: it is likely that the company describes their current manufacturing policy and not some new policy that will be followed sometime in the future. Furthermore, this example is an extract from a subsection which was titled as *Quality policy* which illustrates, therefore, undoubtedly the current quality policy of the company. When House's model of overtly erroneous errors is applied here, the confusion between the present and future tenses can be seen as *a wrong translation*, and more specifically, as *a wrong selection* because the future tense has been selected instead of the present tense. The reader of the target text may be confused by the use of the future tense, and it may remain unclear for the reader

whether the described quality policy is currently used or not, but usually the context helps to see beyond mistakes in the verb tenses.

Lexical translationese occurred also in the way certain *modifiers and qualifiers* had been translated. On the company information sites, this feature occurred altogether in 5 cases. On the company information sites, lexical translationese in modifiers and qualifiers was identified in 3 cases and in 2 cases on the product information sites. This feature usually derives from following an overtly literal translation strategy although it can, in certain cases, also be regarded as ELF. The example sentences (24) and (25) below illustrate, however, cases in which this feature is regarded as lexical translationese because corresponding words can be identified in the Finnish source texts.

(24) TT: We seek to **innovatively** and **comprehensively** develop our business practises, [...]

ST: Pyrimme kehittämään toimintaamme **innovatiivisesti** ja **kokonaisvaltaisesti**, [...] (LT 2011/Company Information.)

(25) TT: **Revolutionary** innovations in machinery: [...]

ST: Konekannan **mullistava** uudistus: [...] (LT 2011/Company Information)

Example (24) illustrates a case in which two strong qualifiers occur in the same sentence. These are overtly literal translations from *innovatiivisesti* and *kokonaisvaltaisesti*. Significantly, as the verb *develop* bears a positive meaning as such, it is not even necessary to translate these qualifiers: the meaning of the sentence would remain the same even without their translations.

In Example (25), the qualifier *revolutionary* has been used as a translation from the adjective *mullistava*. Although this is not an incorrect translation as such, it bears, however, a relatively strong meaning, and a more appropriate alternative could be, for instance

ground-breaking. Qualifiers and modifiers are common in Finnish promotional texts, but using direct translations for them in the English target text can often result in lexical translationese.

When considering House's categorisation of overtly erroneous errors (1977), lexical translationese in modifiers and qualifiers can be regarded as *wrong translations* and as *wrong combinations of elements* especially when they are used as adjectives because, when combined with other elements in the sentence, the resulting translation becomes relatively awkward. They do not, however, usually make the text difficult to understand. In Chesterman's terms (1996: 5), the translation technique of *relevance* could be employed in this case: the translator is allowed to omit unnecessary information, and as modifiers and qualifiers do not usually carry important information when used as adverbials, they can even be omitted as the task of the translator is to translate what is relevant which may mean omitting things occasionally (Chesterman 1996: 5).

Lexical translationese occurred relatively common as *using unnecessary words* as the example sentences (26) and (27) below illustrate.

- (26) TT: We will guide and educate our personnel about [*sic*] **environmental protection issues**.

ST: Opastamme ja koulutamme henkilökuntaamme **ympäristönsuojeluasioissa**. (LT 2011/Opening site.)

- (27) TT: [...] quality hardboard with a smooth face and a mesh pattern reverse, mainly used **for** [*sic*] building work, **packing industry**, DIY, temporary structures.

ST: [...] vakiolevy on helposti työstettävä ja monipuolinen kovalevy mm. puusepän- ja kalusteteollisuuden käyttöön, rakentamiseen ja **pakkausiin**. (SK 2011/Product Information)

In example sentence (26), the noun phrase, *environmental protection issues*, is a word-for-word translation from the Finnish compound *ympäristönsuojeluasiat*. In this case, the last part of the noun phrase, *issues*, is not, however, necessary, and the example illustrates that the source language has affected the target text, because in Finnish, the word *asiat* (*issues*) is indeed necessary. In Example (27), the noun *pakkauksiin* (*for packings*) has been translated into *for packing industry*. The term *industry* refers to the companies and activities that are involved in producing something (CDO 2011); *industry* refers, thus, to a broader process, while packing usually forms only a small part in different industries. The example sentence (27) illustrates, thus, a different case of using an unnecessary word than Example (26) as in the latter case, the word *industry* is not used in the source text.

According to House's categorisation of overtly erroneous errors (1977), this feature can be seen as a clear case of *addition* as unnecessary words have been added in both cases. One unnecessary word does not significantly degrade the readability of a single sentence, but represents still a deviation from the norms of a good translation. As Chesterman stresses (1996: 5), in order to avoid unwanted formal interference, the translator needs to express the meaning in the target text in her/his own words, that is, to use the technique of *deverbalization*. Although the benefits of using this technique are more visible when applied on the syntactic level, it can, in certain cases, be also used on the lexical level to achieve fluency. In addition, as it is not necessary to mechanically translate every word, the technique of *relevance* could be employed here as well: unnecessary words can be omitted to improve readability.

In addition to verbs, modifiers and qualifiers, and the use of unnecessary words, lexical translationese occurred also in *the translation of nouns*. On the opening sites, lexical translationese did not occur but was relatively common on the company information sites (in 9 cases) and on the product information sites (in 7 cases). The example sentences (28) and (29) below illustrate such cases.

(28) TT: [...] **the basic principles** of hardboard have remained the same.

ST: [...] kuitulevyn **perusidea** on säilynyt samana. (SK 2011/Company Information).

(29) TT: Creosoted wooden poles withstand bush fires without any serious loss of **strength**.

ST: Kreosoottipylväät kestävät hyvin ruohikkopaloja ilman suurta vaikutusta pylvään **kestävyyteen**. (IM 2011/Product Information.)

In Example (28) above, the Finnish compound *perusidea* (*basic idea*) has been translated into *basic principles* which illustrates a case of lexical translationese in a noun. The noun *perusidea* can, in certain contexts, be translated into *basic principles* but in this context, the noun, to which it refers, is inanimate, *hardboard*. It would be awkward to suggest that hardboard would have principles, and a more appropriate word could, therefore, be, for instance, *basic characteristics*. In the example sentence (29), the noun *kestävyys* (*durability*) has been translated into *strength*. *Strength* refers to the ability to perform things that require physical or mental efforts, or to the degree to which something is powerful (COD 2011). *Durability*, then, refers to the ability to last a long time without becoming damaged (COD 2011). These definitions demonstrate that a more appropriate word would have been *durability* because the noun to which the word refers here is inanimate, *wooden poles*.

According to House's categorisation of overtly erroneous errors (1977), lexical translationese in nouns can be seen as completely *wrong translations* and more specifically either as *wrong selections* or *wrong combinations of elements*, depending on the position of the word in the sentence. Example (28) showed a case of a wrong combination of elements as the noun (*basic principles*) forms an awkward combination with the other noun to which it is connected to (*hardboard*). In Example (29), a case of a wrong selection occurs as an incorrect noun (*strength*) has simply been selected. In the present study, each case of lexical translationese in nouns was not considered severe, that is, they were not seen as leading into serious misunderstandings.

It is not surprising why Newmark (1993: 141) has used the translator-oriented term *translatorese* to describe lexical translationese and the difficulty of choosing the best dictionary word from a vast range of options: the cases of lexical translationese in nouns, or *translatorese*, illustrate well that the translator makes a conscious choice when choosing a certain word above others, and the choice is not always the right one. The frequency of such cases on corporate websites indicated that the translators of corporate websites are not always familiar with the target language terms. It should be borne in mind that translation is not replacing words with target language counterparts because there are usually various synonyms in the target language for a single source text word. In this subsection, different cases of translationese on the word level have been analysed and their effect on understandability and readability has been discussed. In the following subsection, translationese that occurred on the sentence level as well as its impact on readability will be discussed and illustrated with examples.

4.2.2 Syntactic translationese

Syntactic translationese was identified by using House's model of overtly erroneous errors (1977: 57) of which the category of *breaches of the target language system*, that is, cases of *ungrammaticality* and those of *dubious acceptability*, was of particular interest in this section. Chesterman's (1996: 4–5) translation techniques of transposition, deverbalization, iconicity and relevance, were employed when suggesting more fluent translations in cases in which syntactic translationese was identified.

Cases of syntactic translationese were less common on the opening sites than on other parts of the corporate websites and could be identified in only one case. On the company information sites, syntactic translationese occurred in 16 cases and was identified in 15 cases on the product information sites. The case of syntactic translationese on the opening site, occurring in only one case, was an unorthodox use of a prepositional phrase that had lead into syntactic translationese. On the company information sites, syntactic translationese was detected in the word order (in 6 cases), in unusual noun structures that had resulted in syntactic translationese (in 6 cases), and once in using an

unorthodox prepositional phrase leading into syntactic translationese, in the use of the progressive, in passive and in the use of an impersonal subject. On the product information sites, syntactic translationese occurred in unusual noun structures (in 9 cases), in the word order (in 4 cases) and once in passive and in the use of the progressive form. Different forms of syntactic translationese and their frequencies are summed up in the following table. In what follows, the most common forms of syntactic translationese are discussed and illustrated with examples.

	Opening sites	Company information sites	Product information sites
Translationese in word order	-	6	4
Translationese in noun structures (resulting in syntactic translationese)	-	6	9
Translationese in progressive forms	-	1	1
Translationese in passive structures	-	1	1
Translationese in the use of the impersonal subject (resulting in syntactic translationese)	-	1	-
Translationese in prepositional phrases (resulting in syntactic translationese)	1	1	-
Punctuation errors	1	22	24

Table 4. Different forms of syntactic translationese on the corporate websites

Although punctuation errors are not usually seen as translation errors, they are analysed in connection with syntactic translationese because punctuation differs significantly between Finnish and English, and errors in punctuation can have a negative effect on

readability. In most cases, punctuation errors were errors in the use *the comma*, but also errors in the use of *hyphens* occurred, for instance, with certain proper nouns (e.g. Middle-East vs. Middle East) and in certain adjectives that require its usage (e.g. well known vs. well-known). Errors in the use of hyphens were, however, relatively rare and, therefore, not further discussed in the present study. They do, however, indicate that in addition to lexis and syntax, also punctuation rules of the source language, Finnish, have affected the resulting target texts. On the opening sites, punctuation errors were relatively infrequent and could be identified in only 2 cases on only one of the companies' opening site (SK 2011). On the company information sites, they were significantly more common (in 28 cases) as well as on the product information sites (in 35 cases).

Although lexical and syntactic translationese are discussed separately in the present study, this does not mean that they would not occur in same sentences. In such cases, the target text sentence is often relatively difficult to understand as the example sentence (30) below illustrates.

(30) TT: [...] and the painting line [...] was **changed at the start of 2000** to use water based paints.

ST: Maalauksessa **siirryttiin 2000-luvun alussa** käyttämään vesiohenteisia maaleja. (SK 2011/Company Information)

As Example (30) demonstrates, the sentence structure of the source language has strictly been followed as the passive structure used in the source text has been awkwardly applied to the target text as well. An overtly literal translation has resulted in a relatively awkward expression because the passive is used differently in Finnish and English. In Finnish, both transitive and intransitive verbs can be used in the passive, whereas in English, only transitive verbs, that can have a direct object, can take a passive. (Chesterman et al. 1990: 38.) As there is no direct object in the example sentence, the passive cannot be fluently used in English in this case. In addition, also lexical translationese can be identified in the translation of the noun *alussa* (*at the start*). As with the verbs

start and *begin*, there is a slight difference in meaning between these nouns. When referring to a certain decade, the noun *beginning* would be a more appropriate choice. As mentioned in the section of lexical translationese (4.2.1), this can be categorised as *a wrong translation* and as *a wrong combination of elements* in this case.

When applying House's categorisation of overtly erroneous error (1977: 57) to Example (30), the case of syntactic translationese can be seen as *a breach of the target language system* and more specifically as *a case of ungrammaticality* because a clear norm concerning the use of the passive in the target language has been violated. Chesterman (1996: 5) advises that the translator needs to arrive at the intended meaning of the source text, and that s/he should then express the meaning in her/his own words. Bearing the technique of deverbalization in mind, it is clear that there is no cogent reason for using the passive, and a more fluent translation of the example sentence (30) could be, for instance, *The company started to use water based paints in the painting line at the beginning of 2000.*

The most common case in which syntactic translationese occurred was when *the noun structure* in the source language had been literally translated. This feature did not occur on the opening sites, but it occurred 6 times on the company information sites and 9 times on the product information sites. This is illustrated in examples (31) and (32) below.

(31) TT: **Training is also used** to provide the prerequisites for improving quality.

ST: **Koulutuksella luomme** myös edellytykset laadun parantamiseen.
(LT 2011/Company Information.)

BT: **By training, we** create also the prerequisites for improving quality.

(32) TT: **Installation** is made simply by [*sic*] screws and bolts.

ST: [...] **kiinnitykset** voidaan tehdä yksinkertaisesti ruuveilla ja pulteilla.
(IM 2011/Product Information.)

BT: Installations can simply be done with screws and bolts.

In Example (31), the noun *koulutus* has been translated into *training*. This is not an incorrect translation as such, but it should be borne in mind it is not always necessary to translate nouns strictly into nouns (Chesterman 1996: 4). The example sentence above illustrates a literal translation of a noun structure that has led into syntactic translationese. Moreover, the active voice has been used, and the personal pronoun used is *we* in the source text, but in the target text, the sentence has been translated with the passive voice. This illustrates a case in which the use of the passive may lead into difficulties in understanding the sentence: it does not become clear, who is being trained and by whom. Similarly, in example (32), the noun *kiinnitykset* has been translated into a noun in the target language (*installation*), and this has led into syntactic translationese.

Both of the examples above illustrate a situation in which the noun could easily be changed into a verb in order to make the sentences more readable. Thus, the technique of *transposition* (i.e. changing the word class) could be employed (Chesterman 1996: 4). An alternative translation for the example sentence (31) would, therefore, be, for instance, *We offer training for the staff to create the prerequisites for quality improvement*, and the one for the example sentence (32) could simply be *The poles can be installed with screws and bolts*. It is important to note here that using the technique of transposition requires automatically employing the technique of *relevance* (Chesterman 1996: 5) as well since in Example (31), the noun *staff*, and in Example (32), the noun *poles* should be added into the sentences in order to make them more fluent. When analysed as overtly erroneous errors (House 1977: 57), cases such as these can be categorized as *breaches of the target language system* and more specifically as *cases of dubious acceptability* because, though not violating grammatical rules as such, they have resulted in relatively awkward translations. Although the readability of the sentences

will suffer, this form of syntactic translationese would not, however, lead into serious misunderstandings.

It is important to note here that Example (31) includes also the usage of a verb with a highly general semantic meaning (*to use*) which is regarded here as a feature of ELF because the verb does not occur in the source text. The example sentence (31) illustrates, thus, well the close relationship between translationese and ELF. Features of ELF occur, however, in lexis which facilitates distinguishing it from syntactic translationese.

The second most common feature of syntactic translationese was following *the word order of the source language*. Although this did not occur on the opening sites, it was identified in 6 cases on the company information sites and in 4 cases on the product information sites. As the word order in the Finnish language is more flexible than that in the English language, it is inevitable that using an overtly literal translation strategy results in syntactic translationese. Examples (33) and (34) below illustrate cases in which the word order of the source language has been followed.

- (33) TT: **Through quality cooperation with our suppliers and customers** we seek to continuously improve quality and our business activities.

ST: **Laatuyhteistyöllä toimittajiemme ja asiakkaittemme kanssa** tähtäämme jatkuvaan laadun ja toiminnan parantamiseen. (LT 2011/Company Information.)

- (34) TT: Ø **Proof of this** is the long-term relationships with industrial end users and builders [sic] merchants.

ST: **Tästä ovat osoituksena** pitkäaikaiset asiakassuhteet teollisten loppukäyttäjien ja rakennustarvikekaupan kanssa. (SK 2011/Company Information.)

In the basic word order in English, the subject of the sentence is mentioned first which is then followed by the verb, the object and the adverbial(s) (Chesterman et al. 1990:

13). In Example (33), the adverbial is, however, mentioned first, this being a clear deviation from the standard language norms. If the basic word order was followed, the translation would simply be *We seek to improve quality and our business activities continuously through quality cooperation with our suppliers and customers*. Thus, the readability of the target text sentence could easily be improved. In Example (34), the sentence begins with the object which is a clear deviation from the grammar rules of the target language. If the basic word order was followed, the translation of the sentence would simply be *Long-term relationships with industrial end users and building material trade are proofs of this*.

When analysed as a case of overtly erroneous error (House 1977: 57), the example sentences represent *breaches of the target language system* and *cases of ungrammaticality* because the sentences clearly violate the grammatical rule concerning the word order in the standard language. Moreover, simply by using the translation technique of *iconicity* (i.e. matching the order of information with the order of events described) (Chesterman 1996: 4), that is, altering the word order, the sentence could be made easier to read.

It is important to note that also using an unnecessary word (*quality*), which is a feature of lexical translationese, occurs in the example sentence (33) above. This phenomenon was discussed in chapter 4.2.1, but it demonstrates that it is not uncommon to detect both lexical and syntactic translationese in the same sentence. In addition, in Example (34), the plural form of the noun (*proofs*) would be required when used as the subject of a plural noun.

The use of commas differs significantly between Finnish and English which explains why errors in the use of commas were common on the corporate websites. The main difference in the use of commas between Finnish and English is that in English, commas are usually used when there would be a natural pause in speech, whereas in Finnish, the use of commas is mostly syntactic (Chesterman et al. 1990: 7). On the opening sites, errors in punctuation was detected in only one sentence, but punctuation errors on the company information sites were significantly more frequent, occurring altogether in

22 cases. On the product information sites, punctuation errors occurred in 24 sentences. Errors in the use of a comma occurred in cases in which an introductory phrase was not separated with a comma (in 20 cases), but it is important to note that this is not an absolute rule in English either but can be used to improve readability in a text. Further deviations in the use of a comma included a relative clause which was separated with a comma from a main clause (in 8 cases), a non-finite clause which was not separated with a comma from a main clause (in 8 cases), an additional word or phrase (e.g. *therefore*, *or alternatively*) which was not separated with a comma (in 5 cases), an independent clause which was not separated with a comma (in 3 cases), and once a preceding subordinate clause which was not separated with a comma from a main clause. It is important to note here that since the grammatical rules concerning the use of the comma are not syntactic, as they are in Finnish, not all the errors in the use of comma can be categorised as *cases of ungrammaticality* but as *cases of dubious acceptability* (House 1977: 57) because all the rules concerning the use of commas in English are not unambiguous.

Significantly, it was relatively common that no punctuation errors could be identified on the opening sites of the corporate websites, but were still detected on the company information and product information sites in similar settings. For instance, on one of the companies' opening site, introductory sentences were separated with a comma, but on the company information site, this was not always done. This confirms the assumption that the language used on the corporate websites is more polished on the opening sites than on other parts of the corporate websites.

In the example sentence (35) below, a comma is missing after the introductory phrase. This feature occurred altogether in 20 sentences but cannot be categorised strictly as a punctuation error. It illustrates, thus, a case of *dubious acceptability* (House 1977: 57) as inserting the comma after the introductory phrase can, however, make the sentence easier to read.

- (35) **Towards the end of the 1940's** the rebuilding of post war Europe increased [...] (IM 2011/Company Information).

Example (35) illustrates that leaving the comma out after an introductory phrase does not usually result in misunderstandings, but it can make a sentence heavy to read, especially if the introductory phrase is long. Introductory phrases are not separated with a comma in Finnish, and the effect of this punctuation rule can be seen in the above example as well.

Example (36) below illustrates, then, a case in which the comma is incorrectly used to separate the main and relative clauses which is a clear punctuation error. This error was detected in 8 sentences.

- (36) The work will be carried out by Lahti Energia, *[sic]* **who have long term energy supply contracts with [...]** (SK 2011/Company Information).

In the example sentence (36) above, the relative clause has been incorrectly separated with a comma from the preceding main clause. In Finnish, relative clauses are always separated with a comma from the preceding main clause, and this punctuation rule has presumably influenced the target text. Significantly, adding unnecessary commas does not have a negative effect on readability. The example above shows, however, a case of dubious acceptability (House 1977: 57) because a relative clause is not separated with a comma from the preceding main clause according to standard language norms in English.

It was also relatively common that a non-finite clause was not separated with a comma from the main clause as this feature was detected in 8 sentences. Such a case is illustrated in the example sentence (37) below.

- (37) Fires destroy steel pole's galvanization **leaving it open to rapid corrosion and collapse** (IM 2011/Product Information).

In example (37), the non-finite clause is not separated with a comma from the main clause. This does not presumably result in misunderstandings, but using the comma would make the sentence easier to read. In Finnish, non-finite clauses are not separated with a comma from the main clauses, and this punctuation rule can be seen to having had an effect on the target text. In addition, it is important to note that there is also a translational error in Example (37): the word *open* has been used when the word *exposed* would be a more appropriate choice, when taking the context into account.

4.3 ELF and translationese in relation to Plain English

Altogether 21 guidelines for writing in Plain English are outlined in *Oxford Guide to Plain English* (Cutts 2004: 17–18) of which six were regarded as relevant for the present study. These are *Over the whole document, make the average sentence length 15–20 words* (1st guideline), *Use only as many words as you really need* (3rd guideline), *Prefer active voice unless there's a good reason for using the passive* (4th guideline), *Use clear, crisp, lively verbs to express the actions in your document* (5th guideline), *Put accurate punctuation at the heart of your writing* (11th guideline) and *Organize your material in a way that helps readers to grasp the important information early and to navigate through the document easily* (15th guideline). In the following subsections, features of ELF and those of translationese are compared with the six guidelines of Plain English.

4.3.1 Features of ELF in relation to Plain English

Basic features of ELF on the corporate websites included errors in the use of definite and indefinite articles (most common on the product information sites) and errors in the use of prepositions (most common on the company information sites). These features were considered only slight deviations from the standard language norms as they do not lead into difficulties in understanding even though they can slightly impair readability of a text. Errors in the use of articles and prepositions cannot be said to deviate strictly

from any of the guidelines of Plain English, but as Plain English refers to using simple language and understandable style which does not lead into misinterpretation (Aittokoski 2009: 23), it can be said that even the basic features of ELF are slight deviations from the overall aim of writing in Plain English.

Complex features of ELF on the corporate websites were misuses of the progressive (most common on the product information sites), innovative use of qualifiers and modifiers (most common on the product information sites), using verbs with highly general meaning (most common on the company information sites) and creativity (most common on the product information sites). Complex features of ELF deviate more clearly from the guidelines of Plain English. Example (13) (cf. p. 65) illustrated the innovative use of a qualifier (**practical** usability) which demonstrates a slight deviation from the third guideline of Plain English (*Use only as many words as you really need*) as the sentence contains an unnecessary word.

Example (15), (16) and (17) (cf. p. 66–67) illustrated different types of misuses of the progressive form which can in certain cases lead into a deviation from the 1st guideline of Plain English (*Over the whole document, make the average sentence length 15–20 words*) and can even make a text difficult to understand. Such a case was illustrated in Example (15) (*Vexve has earned its place on the [sic] top of the business area due to its innovative engineering and product development, **using** automatic product lines and **employing** professional staff.*). This is not, however, always the case because the progressive form can be used in different sentence structures and usually the context helps to prevent misunderstandings. Examples (18) and (19) (cf. p. 68) showed uses of verbs with highly semantic meanings (*was, had*). Although the example sentences seem to deviate from the 5th guideline of Plain English (*Use clear, crisp, lively verbs to express the actions in your document*), using verbs with highly semantic meanings does not make the sentences difficult to understand though the readability may suffer. Although deviations from the 2nd guideline of Plain English (*Use words your readers are likely to understand*) were not discussed in the present study as the exact reader group of the corporate websites is difficult to outline, lexical creativity can be seen to deviate from

this guideline but only within opaque creativity (i.e. when the meaning of the word is difficult to understand without seeing the context). It is important to note, however, that a case of opaque creativity was identified in only one word (*machineability*) and more systematic study on the topic is, therefore, needed.

4.3.2 Features of translationese in relation to Plain English

Lexical translationese was divided into translationese in verb choices (most common on the company information sites) and tenses (identified only on the company information sites), translationese as inserting unnecessary words (most common on the product information sites), translationese in nouns (most common on the company information sites), translationese in modifiers and qualifiers (most common on the company information sites) and translationese in an idiomatic expression (identified only on one of the product information sites).

Translationese in verb choices was illustrated in Examples (20) and (21) (cf. p. 73) in which the verbs *experience* (instead of *undergo*) and *start* (instead of *begin*) had been used. The example sentences illustrate that this form of lexical translationese leads into deviations from the 4th guideline of Plain English (*Use clear, crisp, lively verbs to express the actions in your document*). Usually the context helps to prevent any serious misunderstandings, but deviations from this guideline have a negative effect on the readability of a text. Translationese in verb tenses was illustrated in Example (23) (cf. p. 75) and similarly, the confusion between the present and future tenses can be seen to deviate from the 4th guideline of Plain English, but again, the context usually prevents any serious misunderstandings.

Examples (26) and (27) (cf. p. 77) showed lexical translationese as inserting unnecessary words: in Example (26), the noun phrase *environmental protection issues* was used instead of *environmental protection*, and in Example (27), the noun phrase *packing industry* was used in which the noun *industry* was unnecessary. This feature can be seen as a clear deviation from the 1st guideline of Plain English, according to which only

necessary words should be used in order to make the text more readable. This feature is not, however, severe and does not usually lead into misunderstandings but does have a negative effect on readability as the example sentences have demonstrated.

Examples (28) and (29) (cf. p. 79) showed, then, lexical translationese in the choice of nouns: in Example (28) the noun phrase *basic principles* was used instead of *basic characteristics*, and in Example (29), the word *strength* was used when a more suitable noun would have been *durability*. Although this feature cannot be seen to deviate from the guidelines of Plain English as such, it can certainly lead into misunderstandings especially in cases in which it occurs as the subject of the sentence.

Lexical translationese in modifiers and qualifiers was illustrated in Examples (24) and (25) (cf. p. 74). In Example (25), for instance, the word *revolutionary* is used to refer to *innovations*. When the guidelines of Plain English are employed in detail, lexical translationese in modifiers and qualifiers can also be seen to deviate from the 2nd guideline (*Use only as many words as you really need*) because they are not usually necessary in order to understand the meaning of the sentences.

Syntactic translationese, then, was divided into an unorthodox use of a prepositional phrase (identified in one case on the opening sites and on the company information sites), in the word order (most common on the company information sites), in unusual noun structures (most common on the product information sites), in the use of the progressive (once both on the company and product information sites), in the use of the passive (once both on the company and product information sites) and in one sentence, in the use of an impersonal subject. In addition, punctuation errors were most common on the product information sites.

When syntactic translationese occurs, clear deviations from the 1st (*Over the whole document, make the average sentence length 15–20 words*), 4th (*Prefer active voice unless there's a good reason for using the passive*), and the 14th guideline of Plain English (*Organize your material in a way that helps readers to grasp the important information*

early and to navigate through the document easily) become visible. When the information structure, that is, the word order in a sentence is illogical and violates the standard language rules as a result of syntactic translationese, they are seen as deviations from the 14th guideline. Although punctuation errors are not usually seen as translation errors, they will be deviations from the 11th guideline (*Put accurate punctuation at the heart of your writing*) and were analysed in connection with syntactic translationese because punctuation differs significantly between Finnish and English, and errors in punctuation can have a negative effect on readability on the sentence level.

Example (30) (cf. p. 82) illustrated a case in which lexical and syntactic translationese occur in the same sentence. In this example sentence, syntactic translationese occurred in the use of the passive. According to the 4th guideline of Plain English, it is preferable to use the active voice unless there is a good reason for using the passive (Cutts 2004: 17), and Example (30) illustrates, thus, a case in which a clear deviation from this guideline occurs. Awkward passive structures in English can have a negative effect on the readability of a sentence and may even lead to misunderstandings as Example (30) demonstrates.

The most common form of syntactic translationese was translationese in noun structures which were illustrated in Examples (31) and (32) (cf. p. 83–84). For example, the structure *Installation is made [...]* was illustrated in Example (32). Literal translations of noun structures can be seen to cause deviations from the 4th guideline of Plain English (*Use clear, crispy, lively verbs to express the actions in your document*). In Example (32), the verb *make* could have been replaced with *install* which better expresses the action described. Translationese in noun structures does not usually cause misunderstandings but can impair the readability of a text as the example sentences show.

Examples (33) and (34) (cf. p. 85) illustrate, then, the second most common feature of syntactic translationese, that is, following the word order of the source language. Although this did not occur on the opening sites, it was identified in 6 cases on the company information sites and in 4 cases on the product information sites. As the word order

in the Finnish language is more flexible than that in the English language, it is inevitable that using an overtly literal translation strategy results in syntactic translationese. The example sentences show clear deviations from the 14th guideline of Plain English (*Organize your material in a way that helps readers to grasp the important information early and to navigate through the document easily*) because the word order of the Finnish source texts has been followed in the English target texts. As the introductory phrase is relatively long in Example (33), and since the places of the subject and the object are reversed in Example (34), it can be difficult to grasp the information at first reading.

Examples (35), (36) and (37) (cf. p. 87–88) demonstrate different errors in the use of commas on the corporate websites. Although they are deviations from the 14th guideline of Plain English, their negative impact on readability is usually minor especially when they are used to separate subordinate clauses from preceding main clauses. However, using commas correctly in English texts can fasten and ease the reading process because, unlike in Finnish, commas are used when there would be a short pause in speech.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the present study was to investigate what unconventional linguistic features could be identified on the corporate websites of five Finnish medium-sized export companies (*Iivari Mononen Oy*, *Laine-Tuotanto Oy*, *Merivaara Oy*, *Suomen Kuitulevy Oy* and *Vexve Oy*). These unconventional linguistic features were identified as features of ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) and as lexical and syntactic translationese. It was of further interest whether these linguistic forms cause difficulties in understanding, and this was further supplemented by investigating if the English language on the corporate websites followed the guidelines of Plain English.

Corporate websites are an important promotional tool for different companies. They help small and medium-sized companies to gain access to global markets by enabling customers abroad to acquire information about the company and the products the company manufactures and sells. It is essential for export companies operating in minority language areas to be able to offer their websites in English because English is the dominant language of the business world. The opening sites, the company information sites and the product information sites formed the data of the present study because they could be found on each of the companies' websites and because it is assumed that these sites are of primary interest also for the potential new customers abroad. Four of the corporate websites were English translations from the Finnish source texts whereas one company's English websites (MV) were created before the Finnish websites and were not, thus, translations as such. These websites were, however, created by a person who had Finnish as her mother tongue and the websites of this company formed, therefore, a fruitful source for ELF study.

It is important that the language used on the corporate websites follows the grammatical rules of the target language and is as clear and readable as possible. This had undoubtedly been the aim of the companies, but significantly, deviations from these guidelines were relatively frequent. Features of ELF are lexico-grammatical deviations from the way language is used by native speakers of English. ELF, thus, is a variety of English in

which the same lexico-grammatical errors regardless of the mother tongue of the speaker occur. In the present study, the features of ELF were categorized according to their level of severeness. Basic features of ELF included minor lexico-grammatical errors that did not lead into difficulties in understanding, and complex features of ELF were seen as more severe because they could occasionally lead into misinterpretations. The present study demonstrated that features of ELF and translationese are relatively common on the Internet. The most common basic feature of ELF on the corporate websites was the confusion in the usage of the indefinite and definite articles, whereas the most common complex feature of ELF was the extended usage of the progressive form. Features of ELF were most common on the product information sites. Usually ELF studies focus on the spoken language, but I have applied them to the written language on corporate websites as the Internet language can be seen as mixing the two. Moreover, unconventional linguistic forms are likely to occur on the corporate websites because the Internet language is not, and cannot be, monitored and controlled. Seidlhofer's list of typical ELF features (qtd. In Jenkins 2004: 64) was complemented with Jenkins' (2004), Aaltonen's (2006) and Ranta's (2006) research findings on ELF, and these formed the main sources for studying ELF in the present thesis.

Translationese, then, refers to the interference of the source language in the target text. It can be humorously depicted as playing American baseball with the rules of the Finnish version of it: the field, the bat and the ball may be quite similar but the rules would be different. The term lexical translationese was used to refer to unconventional translations of words, terms and idioms, whereas syntactic translationese was referred to following the sentence patterns of the source language in the target text. Lexical translationese was most common in the translation of nouns, and syntactic translationese occurred most often when the noun structures of the source text had been translated as such into the target text. Translationese was most common on the company information sites. House's model of overtly erroneous errors (1977, 1997) was used to identify and analyse cases of translationese. Moreover, Chesterman's translation techniques (1996) were employed in order to suggest more fluent translations in cases of translationese.

The most common features of ELF and translationese on the corporate websites were, then, compared with the guidelines of Plain English. Although the companies did not refer to the term *Plain English* as such, they emphasised that their aim had been to use clear and readable English on their websites. The main aim of the Plain English campaigns is to attack the use of unnecessarily complicated language by government departments and businesses (Crystal 1988: 266), and this aim can, therefore, be seen in line with the linguistic aim of the companies whose websites have formed the material of the present study. Altogether 21 guidelines for writing in Plain English are outlined in *Oxford Guide to Plain English* (2004), and six of them were considered relevant for the present study. Basic features of ELF were only minor and did not strictly deviate from any of the guidelines, but as Plain English is using simple language and understandable style which does not lead into misinterpretation (Aittokoski 2009: 23), it can be claimed that even these features represent slight deviations from the overall aim of writing in Plain English. Complex features of ELF, then, deviate more clearly from the Plain English guidelines and make texts occasionally difficult to read. Lexical translationese causes only minor deviations from the guidelines but, depending on the position of the word in the sentence, could have a negative effect on readability especially when it is frequent. Syntactic translationese (including punctuation errors) was seen as the most severe case of source language interference that leads into clear deviations from the Plain English guidelines. It was regarded as having a clear negative effect on readability and occasionally leading into misunderstandings.

It can be that the linguistic features, which do not cause difficulties in understanding, can end up changing the way the English language is used. It should, however, be borne in mind that although other languages have an influence on English, changes in languages are relatively slow. It can be, however, argued that since these unconventional linguistic features were common and since similar features could be detected on corporate websites of different companies, they form the basis of a new register, and this register can be identified particularly on the corporate websites of Finnish medium-sized export companies. The high frequency of ELF and translationese suggests that the Internet is linguistically a more tolerant medium than any other media and has allowed the

emergence of a new register. The gatekeepers that control the form of language within other media are absent on the Internet. Therefore, the linguistic features detected on the corporate websites are direct representations of the way the English language is used in real life. It is important to keep in mind that no language exists in a vacuum but is constantly in contact with other languages and with its speakers. As Noah Webster has stated,

“Language is not an abstract construction of the learned, or of dictionary makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its bases broad and low, close to the ground.”

I believe that the results of the present study are of use for different organisations and companies that already have, or are planning to have, English websites. The results can raise the level of awareness on unconventional linguistic features identified on corporate websites of Finnish medium-sized companies, and they can also increase the interest to invest more on constructing websites that are easy to use – and to read. It is often incorrectly assumed that knowing the language is all that is required for writing fluent English and creating fluent translations, when this is hardly the case in reality. Well-organised and grammatically correct English websites are undoubtedly a good promotional tool of which usability and readability should be taken into account when planning the marketing communications of an organisation. Companies should take into account that the quality of the language used on their corporate websites has an effect on the image of the entire company: fluent and grammatically correct language gives undoubtedly a more attractive and international image than websites which are poorly translated by people who do not have training in linguistics. When creating English websites, knowing the language is not enough, and it is, therefore, worth investing in quality translations created by language professionals.

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