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English-language Translation

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Quality of Translation: Approaches and a Field Survey
Master’s Diploma Thesis

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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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Author’s signature
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................... 1  
Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. 2  
List of Abbreviations ............................................................................................................ 4  
Table of Figures ..................................................................................................................... 5  
1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 7  
2 Theoretical Introduction to the Issue of Translation Quality .......................................... 8  
   2.1 The Notion of Quality ..................................................................................................... 8  
   2.2 Translation Quality: Definitions and Perspectives ....................................................... 8  
      2.2.1 Major Approaches to Translation Quality ............................................................ 9  
   2.3 Can Quality Be Measured? ............................................................................................ 11  
      2.3.1 Objectivity vs. Subjectivity of TQA ..................................................................... 11  
      2.3.2 Developing Objective Assessment Methods ......................................................... 12  
      2.3.3 The Argumentation-Centered Approach ............................................................... 13  
      2.3.4 The Role of Subjectivity in TQA .......................................................................... 14  
   2.4 Perceptions of Quality in the Translation Market Environment .................................... 15  
3 Research: the Current Situation of Translation Quality Perceptions on the Czech and English Markets .................................................................................................................. 17  
   3.1 Introduction to the Research Part .................................................................................. 17  
      3.1.1 Motivation for the Practical Research ................................................................. 17  
   3.2 Field Research Focus ...................................................................................................... 17  
   3.3 Expectations .................................................................................................................. 19  
   3.4 Methodology .................................................................................................................. 19  
      3.4.1 Qualitative Research Method ................................................................................ 19  
      3.4.2 Respondents .......................................................................................................... 20  
      3.4.3 Interview and Question Types .............................................................................. 21  
      3.4.4 Interview Structure ............................................................................................... 23  
      3.4.5 Data Compilation ................................................................................................. 24  
      3.4.6 Research Organization ......................................................................................... 24  
   3.5 Fundamental Issues of Translation Quality in the Business Environment .................. 25  
      3.5.1 Cost, Time or Quality? ......................................................................................... 26  
      3.5.2 Quality Assurance ............................................................................................... 27
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbr.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAT</td>
<td>computer aided translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZ1–CZ12</td>
<td>a Czech translation service provider participating in the survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB1–GB8</td>
<td>an English translation service provider participating in the survey</td>
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<td>PM</td>
<td>project manager</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>source text</td>
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<td>TQA</td>
<td>translation quality assessment</td>
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<td>TSP</td>
<td>translation service provider, translation agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TT</td>
<td>target text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The topics for discussion on quality management.........................................................23
Figure 2: The topics for discussion on translation workflow .......................................................23
Figure 3: The topics for discussion of translators ........................................................................24
Figure 4: The triangle of triple constraints ...................................................................................26
Figure 5: The requirements for translator’s recruitments in the Czech Republic ......................56
Figure 6: The requirements for translator’s recruitments in the United Kingdom .................56
1 Introduction

There has hardly been a more discussed issue in the field of Translation Studies than the definition of translation quality. The perception of what is ‘good’ is highly subjective and depends on a number of various factors. For that reason it is virtually impossible to devise a universal set of criteria to measure translation quality objectively.

In my final Master’s thesis I am, however, posing a question whether it is necessary to assess the quality of translation objectively when each translation is in fact special, with its own context, purpose and intended audience. This is particularly true in the translation business environment, where the interests of translation buyers play a primary role in determining what a good translation is and therefore cannot be disregarded within translation quality assessment. The goal of the thesis is to focus on the translation service providers’ perception of translation quality and the ways they strive to achieve it in the translation business environments in the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom and to identify best practices or divergences in order to propose suggestions for translation quality improvement.

The first part of the thesis will describe the major translation theories and their conception of what makes a good translation as well as the methods developed to measure translation quality. The academic view will be contrasted with the way translation quality is apprehended in the commercial environment.

The research conducted among translation service providers in the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic will be presented in the second part of the thesis. While the first section will outline the main issues underlying the notion of translation quality in the translation business environment in general, the second section will delineate the typical translation processing exemplified by individual translation service providers’ practices. Since the translation process is complex and does not involve translation service providers only, attention will also be paid to the translation buyers’ and the translators’ positions in it. Subsequently, the general tendencies and observed differences will be highlighted with respect to what translation service providers consider to be highly effective in improving translation quality.

I believe that the final Master’s thesis will provide a useful insight into the current practice of translation processing in the Czech and the English translation business environment, inspire translation service providers and add a fresh impetus for the translation services development.
2 THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUE OF TRANSLATION QUALITY

2.1 The Notion of Quality
The general idea of quality is in no way uncommon to us. Everyone deals with issues of quality on a daily basis – whether they concern the freshness of the food we buy, the lifespan of things we regularly use or the aesthetic level of film, music or theatre production.

Although the concept of quality is all around us, it might not be an easy task to define it, for what we believe quality is in one context might not be the case in another. Different people will also perceive quality quite differently even when referring to the same object. Based on their experience and personal subjective assessment everyone has a different concept of quality.

The term 'quality' encompasses a number of aspects and therefore it is difficult, if not impossible, to propose a single definition of it. Some shared characteristics can certainly be found but they may also vary significantly across different fields of application.

When applied to a specific area of interest, such as for instance translation, the notion of quality becomes somewhat clearer. Nevertheless, the concept is not simpler – taking into account the wide variability of translated texts that might be considered poor or excellent, the issue of quality has not lost anything of its complexity. With a deeper insight one could even label the term as ambiguous since what represents an excellent translation for one person might be deemed unsatisfactory by another.

This brings us to a question whether the assessment of translation being good or not is only a matter of personal subjective evaluation of a product or whether there are other text-inherent criteria playing their part?

2.2 Translation Quality: Definitions and Perspectives
Translation has always been connected with the notion of quality. For centuries translation quality has been central for various reasons, such as “aesthetic, religious, and political, […] pedagogical, administrative, […] and economic” (Williams, 2004: xiii). Irrespective of the motives, people have always strived to produce what was considered to be a 'good' translation.
Today perhaps more than ever before the issue of quality in translation deserves discussion. Due to globalization, the world nowadays depends on successful communication facilitating mutual understanding and helping overcome language and cultural barriers. In the past decades there has been a constant increase in the volume of translation production throughout the world – the estimated global translation market growth was 7.5% p.a. in 2006 (Benitatto, 2006).

The growth of demand for translations is caused by the generally recognized phenomenon of ‘shrinking of the world’ and people’s desire for the increased consciousness of the world as a whole. Not only literary texts are being translated to a greater extent, but as Zehnalová (in Knittlová, 2010: 221) notes, an increasingly significant segment of translations intended for everyday short-term usage is being produced. Therefore, translation and its evaluation become a key economic factor in many industries and move into the limelight of both general public’s and professional interests.

The topical issue of translation quality has also been drawing attention of scholars in the field of Translation Studies. They have been trying to find an answer to the difficult question of what translation quality actually is and how to measure it on the basis of translation theory and its application to translation criticism.

Indisputably, the aim of each translation activity is to produce a good text (Schäffner, 1997: 1). The question remains what the definition of a ‘good’ text is – what are its characteristics? What should a ‘good’ text include or omit?

There is no universal set of criteria to evaluate what we consider ‘good’ or ‘poor’ translation, otherwise the discussion over translation quality would be pointless because all translations, measured by the same criteria, would be excellent. As House (1997: 1) states, “[e]valuating the quality of a translation presupposes a theory of translation. Thus different views of translation lead to different concepts of translational quality, and hence different ways of assessing it.”

2.2.1 Major Approaches to Translation Quality

2.2.1.1 Formal Equivalence, Subjective and Mentalist Approaches

The basic concept of translation quality is associated with the relationship between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). Within this approach, the ST is taken as a yardstick of translation quality: a translation is successful if it renders the original text well – if it transfers what is important for the ST, if it is a faithful, accurate and precise representation to the ST. The levels on which this accuracy should be maintained are both
quantitative (nothing is omitted, linguistic features of the ST are reflected in the TT, the TT communicates the same and unchanged message) and qualitative (the meaning is not altered in any way). Newmark (1991) defines a good translation as “as accurate as possible, as economical as possible, in denotation and in connotation, referentially and pragmatically” (1991: 111).

Although this concept is well-grounded and logical, there are no general principles by which the actual quality might be assessed: who determines what the appropriate level of accuracy or faithfulness is? Translations tend to be evaluated by general judgements that do not in any way testify their objective quality. According to House (2001), the subjectivity and intuitiveness of these so called ‘mentalist’ interpretations are “inappropriate for the evaluative business of making argued statements about when, how and why a translation is good” (2001: 244).

2.2.1.2 Functionalist Approaches and Skopos Theory
The linguistic model based on features of the ST and their rendition in the TT has been gradually replaced by the functionalist approach focusing on a macro-textual level rather than a micro-textual one. It takes into account the function of a translation in its complexity – it frames the text within communicative purposes of its agents (senders, receivers), their cultural background, medium, time and place. Nord (2007) refers to such conditions as the “situation-in-culture”. Within this approach, it is no longer words and grammatical structures that are translated, but rather individual communicative utterances in the discourse. The major criterion for translation evaluation is its “functionality in a given situation-in-culture” (2007: 2).

In this light translation quality assessment (TQA) should not be limited to a translated text only, but the whole situation must be considered. In his sociolinguistic approach Nida claims that when comparing translations in order to assess which one is the best, one should in the first place ask “Best for whom?” (Nida, 1982: 64). He further states that “[t]he relative adequacy of different translations of the same text can only be determined in terms of the extent to which each translation successfully fulfils the purpose for which it was intended” (Nida, 1976:64). This principle is also referred to as ‘dynamic equivalence’, defined by Nida as the “quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors” (1982: 200), as opposed to formal correspondence, i.e. “quality of translation in which the features of the form of the ST have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language” (1982: 201). The latter model is
briefly described in the previous chapter. In the functionalist view, preserving the message implies faithful and good translation.

Within functionalist approach various theories developed among which Skopos-theorie, first presented by Vermeer in 1978, has played a major role. Drawing on the action theory, this approach highlights the *skopos* (a Greek word for purpose, aim, objective, goal, target) or, in other words, the importance of defining the purpose of translation. In this respect, the ST serves merely as an “offer of information” or translator’s “raw material”, which is then trans-coded into a TT according to its purpose. Since this purpose can vary considerably, Vermeer claims that no ST has only one correct or preferred translation (Vermeer; in Baker, 2001).

### 2.3 Can Quality Be Measured?

Having outlined the two major, but opposing theoretical approaches to translation quality, we can now try to define criteria which a ‘good’ translation should meet in order to be judged as a quality one.

As the variety of views on translation quality implies, setting universal criteria for translation quality is practically impossible. TQA has always been a tricky issue and subject to an extensive discussion. Translation was expected to comply with vague and often contradictory requirements. Zehnalová (2010) formulates a general and rather hazy idea that TQA is based on what the assessor considers to be an adequate translation and that assessment criteria have been similarly indefinite and subjectively preconditioned (in Knittlová, 2010: 221). McElhanon (2007) advocates that the issue of translation quality “is irresolvable” (2007: 36). He justifies this opinion by the fact that the issue has been discussed for millennia and still nobody has been able to propose a satisfactory answer. He claims that if there were a solution, we would know it already.

On the other hand, there is a wide range of TQA systems at our disposal already. The question is not whether we can measure quality, but by which means it can be measured.

#### 2.3.1 Objectivity vs. Subjectivity of TQA

Since the term of translation quality is by its nature ambiguous, opinions requesting objective measurement are voiced frequently. The requirement for objectivity is justified: only an objective comparison of multiple translations of either the same ST or of two unrelated texts would enable to correctly assess which version is superior. Angelelli (2009: 1) lists some instances where objective assessment is crucial:
• in the academic environment: for formative evaluation in educational programmes, including screening candidates during admission procedures, providing feedback on students’ performance and progress and testing their knowledge and skills at the end of a programme

• in the professional environment: to ascertain to what extent a translation delivered by a translator or translation agency meets client’s expectations and requirements.

For translation recipients in the market environment it is essential to be able to assess whether a foreign-language text they are receiving is trustworthy, whether it renders faithfully the original version, because in business there may be many things at stake or translation buyers, for any reason, do not want to be dependent solely on their own language skills.

2.3.2 Developing Objective Assessment Methods

Objective assessment methods are usually based on error quantification – a detailed micro-textual analysis of a translated text and its comparison with the original. The translated text is usually examined on multiple levels, e.g. lexical, stylistic, grammatical or terminological. Detected discrepancies are then added up and the overall quality level of translation is expressed by means of a numerical score or by a verbal description. Sometimes errors may be categorized according to their typology and counted as multiple scores and perhaps even evaluated as separate indicators of translation quality (for instance with respect to grammar, terminology or typography), depending on assessment guidelines of a particular evaluator. Mossop (2001: 151) points out that a distinction should be made between a major and a minor error. What constitutes a major or a minor error will largely depend on the assessor as well as on the purpose of the translation: it must be individually judged whether such an error is key to the message transferred or not.

The assessment should also take into account the relativity of translation purposes and the factors beyond the translator’s control. Translation purposes vary and it should be reflected in TQA methods, for example some aspect of translation may be deliberately excluded from evaluation on the basis of client’s request. Mossop exemplifies this situation on the case of translation for information purpose where technical terminology does not have to be adhered to as strictly as in the case of a text designated for publication. In Mossop’s words: “Translations might be far from ideal yet serve their purpose.” (2001: 153). The
latter aspect applies to conditions under which a translation was processed. Circumstances such as inappropriately little time or illegible ST, might affect quality as well.

2.3.3 The Argumentation-Centered Approach
An innovative and perhaps groundbreaking approach to TQA is introduced by Malcolm Williams in his book *Translation Quality Assessment: An Argumentation-Centered Approach*. Drawing on the functionalist model, Williams criticises quantitative assessment methods based on micro-textual analysis of sub-sentence elements and proposes an argumentation-centered approach where the key measure of translation quality is the extent to which a translator manages to transfer the discourse-based argument structure of the original text. He claims that only a translation that successfully renders this structure can be “acceptable”. This idea of acceptability corresponds with what Nida calls “relative adequacy”.

Williams (2004) cites Larose who also advocates a broader view on TQA stating that in order for a TQA to be successful, reader’s expectations and requirements set by a client must be considered (2004: 3-19), which I largely draw on in the practical part of my thesis. In the Williams’ concept the question of acceptability precedes the notion of errors. In other words, translation evaluation should not be based on quantitative models of error assessment but a translator should first and foremost aim to produce a text which is acceptable for a translation buyer, whether it means that it is completely flawless or contains any minor mistakes. He thus reflects the underlying idea of the functionalist approach by emphasizing an indispensable aspect of the translation process that should be primarily accounted for in TQA: the specific purpose and situational context of each translation activity. We need to know the context of the TQA because the evaluation of students’ translations at a university or the pre-delivery evaluation of final translation by a translation service provider (TSP) may be, and should be, approached differently (2004: 3-19).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the objectivity of assessment has been emphasized and achieved by quantitative assessment methods. Even though it is perceived that error quantification “lends objectivity to the [translation quality] assessment”, Williams (2009) claims that it is not so because errors can be assigned different levels of seriousness and their adding up will yield results of little explanatory value. He illustrates this on an instance when a translation with x+1 errors might be rated as same or even more satisfactory than

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1 see chapter 2.2.1.2 Functionalist Approaches and Skopos Theory
a translation containing x errors (2009: 6). Differentiating errors by categories based on their gravity as “critical/major, minor, weak point, etc.” rather than typology might help solve this issue. Nevertheless, such categorization elicits another problem: where is the dividing line between a major and a minor error? Then the issue of inconsistency must also be considered as one evaluator may prefer total faithfulness of the translation, while another may accept minor shifts in meaning. All of this is relative and subject to discussion. Williams therefore calls for drawing distinction between assessing translation quality by quantitative methods, such as measurement and quantification of errors or various national and international quality standards (e.g. ISO) which only present certain guidelines for quality control process but do not provide specific acceptability or level-of-quality yardsticks, and assessing the acceptability of a translation product. He argues that “a translation is an intellectual product and, as such, is a complex, heterogeneous one” (2009: 7). This is seen as a major reason why objective TQA methods may not reflect precisely the actually quality as it is perceived by a translation recipient.

2.3.4 The Role of Subjectivity in TQA
The notion of acceptability emphasized by Williams is closely interconnected with the subjectivity of TQA. Despite the fact that subjectivity has often been involved in translation evaluation (Zehnalová, in Knittlová, 2010: 221), it is in a way a necessary precondition of a successful evaluation. House (1997) claims that “[i]t is difficult to pass a ‘final judgement’ on the quality of a translation that fulfils the demands of objectivity” (1997: 119). Therefore, if we want to create an authentic image of translation quality, we must necessarily take into consideration client’s subjective views.

A comprehensive definition of quality by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is cited in Mossop (2001): quality is “the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs” (2001: 6). The definition of quality itself therefore encompasses the notion of subjectivity by mentioning its dependence on expectations which naturally differ. Mossop further comments on this definition by outlining its two major implications:

Firstly, the relativity of quality is obvious. The fact that different criteria, which will reflect different clients’ needs, will be applied to different jobs is supported by his claim that “[t]here is no such thing as absolute quality” (2001: 6).

Secondly, TQA should take into account not only the stated needs of a client, but also those that are not explicitly given, but merely implied. This is a remark of huge importance
from the quality assessment point of view because it might be a key to unravelling the mystery of why views on translation quality differ so considerably.

2.4 Perceptions of Quality in the Translation Market Environment

The final Master’s thesis focuses above all on the market-oriented perception of quality, that is on the way clients evaluate the quality of translations delivered by TSPs in a commercial environment. In translation business environment, TQA does not draw on elaborate translation theories, textual analysis and detailed evaluation schemes. Clients simply value such products that suit their needs.

Two distinct perceptions of translation quality are discussed by House (2009). In her view, linguistic analysis of a translation “should not be confused with evaluative assertions made solely on the basis of social, political, ethical or individual grounds”, which she refers to as “social judgement”. Nevertheless she says that in the academic environment – in the field of Translation Studies – where social factors considered without their relation to the textual analysis are “of secondary relevance”, “in the reality of translation practice, [social factors] often turn out to be more influential than linguistic considerations or the professional competence of the translator” (2009: 55). The evaluation of the linguistic quality of a translation and its interpretation or the social judgement therefore represent two different attitudes to the same issue and our inclination towards one or the other depends on the environment that we consider.

Focusing in the business environment, the primary concern of translation buyers is whether and to what extent a TSP succeeded in meeting their needs and requirements which may not exclusively relate to the quality in the linguistic sense, which is the core aspect of translation quality as a textual phenomenon. Factors such as turnaround delivery time or the level of service they are receiving will also play a significant role in the client’s overall satisfaction. Generally speaking, clients may be satisfied even with a poor piece of translation if they simply do not care for a superior rendition of the original but prefer an express delivery instead. In Newmark’s words, “customer satisfaction is the proof of a translation’s ‘success’, but it is not a measure of its quality” (Newmark, 1998: 105).

Clients’ needs are often the bone of contention when the objectivity of translation assessment is in question. Translations are produced in a process that is subjectively conditioned by

- client’s preferences in terms of style or terminology of the translation,
• translator’s comprehension and judgement of the ST,
• different views of reviewers and editors on what is adequate, acceptable and satisfactory.

Although clients may specify some of their requirements, most of those will remain implied, such as the important aspect of the level of transfer accuracy (Mossop 2001: 7). Clients feel that this is a matter of course and they do not have to state this need explicitly, therefore they rely on competences of translators, reviewers and editors. The difference between their and clients’ views will necessarily result in clients’ dissatisfaction.

Translation buyers, specializing in various fields of economic activity, do not usually have a good insight into the translation industry: their understanding of individual steps involved in translation processing is incomplete or faulty and their ability to assess the real quality of outcomes may be biased. According to Williams (1989: 16), clients evaluating translations may have insufficient competence in the languages of translated documents or focus their attention solely on one aspect of the translation, not taking into consideration the original text or other important translation features. For the above mentioned reasons, client’s evaluation is highly subjective and interpretative and should not be taken as a yardstick of translation quality.

Despite client’s outlined incompetence in evaluating translation quality, Williams (1989: 16) states that such feedback is not useless, but on the contrary a very important tool for quality improvement of both translation and additional services provided by TSPs in the long term. Translation in a market environment is often seen as a complex process involving several participants: a TSP regulating the whole process, a translator offering his/her skills and knowledge and a client specifying concrete requirements of the job. Therefore the client should be viewed as an equal participant in the translation process and his needs, requirements and expectations should be properly reflected.
3 RESEARCH: THE CURRENT SITUATION OF TRANSLATION QUALITY PERCEPTIONS ON THE CZECH AND ENGLISH MARKETS

3.1 Introduction to the Research Part
The second part of the final Master’s thesis focuses on the practical interaction between translators, TSPs and their clients with respect to the issue of translation quality. It aims to monitor the current situation on the translation market in the Czech Republic and in the United Kingdom and compare the TSPs’ perspectives with those of translators and translation buyers.

3.1.1 Motivation for the Practical Research
The selection of this particular topic for closer practical research was motivated primarily by my personal interest in translation quality issues which I was dealing with on a daily basis when working as a project manager in a translation agency. The job has inspired me to investigate what is behind the notion of ‘quality’ – why is it that participants involved in the translation process perceive quality differently?

The Czech free market environment has been evolving rapidly since the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and the language-service sector is not an exception. Nevertheless, local translation business is still far from providing translations of sufficient quality, not mentioning the level of services.

Having been first an exchange student and later an intern in the United Kingdom, I realized that a comparison between the English translation market and the Czech one could bring some interesting outcomes concerning translation quality assurance which might benefit local businesses and reveal scope for further enhancement of the level of services that local TSPs offer.

Studying for a degree in translation, I was also curious to find links between translation theory and practice, i.e. how theoretical views on the notion of translation quality and the methods by which it should be achieved are reflected in the real market environment.

3.2 Field Research Focus
Most TQA theories developed over time in the field of Translation Studies interpret quality mainly at micro- or macro-textual levels. They are based on text analysis of individual
features of both the ST and the TT, either in comparison or by stressing different linguistic or extralinguistic aspects of them, accounting thus for author's intention, translation audience, goal, anticipated response etc.

Nonetheless, I have chosen a different way of looking into translation quality: my interpretation of quality refers to translation that is acceptable for its recipient – the linguistic features take a back seat to other aspects that come into play: correspondence with client’s expectations, flexibility in terms of turnaround and delivery time or other non-standard requirements, suitability for the designed purpose, terminological aspects in specialized translation etc. Although the academic interpretation of translation quality largely overlaps with my market-oriented conception, different translation features are stressed. My research is therefore centred on clients’ expectations and on methods that TSPs use to accommodate clients’ requirements.

For this reason I set a goal to map the TSP representatives’ views on translation quality in general and with respect to their particular position on the market, to their translators and clients, to specific measures they have adopted to ensure high quality of their outputs.

Main research questions include:

### 3.2.1.1 General Issues
- How is the notion of translation quality perceived by TSPs, translators, clients? How do their perspectives differ?
- Do viewpoints on translation quality vary significantly in the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom? What are the specifics of the English market and could their knowledge enhance quality of translation services in the Czech Republic?

### 3.2.1.2 TSPs’ Perspective
- How do TSPs supervise and measure translation quality?
- Which factors have an influence on translation quality throughout the translation process?
- By which means do TSPs enhance the quality of their translations? Can translation quality be improved by certification and introduction of norms and standards?
3.2.1.3 Clients’ Perspective

- What are the clients’ priorities with respect to translation quality? What importance do they attach to quality, cost, or time of delivery?
- What aspects of a translation are valued most by translation buyers?

3.2.1.4 Translators’ Perspective

- What makes a good translator?

3.3 Expectations

Being myself involved in the translation business environment, I was to some extent familiar with the way translations are processed. I could therefore take advantage of my understanding of the situation and search for similarities or differences at other TSPs. I assumed that the workflow of a typical translation project will not considerably differ, but the emphasis put on various aspects of this workflow will depend on a particular TSP: its size, the volume of translations it processes, specialization in certain languages, language directions or subject matters, priorities and regulations set by the TSP’s management, certifications issued by external authorities etc.

The aim of the field survey was to find possible connections between different ways of handling translation projects and the quality of final outputs and the consequent clients’ satisfaction.

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 Qualitative Research Method

The research objective was not to map the situation on the translation market by collecting statistically relevant data from a large number of TSPs which would cover a substantial part of the market, but rather to gather detailed information from several TSPs only, which would comprehensively depict their attitudes towards the issue of translation quality. I intended to reflect the whole range of opinions that TSPs hold. Therefore qualitative rather than quantitative field research was carried out in a form of a series of in-depth structured interviews with TSP representatives, mostly PMs or translation agencies’ directors.
3.4.2 Respondents

TSPs approached in this study were selected randomly; no special criteria were reflected in the selection process. Those who accepted my invitation were included in the research sample.

In the Czech Republic, a total number of 12 TSPs took an active part in the study, in the United Kingdom there was a total of 8 participating TSPs. This number is more than sufficient taking into account the qualitative nature of the research. Although generalizations may be distorting, even such a number of respondents have yielded interesting results.

3.4.2.1 Czech TSPs

As for the Czech sample, all of the TSPs, with only one exception, were based in Prague or Brno. They, however, considerably varied in size as well as scope of specialization. There are both small translation agencies operating as a family business with only a few employees (for instance two managers and two coordinators) and large agencies with the national or even international scope. Only one of the participating TSPs specializes in a single area of expertise (law and economy), the rest offers a wide range of services and specializations. The majority of interviewed TSPs operate on the Czech market from the beginning of the 1990s, i.e. boast a tradition of up to 22 years, only two of them were established less than 7 years ago.

3.4.2.2 English TSPs

TSPs operating on the English translation market are diverse as well. They are based all over the United Kingdom. Both small family and large multi-national businesses are represented. They quite often present their specializations in certain areas of expertise, however, they are generally available for all projects. There is one TSP working predominantly with Nordic languages, the others handle basically any languages. They have not been on the English market longer than the Czech TSPs, although I expected that they would have a longer tradition.

As my objective was to reveal possible location- or culture-based divergences of opinion, the survey was carried out both among the TSPs in the Czech Republic and in the United Kingdom. The research in the United Kingdom was initiated during my three-month Erasmus internship in Yorkshire and finished distantly by means of online questionnaires or skype conferences; the Czech part of it was carried out simultaneously.
3.4.3 Interview and Question Types
Structured interviews were framed by a questionnaire, or more precisely a set of topics for discussion. In order to avoid asking close-ended questions, such as dichotomous or multiple choice ones, I predominantly formulated questions as open-ended which are more suitable for qualitative research as they allow more freedom for answers: respondents are not limited by a few alternatives offered, but they can express their opinions freely as well as comment on the nature of a question or add any remark that they feel is relevant. For the same reason I did not distribute the questionnaires in a paper form. Furthermore, I preferred meeting and talking to TSP representatives in person to be able to assess not only information explicitly stated by them, but also subjective impressions beyond the scope of a questionnaire. As I assumed that some TSP representatives would not be willing to devote their precious time to a personal meeting or there would be other unfavourable circumstances, I also proposed to arrange a virtual meeting via skype, to carry out an interview over the phone and also prepared alternatives in forms of electronic and online questionnaires to collect the data in writing if need be. The questions were, however, not rigid, but were adjusted to individual TSP representatives during the interview itself. On that account, some questions have been given more scope or induced further topics for discussion, while other questions might not have been applicable at all. When circumstances allowed, the interviews were recorded so as to increase my concentration on interpersonal aspects and not to miss any information.

3.4.3.1 Translation as a Process vs. Product
A crucial question that needed to be answered before a questionnaire was compiled was whether translation would be viewed as a process or a product. This distinction between the two is marked (the following is adapted from Zehnalová, in Knittelová 2010: 221):

- translation as a process – defines translation as an activity. While in a translator’s perspective this encompasses individual steps taken in order to produce a translation, i.e. translation assignment and text analysis, ST interpretation, selection of translation methods and strategies and production of the TT. A TSP’s concept of translation as a process is broader: it includes all phases of translation processing starting with a client’s assignment and in-house ST analysis, continuing with assigning the job to a translator, his/her interpretation of TT, translation drafting, determination of the translation strategy and methods, TT creation and ending with TSP’s checking of the job and final submission to the client.
• translation as a product – views translation primarily as a text – the words, sentences, paragraphs, not taking into account the context of its production and designated purpose, but only considering it within the linguistic framework.

This distinction will necessarily be reflected in the way TSPs approach translation quality assurance. If they evaluate translation in the broader sense, as an activity, they encourage translators to enquire in case any ambiguities occur during translation, they implement continuous checking and proofreading processes to make sure their quality standard is maintained. After translation’s submission to the client, feedback with possible suggestions for improvement in the future is sent to translators to provide them with opportunities to learn from their own mistakes, to familiarize with client’s special requests and enhance their performance in the long term. If they, on the other hand, approach translation as a product, they primarily concentrate on the linguistic features of it, with most responsibility for translation quality delegated to translators. The TSP subsequently checks the final translation for formal correctness and completeness. Communication with translators is not regarded as necessary and is therefore less frequent.

Because both points of view contribute the overall picture of translation quality, both of them are reflected in an interview/questionnaire design as follows:

Process questions are addressing issues such as:

• Which processes of translation quality assurance have proven most effective?
• Do you provide feedback to your translator? If so, is it negative or positive? How often and in what form do you send it?
• Do you encourage your translators to develop their skills and knowledge? Do you offer them any such opportunities?

Product questions concern the following aspects of a translation:

• What are the most frequent errors on the micro-textual level of the TT supplied by your translators?
• What skills/knowledge do translators lack in general?
• On what levels is the final (pre-delivery) checking of a translation carried out?

As TSP representatives’ responses to questions imply, emphasis is usually put to the process nature of translation because the dynamic translation process is intertwined with its
individual phases, such as the recruitment of translators, continuous supervision and pre-delivery checking. The majority, if not all, TSP representatives I have interviewed are aware of this and adjust their translation quality assurance models to correspond with the process nature of translation.

3.4.4 Interview Structure
The interview consists of three major parts: the Quality Management, the Translation Workflow and the Translators. The structure aims to cover the whole process of handling translation projects with respect to specific procedures that are implemented to ensure translation quality, as depicted in figures 1, 2 and 3 below.

Figure 1: The topics for discussion on quality management

Figure 2: The topics for discussion on translation workflow
3.4.5 Data Compilation
As mentioned earlier, data provided by TSPs during interviews were not to be the only ones relevant for my research. Other sources of information I took into consideration were personal impressions made by TSP representatives during interviews including possible implications of what they said and my observations of connections between the information stated and implied. Subsequently all the data available were analysed and interpreted in comparison. Wherever any specific examples of best practice appeared, I paid special attention to them and included my conclusions in the research evaluation part.

3.4.6 Research Organization
The research consisted of two separate phases:

3.4.6.1 1st Phase
Both English and Czech TSPs were approached with a request to participate in the survey by means of telephone or email enquiry. Personal meetings were arranged and TSP representatives were interviewed on the basis of the above mentioned set of topics for discussion. Data collected were subsequently interpreted.

3.4.6.2 2nd Phase
Data analysis revealed some areas of interest that did not seem important in the beginning but proved extremely relevant to translation quality during research itself and vice versa. Just to give an example, the role of a translator seemed more crucial in TSP representatives’ interpretation than I anticipated. On the other hand, most TSP representatives were not able to quantify the ratio of positive to negative feedback from clients; this information,
however, proved quite insignificant compared to a similar but more specific enquiry on what clients particularly appreciated or complained about. It was therefore necessary to adjust questionnaire structure for such alterations and ask concerned TSP representatives follow-up questions.

3.5 Fundamental Issues of Translation Quality in the Business Environment

As the preceding chapters clearly indicate, the issue of translation quality is a complex one. It was not an easy task for the TSP representatives I have addressed to formulate their thoughts clearly and unambiguously, define their own conception of translation quality and describe concrete methods of achieving it. Although all TSPs unquestionably strive for the best translations on the marketplace or in their field of specialization, it is not univocal what the ‘perfect translation’ in reality is, by which criteria is its quality ‘measured’ and what procedures are followed so that the translations are superior. Most responses cannot be generalized or interpreted uniformly. Respondents put emphasis on quite different elements of both the process and the product of translation.

In the following subchapters I will try to outline the TSP representatives’ views on various factors that come into play within high-quality translations’ production. Individual TSP representatives’ responses, personal opinions and comments shared during interviews or via online questionnaires resemble the pieces of a puzzle that fit together and offer an insight into the situation in the translation business environment in the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom. I will also contribute to the overall picture by my own observations and remarks based on comparison of sometimes even opposing TSPs’ attitudes.

The translation process in a business environment takes place on the basis of the interaction between a TSP, a client and a translator. All these participants inevitably influence the final result and only their close cooperation will yield the expected high-quality translation. A TSP acts as a mediator in this process: it facilitates information exchange, regulates the process and takes the responsibility for the output. The other two participants contribute to the process in their own ways.

The research focuses predominantly on the aspects of the TSPs’ quality management. These specific approaches, however, often drew on broader views that underlie the notion of quality throughout the translation business environment. The aspects I have investigated seem to be interconnected with these profound issues, so I have decided to cover them first within the following sections.
3.5.1 Cost, Time or Quality?
Firstly, it should be noted that in the business environment translation processing is often viewed in the framework of project management. Translation jobs assigned by clients to TSPs are handled as typical projects. In *A guide to the project management body of knowledge* (2004: 5) a project is defined as “a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service or result”. Bearing characteristic features of a project, translation can be visualized by means of the so-called project triangle, also referred to as a triangle of triple constraints (adapted from Chatfield):

![Figure 4: The triangle of triple constraints](image)

A translation project is limited by its cost, time and quality. Since the three vertices of the triangle are connected, changing one of them inevitably affects at least one other vertex. It follows that producing a translation that is cheap, of a superior level of quality and delivered fast, with all these three aspects present simultaneously, is an impossible task to fulfil.

Clients, however, require the combination of the three attributes. Today’s busy life brings about the necessity to have everything done at the lowest cost possible, as quickly as possible as well as in the highest quality. Balancing those three aspects of the translation processing is a challenging mission for every TSP. A line must be drawn precisely where the price is still acceptable, the time of delivery is feasible and quality conforms to the client’s requirements.

Concerning the client’s viewpoints, I expected that there would be a general preference of low cost to the other two aspects. Although this assumption was largely confirmed by the research, we should take care not to overgeneralize. There are certain situations, and they may be quite numerous, when the price factor is not central to the translation. In some
cases a client is willing to compromise and pay a higher price either for a terminology correctness and accuracy of a translation or a faster delivery\(^2\).

Still, price plays a major role in translation business and clients often choose translation suppliers primarily by the most favourable pricing policy. In case translation buyers are not content with the budget of a translation project, they do not hesitate to ask for a discount or search for other strategies to lower the price, such as only partial translation or translation without consequent proofreading by a native speaker, as some TSPs suggest. CZ5 demonstrates this fact by an example: a large multi-national company has their texts translated by a Czech freelancer, which is very cheap, and subsequently asks CZ5 for proofreading by a native speaker, but the translation is so bad that it would be better to do a new translation. However, proofreading service is cheaper and that is why they are asked for proofreading only. CZ4 and CZ7 hold the same opinion that some clients tend to demand lower prices in reference to the global economic crisis. In spite of the fact that the crisis slowly recedes, especially on the translation market, this is a still convenient ‘alibi’ for translation buyers. These examples only demonstrate how sensitive clients are to translation cost.

3.5.2 Quality Assurance

There is a wide gap between the linguistic quality of translation and the client’s evaluation of the final product delivered by a TSP\(^3\). From the market-oriented perspective, it is not only a translated text itself, but the whole set of other circumstances that influence client’s overall satisfaction.

To ensure that the clients gets what they expect, a vast majority of TSPs (or at least those who are aware of their role in the translation business environment) implement quality assurance procedures which extend throughout the entire translation process, but take place also before and after a project and are adhered to by all TSP’s members. The elements of quality assurance can be divided into the following areas (adapted from Mossop, 2001: 93):

- quality of service – embraces issues such as reliability in terms of meeting set deadlines; good and open communication with colleagues and partners; prompt and satisfactory process of dealing with complaints; keeping records of translation projects for client’s information or future reference

\(^2\) the latter example refers to express projects that are dealt with in more detail

\(^3\) see chapter 2.4 Perceptions of Quality in the Translation Market Environment
• quality of the physical product – accounts for meeting translation buyer’s requirements in terms of the formal aspects of a text such as the page layout, formatting etc. or for the method of delivery
• quality of the translation – includes above all the issues connected with terminology and the style of writing adapted to the purpose of translation

It is only a combination of the three ingredients outlined above that results in the client’s satisfaction and significantly increases the probability of a long-term cooperation. Should only one of the aspects be underestimated or performed at a lower-than-expected level, the client will without doubts notice and will search a more reliable TSP.

3.5.3 TSPs’ Business Strategy and their Position on the Market

I would like to emphasise another perspective that is often neglected in connection to translation quality: the approach of TSPs themselves to the business environment and the position that they occupy in it. What I have in mind is the image of a particular TSP, the way they present themselves, their background and history, the motivation for doing business in the translation industry, the issue of specialization in certain areas of expertise, the language combinations or text types and the portfolio of services they provide. Although these aspects may not have a major effect on the linguistic level of the TSP’s output, we can undoubtedly trace an influence on the level of services or added value provided to translation buyers. In the highly competitive environment, which the translation industry without fail represents, translation buyers are very price-sensitive⁴ and, apart from the matter-of-course linguistic quality of translation, demand (although in most cases only implicitly⁵) a high level of client services, including a frequently underestimated aspect of personalised communication, helpfulness of PMs who are responsible for translation projects, stretching even beyond contractual terms, and added value in various forms. For that reason the TSPs’ approach to the translation business as such will have further implications at this level.

The first aspect is the motivation for doing translation business. Some TSPs are commercially oriented, viewing translations as a simple way of making money. The others care about the translation as a process, do their best to accommodate the clients’ requests, and the money follows. This different business strategy reflects in the ‘atmosphere’ of the translation process and subsequently in clients’ satisfaction with the business and

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⁴ see the previous chapter 3.5.1 Cost, Time or Quality?
⁵ for more details refer to chapter 2.3.4 The Role of Subjectivity in TQA
translation quality as well because one likes his job, he does it well. Nevertheless, clients blindly prefer those TSPs that offer the lowest price, although to the detriment of quality. As I have hoped and the research has proven, the second group of TSPs is considerably larger. They are willing to give up profit temporarily for the sake of a successful long-term cooperation and they project their image on the constantly high level of their services quality.

The second perspective focuses on the distinction between a TSP specialising in certain areas of expertise, types of documents or language combinations on one hand and a TSP dealing with just any type of a translation project on the other hand. The specialization brings about certain advantages, most importantly profound knowledge on the subject matter and detailed quality supervision, but contrary to my expectations there were no TSPs focusing on a few selected areas that would decline translation jobs that wouldn’t belong to their scope of specialization. The interpretation is obvious: they are not the TSPs themselves who ‘specialize’, but their suppliers, therefore TSPs specialization depends on the knowledge of their translators. Since a TSP typically cooperates with a large number of translators (the addressed TSPs usually stated that their database of translators comprises hundreds or even thousands of suppliers of various areas of expertise, language combinations and directions), it is very rare that a translation project is declined. TSPs also show a high degree of flexibility with respect to the type of jobs they process. To give a few examples, several TSPs have expanded their business into the field of translations for the European Union because the demand has been growing recently and it was a great opportunity for their development, or a TSP located in an industrial area processes the majority of translations on this subject for local companies – although it is not the TSP’s main specialization, they take advantage of the high demand in the particular market sector.

The third factor influencing the TSPs’ position on the market is the range of services they provide: either translation (and interpretation) services only or a wide range of language services, including additional proofreading and revising, language teaching, desktop publishing, language audits etc. This is rather convenient as the language services are ‘packaged’ and a TSP attends to all needs of a single client. Larger translation buyers in particular appreciate this complex approach. Tailoring services to client’s needs entails the feeling of individuality and respect that is very much valued by clients. The wide portfolio of services therefore clearly differentiates such TSPs from their competitors and large buyers are more likely to cooperate with a TSP providing a wide range of services.

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6 see chapter 3.7.3 Formal Complaints for some examples of this practice
As I have suggested in the examples above, the quality level of a TSP is not just a matter of the competence of the suppliers (translators, revisers etc.), but it depends to a large extent on the way a TSP functions in the market environment.

3.5.4 Translation as a Non-Commodity

Businesses operating in a modern economic environment take advantage of outsourcing as a means of increasing the effectivity in their business activity. Outsourcing often concerns not only input materials or products, but also services. Recent research on the global translation marketplace shows that from the total number of translation buyers, 87% outsource most or all of their jobs (Benitatto, 2006).

The reasons for outsourcing are numerous. Just to name a few, buyers may not have capacities to provide certain processes internally or they want to ensure a quality service that only businesses specializing in the particular area may offer. In this sense, ‘buying’ translation equals buying any other product or service. Nevertheless, most translation buyers do not understand that this is not the case: that translation is not a typical commodity traded on the market.

Durban & Melby (2007) explain why translation is not like any other goods that can be bought in a shop. The unique character of translation as a non-commodity is given by “the huge variety of possible specifications for a translation project” (2007: 3). A translation buyer must account for factors such as the type of the document, its specialization in a certain area of expertise, the intended target group and the purpose of the translation (i.e. for information or publication purposes) or the language variety of the TT. It is necessary that the buyers specify all of these requirements in order to obtain translation that is suited to their needs.

The above listed features of a translation project also imply that no two translations of the same ST will ever be the same (2007: 3). This is what translation buyers rarely realize: they simply expect their documents to be translated invariably by any TSP and, much to their disappointment, one TSP delivers quite a different text from another one, although both translations meet high quality standards and are perfectly acceptable for their purpose. This is quite a common dispute between TSPs and their dissatisfied clients, as TSPs frequently indicated in their responses.

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7 see chapter 3.5.5 Quality Levels Determined by Text Type and Translation Purpose
8 see chapter 3.7.3 Formal Complaints
As my research suggests, the translation buyers’ unawareness of the character of a translation product as a non-commodity is striking and widespread, irrespective of the area of expertise or the market location. Clients’ insight into the complexity of the translation process is very limited and TSPs often struggle with quite unrealistic requests and expectations. The only exception to this general rule is the case of translation buyers who have outsourced translation services on a long-term basis and therefore are experienced in this respect already and are able to assess which requirements are reasonable and which are virtually impossible to satisfy.

I personally consider the little knowledge of translation buyers alarming, but on the other hand I believe that buyers’ insight as to what the translation process encompasses can be enhanced by continuous interaction with TSPs that provide a client with the necessary background and request information that facilitate a successful translation process. By this close cooperation many misunderstandings and consequent client’s dissatisfaction could be prevented. GB3 realizes it well and provides their clients with a small ‘translator's brief’ which contains questions about the target audience, the tone and manner they want the translation to be in etc. so that they have an idea what underlies a successful translation process.

The TSPs addressed in my research, however, stressed that not every client is willing to cooperate so closely on the translation process. Translation buyers only little realize that their involvement, at least to some extent, is necessary as well as welcome, assuming that it is the TSP’s responsibility to ensure that the output is excellent. Mossop (2001) also claims that “educating clients is not easy” due to the client’s lack of interest, frequent changes of the person in charge of translation assignments within a buyer’s company (2001: 7) and perhaps little importance assigned to the information exchange by the client. The TSPs’ efforts to educate their clients should, in my opinion, be significantly increased as it thoroughly influences the translation process – from the initial formulation of clients’ needs to their satisfaction with the final product. Not only are clients getting more involved and feel respected, which positively affects the cooperative atmosphere, but also the criteria determining priorities and individual steps of the translation project are clearly formulated in advance, which facilitates the TSP’s work.

### 3.5.5 Quality Levels Determined by Text Type and Translation Purpose

It is no surprise that different text types require different translation strategies. In the words of Newmark (1998), “there are as many types of translations as there are of texts”
Similarly, various kinds of texts may differ by the level of quality assigned to them. I am referring to Mossop’s (2001: 7) division of translation quality into the two categories of the information and publication quality. Translation buyers rarely realize that the translation process must be suited to the intended objective of a translated text and believe that any text would be translated in the same way. It is, however, not the case: different approaches must be adopted when dealing with a text that would be used by the client in-house and would serve exclusively as a source of information or instructions, especially for a small number of people and for a shorter period of time. The other type of documents represent materials intended for a large audience, primarily outside readers, for a fairly long period of time – there are usually presentations of a company of various kinds (websites, promotional or advertising materials, service and product catalogues etc.).

Unlike translation buyers, TSPs often apply this approach: they differentiate between informative texts intended for the internal usage in a company and documents that would be subsequently published. An example given by a TSP participating in my survey illustrated such a distinction on the example of a company in-house directive where even minor grammatical or stylistic errors will not impair the overall acceptability of the document because it is the information it conveys that is central, and on the other hand on business correspondence addressed to the top management of a partner company where even a little detail such as a spelling mistake or inaccurate formulation might have fatal consequences, perhaps even losing the client.

3.5.6 Quality as Process or Product

The distinction between the process and the product nature of translation quality has been outlined in the methodological part above9. My research suggests that there is a tendency to view translation quality as being determined by numerous factors throughout the process of translation. It follows that TSPs grasp quality assurance in all its complexity and pay attention to every detail that may affect the translation quality. I have not encountered a single TSP who would promote quality assurance exclusively in terms of the product approach, i.e. the textual correctness and accuracy. TSPs are well aware of the process nature of translation projects and therefore they do not concentrate their attention solely on the final product, the TT, but also, if not predominantly, on other aspects of a translation process, such as the criteria for translators’ recruitment, which are often quite

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9 see chapter 3.4.3.1 Translation as a Process vs. Product
strict\textsuperscript{10}, or multiple translation checking. The individual factors impacting on the overall translation quality in the TSPs’ interpretation will be described in more detail in the following chapters.

3.5.7 Historical Comparison of Approaches to Translation Quality
There were no marked differences in the approach towards the complexity of the translation process with respect to quality assurance procedures in the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, some divergences might be revealed from the historical perspective.

Some of the Czech TSPs compared the current situation on the translation market with the way this business sector looked like some 20 years ago, in the period following the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and the development of a free market economy in the Czech Republic. According to their comments, there was little focus on translation quality in the 1990s: everybody would translate just anything into both mother and second languages. The quality delivered varied significantly among individual suppliers and clients actually didn’t have much idea of what the notion of quality meant and therefore didn’t require it. The strongest weapon in TSPs’ hands was not the superior quality of their translations, but competitive prices. In contrast to that, the situation nowadays is radically different: clients demand high-quality translations, whatever that may in their perspective imply, and TSPs compete not only by their pricing policy, but also by the demonstrated quality of their translations and last but not least by added value including additional services, charging no or little express fees or other loyalty bonuses.

3.5.8 The Market of Certified Translations
During my investigation of matters that TSPs deal with on a regular basis I often encountered the issue of court translators and interpreters where the concept of quality must be approached individually. In assessing the quality of a translation it is the court translator who has the final say as he/she proves the translation’s accuracy and correctness by adding the interpreter’s clause with his/her signature and an official round court stamp. Several TSPs noted that in spite of this guarantee a client is often dissatisfied with a certified translation owing to inaccuracies, e.g. in names’ transcription, numbers format or even their incompleteness. These are in no way minor mistakes, but ones that can make

\textsuperscript{10} see chapter 3.8.1 The Requirements for Translators Recruitment for more details
a huge difference in a court trial, for instance. The question to what extent a court stamp is a guarantee of quality therefore remains open to discussion.

3.6 Typical Translation Processing in the TSP’s Perspective

To be able to discover what contributes to translation quality of the final product, we need to immerse deeper into the translation process itself. The research confirmed my preliminary assumption that the translation workflow of individual TSPs would not significantly vary. The first and main point of contact for translation buyers is a project manager, also referred to as a project coordinator (PM), who is in charge of the whole translation workflow, from the first contact with the client to the final translation delivery and even beyond this process. The usual responsibilities of a PM, as stated by the majority of addressed TSPs, comprise:

- preparation of quotes and answering any translation buyers’ questions
- acknowledgment of the translation job receipt
- checking the ST and the assignment for clarity
- communication with the client about possible ambiguities
- selection of suitable suppliers, both translators and proofreaders/revisers (if applicable to the particular job)
- outlining the project’s time schedule
- translation supervision during its processing
- mediation of communication between the client and the translator
- pre-delivery comparison of the ST and TT in terms of the translation completeness and the TT formal correctness (e.g. a graphic layout) as well as determining whether the prearranged client’s requirements have been met (i.e. checking)
- sending the final translation to the client, including translator’s comments, if any
- keeping documentation and records

The scope of responsibilities assigned to a PM can be extended, for instance the CZ2’ PM sometimes also translates shorter texts and revises translations if time allows.

In any case, it is the PM who is responsible for the high-quality of translation output. This, however, presupposes some linguistic and practical insight into the translation process.

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11 in a certified TSP (see chapter 3.6.6 Certification)
While in the Czech Republic a university degree in translation or in a linguistic field is not required, the situation in English TSPs is quite different: a degree in translation or interpreting is a necessary precondition of a PM’s work. Some bigger TSPs (e.g. GB3 with about 15 PMs) even employ PMs from different backgrounds to be in charge of projects translated into their mother tongue. A PM’s knowledge of the target language is definitely an advantage, nevertheless, as numerous examples of Czech TSPs show, not a precondition of a successful translation. Translation projects are usually checked by another independent linguist\textsuperscript{12}, therefore second checkpoint is not necessary. However, it will not do any harm and in case the proofreader/reviser has failed to notice a mistake, the chances are that the second checking would reveal it. It shouldn’t be forgotten, though, that at least the basic foreign language knowledge is needed as PMs are constantly in touch with foreign translators and revisers.

As for the practical insight, I believe that a PM learns to thoroughly understand the process primarily by his/her own experience in the area. Dealing with a number of clients, their requirements and especially their feedback hugely contributes to a PM’s ability to identify possible problematic issues in advance and avoid client’s dissatisfaction by an effective communication. In relation to the earlier remark on clients’ lack of awareness of what to expect from a translation\textsuperscript{13}, CZ7 notes that it is always very welcome if a PM explains the process that would follow the assignment and proposes steps to be taken to eliminate possible problems, such as an additional revision by a specialist for a technical text or a preprint proofreading for materials that are to be published.

In this respect, the proactive role of a PM should be promoted. The scope of his/her responsibilities is indeed wider than that of a ‘member of the administrative staff’ as this position is sometimes labelled. The major role of a PM lies in effective communication with a client. A constant contact with a client does not represent only a means of preventing possible future misunderstandings, but also it is a way to learn useful information. A PM listens to the clients’ comments concerning the quality of the delivered translations, whether it is satisfaction or possible reservations. Additionally, he/she may encourage further cooperation development by offering other services suitable to the clients’ needs.

\textsuperscript{12} see chapter 3.6.3 Internal Processing: Checking, Revising, Proofreading, Editing  
\textsuperscript{13} see chapter 3.5.4 Translation as a Non-Commodity
A PM is thus a crucial figure of the translation process because he/she links all its participants and is responsible for a smooth translation workflow which comprises a careful selection of suppliers, time scheduling, budgeting, problem-solving etc.

### 3.6.1 The Initial Phase: Interaction with Clients and the Project Specification

Every translation project is initiated by the client who needs a certain document to be translated and contacts a TSP to deal with the request. If there is no established cooperation with a single TSP yet, a client rarely addresses only one random TSP, but turns to several agencies asking for a quote which is usually provided free of charge. Only after a client receives an offer that meets his expectations, it is confirmed and a TSP starts processing the translation. A vast majority of TSPs provide a free-of-charge translation of a short text in the extent of approximately one standard page\(^\text{14}\), as the demonstration of translation quality, or a discount for the first translation project. A similar procedure is applied in tenders placed by subjects from the public sphere, government translation buyers or large multinational companies. These selection procedures are usually large-scale, extend over a lengthy period of time and are aimed at establishing a long-term cooperation with a reliable TSP who complies with the defined requirements. Within such a tender, a TSP is usually obliged to prove its expertise and capabilities in the field concerned, substantiate them by references or a certain volume of translation, and last but not least offer such a rate that is acceptable for a client, including possible client or quantity discounts. Some translation buyers consider some kind of formal service certification\(^\text{15}\) a prerequisite of a successful cooperation. All of these demands presuppose a certain level of quality of the addressed TSP.

When a cooperation is established and a client assigns a translation project to a TSP, a PM is responsible for the job’s takeover. A PM is required to react to a client’s request promptly (i.e. to confirm the receipt of the demand for translation or ask for the clarification of requirements), in CZ7’s case within 15 minutes.

It is the PM’s primary responsibility to ensure that all information necessary for a successful processing of the job have been provided, that the terms and conditions of delivery and payment have been agreed on and that the source documents are complete and ready to be translated. Only then a translation process itself may be initiated. What has proven effective and greatly facilitating the assignment process and consequently the

\(^{14}\) usually calculated as 1,800 characters including spaces, alternatively 1,500 characters without spaces

\(^{15}\) see chapter 3.6.6 Certification
quality of translation is an introductory meeting of the translation buyer’s and the TSP’s representatives at the beginning of their cooperation. The goal of this meeting is to exchange information concerning client’s expectations, requirements, priorities as well as the TSP’s business terms and conditions and internal procedures, including the complexity of the translation process in general. As my survey and experience confirm, such discussions are vital for a smooth future cooperation.

PMs should encourage translation buyers to provide as much information and translation context as possible, to specify the purpose of the translation with respect to its further use\textsuperscript{16}, to supply any reference materials and/or terminology sources available. The lack of such information adversely affects both the process and product of translation and, as the TSPs often confirm, inadequate specification of the translation background or required set of terminology are the most frequent reasons for consequent complaints. However, the reason why clients do not provide the context or reference materials is not that they do not want to or do not have any at their disposal (which happens rarely, as CZ12 says), but because PMs do not stress its importance. GB7 says that clients rarely provide reference material without prompting. It follows that most complaints could be quite easily avoided if PMs clarified the importance of the translation context to a client. By effective communication, i.e. asking for the client’s motivation for the translation, the internal or external use of it, the audience or target group they have in mind, the destination of the translation (either country or a specific region) and in connection with the preferred language variant, PMs determine whether the translation would serve its purpose without an additional proofreading by a native speaker or whether a revision by a specialist would be necessary, and so on. By agreement with the client a procedure is outlined individually for each translation project.

CZ2 approached the issue of information shared by a client differently: client receive a written ‘Agreement on the Level of Services Provided’ with an explanation of what they can expect, i.e. in case there is no project-specific terminology supplied, a translator is entitled to use any terminology that is correct in the given context. By confirming the translation order, clients also agree on the conditions described in the Agreement and states that they are aware of the possible consequences (such as declining a possible formal complaint). The responsibilities for disputable aspects of translation are in this way transferred to the client’s side.

\textsuperscript{16} see information versus publication quality in chapter 3.5.5 Quality Levels Determined by Text Type and Translation Purpose
In spite of the fact that the CZ2’s method is definitely less time consuming and correct from the legal perspective, I strongly advocate the CZ11’s open communication approach. Not only this attitude is highly effective in ensuring the high-quality of the TT, but also it is a guarantee that the clients’ requirements are complied with. Moreover, thanks to their involvement in the process, the clients’ trust in the TSP is increased because their opinions are appreciated and they feel respected as customers.

3.6.2 Communication with a Translator: the Job Assignment and Clarification

Following the translation project assignment by a client, the PM’s tasks include outlining of the project schedule, preparation of the text to be translated and the reference materials (e.g. converting the ST to an appropriate format for CAT tools processing or creating a glossary based on the reference materials provided) and the selection of suitable suppliers for the job: translators, revisers, proofreaders, desktop publishers etc. In this section, I will primarily deal with the translator’s role in the process.

A job is usually assigned in two steps: firstly, the translator’s availability is checked and he/she is offered the job (usually defined only in terms of the language combination and direction, the document’s type and subject area, wordcount, deadline and possibly a budget). Secondly, when accepted by the translator, further details of the project are communicated to him/her via a purchase order. It ideally comprises the description of the project and all the information provided by the client: both reference materials (as they were delivered or compiled into a glossary or a termbase) and special requirements, which may be supplemented by a link to the client’s website or any other relevant information. It is a usual practice of the larger TSPs in particular (GB5, CZ7) that one PM is in charge of all projects of the same type or of the same client. This method ensures a consistency in the terminology used in that context or any specific procedures applied to the translation processing. With this knowledge, a PM may suggest possible improvements drawing on his/her experience in dealing with similar projects or provide some helpful hints to the translator concerning the text tone and style. This is without doubts a very useful approach.

The methods of a translation assignment vary, nevertheless a majority of TSPs take advantage of tailor-made information systems or applications enabling them not only to assign individual translation projects, but to monitor their progress too. Such systems also include the database of suppliers or clients and have additional functions, for instance the selection of suitable translators according to the given criteria or the evaluation of translators’ performance. Nevertheless, the smaller TSPs do not need such sophisticated
systems and, as I was told by CZ5, their assignment process is fairly informal, comprising basically just a telephone call during checking the translator’s availability for the job and the subsequent delivery of the ST by email.

Having all the instructions, the translator may start translating. He/she works independently of the TSP, using his/her own translation strategies to ensure that the final product is in compliance with the requirements and information provided. With any type of text or area of expertise it may happen that a translator is not sure about some terms meaning or does not understand the meaning of the ST which is unclearly written. In that case he/she is supposed to turn to the TSP for advice. During my research I asked the individual TSPs whether translators address them with enquiries about the translation job during its processing. Their responses were similar: translators rarely ask, although they are encouraged to do so. There is a dilemma whether a translator should work independently and apply his/her knowledge alone as best as his/her can, or whether a translation should be produced in cooperation with other subjects (a TSP, colleague translators, an expert in a certain field). CZ12’s view is that a translator should work independently, but it is the TSP’s task to ensure that all aspects of translation, such as the client-specific terminology, are clear to his/her. Translators might adopt the faulty reasoning that their enquiries may disturb the TSP and that they would look silly for asking such banal question. The TSPs, however, take the view that the best results are achieved in cooperation and they welcome any kinds of enquiries from their translators. The TSPs find an answer by themselves if possible (e.g. by searching the Internet – as some of the TSPs noted, it is often the case that a translator simply did not check the suitability and acceptability of his/her solution on the Internet17) and if they are unable to resolve the problem on their own, they forward it to the client. This procedure is always preferred to the ignoring of the problem by a translator.

In order to prevent possible misunderstandings, some TSPs (e.g. CZ2 and CZ8) handling extensive translation projects organize introductory trainings for the participating translators who are given any materials and instructions needed for their further independent work. Another strategy, adopted for example by CZ9, lies in sending the translator a summary of instructions applicable to every translation project, such as how to work with terminology or CAT tools, how to contact us etc. Both of these methods are, in my view, fairly useful tools for TSPs to assist their translators, to encourage them to ask questions and also to make sure that they clearly understand what they are expected to do.

17 see chapter 3.8.2 Translators' Major Weaknesses
As far as the types of enquiries sent by translators are concerned, they comprise the most common terminology issues (particularly the client-specific terminology, for example company abbreviations or acronyms, as GB6 and CZ6 say), the requirements of a graphic design or formatting of the translated document, the ambiguities of the ST (where the meaning is not quite clear and more context is needed for the correct interpretation) or the illegible sections of a text (which is mostly the case of handwritten legal documents intended for a certified translation by a court interpreter). CZ6 mentioned some cases when a translator revealed factual errors in the original. The correction of these inaccuracies should be approached individually, taking into consideration the wider context: some piece of information is crucial to the message communicated by the ST and must be properly transferred to the TT, while another may not influence the correct meaning of the text at all and therefore does not have to be paid much attention. This division is analogical to the Mossop’s distinction between a major and a minor error and the decision whether such inconsistency is key to the message transferred\textsuperscript{18}. In any case, the client should be informed about the mistake and consulted about further steps to be taken. Moreover, the client will in most cases be grateful for the corrections which are beyond the scope of the services normally offered by the TSP.

\subsection*{3.6.3 Internal Processing: Checking, Revising, Proofreading, Editing}

The reason why most translation buyers outsource translation services from TSPs is that they can rely on a certain level of the TSPs’ output quality which is guaranteed by the internal processes beyond the typical translation activity, such as the translation checking, revising, proofreading or editing. The role of TSPs in this process is indispensable. As CZ1 says, various mistakes and inaccuracies in the texts that translators deliver are common due to the careless approach and not paying enough attention to details. Therefore a thorough checking before the final translation is sent to the client is absolutely necessary.

The type of checking procedures applied to a specific translation job depends on a variety of factors: the client’s requirements or the TSP’s decision, the text type and purpose, the language into which the text is translated, the competence of a translator etc. It is difficult to outline a standardized workflow of checking translator’s work at this point as each TSP handles the task in a different manner.

\footnote{see chapter 2.3.2 Developing Objective Assessment Methods}
Generally speaking, any TSP’s processes can be carried out internally or externally. The PM is responsible for the work distribution among the suppliers. Some tasks may be done by the PM him/herself, while some projects are revised or proofread internally and externally. Translation can be checked from the point of view of the linguistic (grammar, stylistics), technical (terminology) or formal (layout, completeness) compliance with the client’s specific requirements.

When discussing the procedures taking place between the text translation and its delivery to the client, it should first of all be noted that the terms ‘checking’, ‘revising’, ‘proofreading’ and ‘editing’ are often used inconsistently by TSPs, which is, however, not a surprising fact.

In my description I apply the Mossop’s definitions of the terms. In the context of a text revision proofreading is defined as checking of a text for coherence and an appropriate stylistics and linguistic level, which is “limited to corrections (i.e. no improvements are made)”, while revising is understood as a comparison of a draft translation with the ST and “making appropriate amendments” when necessary. Editing does not exclusively apply to translational texts and its aim is to adjust the text to suit its purpose. Checking of a translation entails “identifying error, without necessarily correcting them” (Mossop, 2001: 165-169).

As my survey shows, the most common method of a pre-delivery translation processing is an external proofreading by another translator followed by a formal checking by the PM. Although the final step of the PM’s checking is always performed, the external phase is sometimes skipped – with languages that the PM knows and is therefore able to supervise the linguistic correctness by him/herself, with shorter or non-specialized texts, in case of a translation for information purposes or if the client has expressed the wish to skip the proofreading as the translation will be checked internally. On the other hand, external revision or proofreading is always carried out when it is an integral part of the workflow, as regulated by the TSP’s directives or certification standards. Especially the English TSPs pride themselves on this double or even triple (in case of the PM’s competence in the target language) revisions being an integral part of the translation workflow. It cannot be denied that a fresh pair of eyes may reveal mistakes left uncorrected by the previous reviser or proofreader, but the problem may arise when revisers make such amendments that they are not authorized for and the corrections impair the translation’s consistency with the original text. To avoid this, some TSP adopt the strategy of setting priorities as to what the area of responsibility of a particular supplier is: while the translator’ task is to produce

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19 see chapter 3.5.5 Quality Levels Determined by Text Type and Translation Purpose
a faithful and stylistically adequate translation, the proofreader's job is to correct possible spelling mistakes and the reviser is responsible for the terminology accuracy and consistency. Evidently, these competencies correspond with the above mentioned Mossop’s definitions of the individual roles, but TSPs stress the importance of communicating the task to translators as specifically as possible to prevent misunderstanding.

As the TSPs responses imply, the fact that the reviser or proofreader, as well as the translator, must be native in the target language is an essential precondition in the United Kingdom, while the Czech TSPs are content with any translator working into the target language. It may be a bit distorted by the possibility that the Czech TSPs regard this condition as a matter of course, but the truth is that they rarely stressed it during the interview, unlike the English TSPs.

Some revisions are done with the focus on the expertise of the reviser rather than on his/her profound knowledge of the target language. Specialist professionals, such as lawyers, engineers etc., are asked to revise jobs that have been translated by a native speaker, so that superior quality at both the linguistic and the professional level is guaranteed.

Translation buyers are mostly interested whether the external revision or proofreading is included in the translation price or whether it is provided as an additional service. As I learnt from the TSPs answers, internal formal checking (and sometimes also proofreading) is always an indispensable part of the workflow and is therefore included in the translation price as defined in the quote. However, revision (e.g. of technical documentation or highly-specialized types of translation), editing (e.g. of marketing texts) or pre-print proofreading are usually charged extra. From the TSP’s point of view this is a logical step, as these services are in fact beyond the scope of the translation process itself. Nevertheless, the clients expect that the final product would come in a complete ‘package’, that they would receive a translation that is ready for an immediate publication without the need of further amendments or corrections. They are rarely willing to pay anything extra to get what they expect. Again, it is the responsibility of the PM to get in touch with the client and explain the reasons why a certain type of revision or editing is important and should be implemented. If the clients know what they would get for their money, they are more likely to pay, as CZ11 says. To accommodate the clients’ requests, some TSPs offer a complex service, when a client pays for the translation and any necessary proofreading or revision jobs altogether. The major drawback of this policy is the fact that the final price is
seemingly higher than the price that their competitors charge. Because translation buyers tend to prefer the cheapest supplier and do not check what they are actually paying for, they may choose a TSP that is in reality more expensive.

Although the steps carried out by a TSP in the pre-delivery phase of the translation processing are crucial for enhancing the quality of the final translation products, they cannot substitute the proper translation as such. CZ10 stressed that proofreading and revising can rectify formal inaccuracies, translation incompleteness or linguistic errors, but the overall translation quality in terms of the formulation of ideas, the translation faithfulness or the overall ‘image’ of the text depends heavily on the translator.

### 3.6.4 Providing Feedback to Translators

What some TSPs view as the essential step in improving the quality of their services, but others only as a time- and energy-consuming effort beyond the scope of their activities is the processing and providing feedback for their translators.

About half of the participating TSPs processes the feedback within every translation project and provide it to translators immediately. The corrections or suggestions in a written form are usually compiled by a reviser/proofreader or a PM during the pre-delivery phase of translation checking. The client’s comments are forwarded to the translator when available. Only in case of one TSP, CZ12, the feedback procedure is standardized to the extent that a reviser is asked to fill in an evaluation form for each job. He/she assesses certain aspects of the translator’s performance, for example the usage of terminology or the stylistic level of the translation, and can add his/her own comments. This form is given to a translator only if negative evaluation prevails, otherwise it serves for the information purposes of the PM only. CZ12 stated that they regret not to be able to send all the feedback due to time constraints, even though they are aware of how important it is to give not only negative, but also positive feedback.

The other half of my research sample provides feedback to their translators only if some serious problems occur or if there is a large number of errors in a single translation job. This is usually a project that the client complained about. Exceptionally translators ask for feedback on their own initiative and in that case they receive it. Translators are often consulted about their disputable solutions during the proofreading/revision phase if time allows. I did not regard this type of communication as ‘feedback’ in the true sense of the word within my research, although there is no doubt that reactions of a PM or other colleagues are definitely immensely useful for a translator in terms of his/her translation and language skills development.
3.6.5 Express Projects

I have included the topical issue of express project into the research on purpose. As my experience suggests, there is a growing tendency towards the ‘acceleration’ of the translation turnaround. According to my expectations, all TSPs confirmed this assumption without exception. CZ2 even accounts all projects express or CZ11 ironically remarks that the deadline preferred by most clients is ‘yesterday’.

Although the proportion of express projects to the jobs with a standard deadline given by TSPs ranged between 7 and 50%, the increasing trend towards speeding up the translation processing was clearly recognized by all of them. It is a common practice to charge extra fees for express delivery and although most TSPs still do (ranging between 20 to 100% of the translation price), the majority of the TSPs limit these express fees to the projects that cannot be handled by a single translator and must be split between two or even more of them in order to meet the tight deadline. Some TSPs also feel the pressure to reduce express fees or to abandon their application altogether in such projects that are still manageable (CZ2, CZ11). CZ8 says that their competitors attract customers by cutting down or even completely cancelling the express fees, but it is natural to pay extra if you demand something more than a standard service. Therefore this represents a real dilemma for most TSPs. They often claim that they cannot afford reducing express fees because their suppliers charge them for the express delivery as well. GB3 devised an interesting method to avoid being charged extra by their translators: they try to find a translator from another time zone to avoid night shifts.

The fundamental question, however, is what the characteristics of an ‘express’ project are. Although this is not a rule, they are commonly defined in terms of the translation pace, when the delivery of a project of more than 6-8 standards pages per day is considered express. Small jobs with extent of one or two standard pages can be delivered almost immediately (CZ11) or within 1 or 2 hours (GB4). GB4 adds that this is a normal phenomenon. However, GB1 is an exception in that they never deliver on the same day. They justify their view by the statement “it’s better to sleep and think about it.” Nevertheless, most TSPs feel the pressure to deliver as soon as possible and do their best to satisfy the clients’ needs. As CZ8 noted, clients remember when you do something extra to help them in a difficult situation and they will happily come back in the future.

As I was mainly interested in the methods of maintaining the standard level of quality with express projects, I asked participating TSP representatives how they deal with tight deadlines and to what extent the normal translation workflow is altered. The most frequent
reaction was that they first of all negotiate with the client, give them reasons why producing a good translation would be difficult under the given conditions and try to agree on postponing the deadline. If the client insists on the set deadline, they employ more translators in the project. However, splitting the work between several revisers is not advisable (GB3, CZ12). CZ12 remarks that the translation’s splitting itself may jeopardize the quality of the final product and CZ7 adds that splitting particularly affects the consistency in the legal documents, such as contracts. GB5 applies special ‘urgency terms of business’ stipulating that the splitting of a translation is allowed and in-house checking may be skipped if there is not enough time for it. The clients are always notified in advance. The situation is similar with the Czech TSPs: if they assess that the standard translation workflow cannot be complied with, they inform the client about the implications (such as no proofreading by a native speaker) and start the translation only after they agree on the conditions.

Nevertheless, “[q]uality takes time,” as Mossop (2001: 88) says. CZ5 claim that they would never compromise on quality and whenever they accept a translation project, it is delivered to the high quality standard even at the expense of missing the deadline. In the CZ7’s opinion, it is nearly impossible to produce a good translation quickly and with no extra costs in certain fields, such as accounting, where special attention must be paid to little details (e.g. number formats).

Express projects therefore increase the probability of client’s complaints. Contrary to my expectations, the amount of complaints about express project in comparison with standard jobs is not markedly higher, but in fact it is even lower, as confirmed by several TSPs. They ascribe it to the clients’ awareness of the limited time for the translation processing and they therefore tolerate some minor mistakes or inconsistencies. CZ6 assign such jobs to the experienced and reliable translators only in order to avoid possible complaints.

In any case, it is an undeniable fact which is particularly true with express projects, that effective communication is the key to client’s satisfaction: as long as the clients know what to expect for the price they pay and in the limited time, they are satisfied.

3.6.6 Certification

The issue of translation quality closely relates to the quality assurance standards, namely ISO 9001, EN 15038 (internationally) and CEPRES:2007 (in the Czech Republic). My research aimed to reveal whether such standards implemented by the TSPs enhance the quality of the translation process and product and if so, in what ways.
Among the English TSPs only one out of 8 is not certified while the rest complies with ISO and/or EN standards. The prevalence of certified TSPs within the Czech sample is not that obvious, with only 8 certified TSPs compared to 4 non-certified.

Considering the reasons for and against certification, we discover quite contradictory tendencies. The most frequently stated reasons for certification include firstly an internal perspective: a significant contribution to the standardization, harmonization and improvement of internal procedures, such as keeping records of individual projects and collecting feedback from their translators. CZ7 perceives that certification gives a powerful impetus for further development of the company thanks to the regular internal and external audits. Secondly, the TSPs stress the external point of view: they perceive certification as a guarantee of their services’ quality, the feature that differentiates them from their competitors and provides a comparative advantage on the market. Alternatively, certification may be required by a client or represent a condition for the participation in tenders, as is the case of CZ11 or CZ9.

The arguments against certification are also strong: CZ6 states that translation buyers do not prefer certified TSPs, that it is not required by the market environment in general and the only subjects who benefit from certification are the certification authorities. CZ5 believes that quality should draw on mutual trust between the client and the TSP and not on formal standards that have no effect in reality. Moreover, clients are allegedly not willing to pay more for certified services. CZ3 adds that the certification as such does not guarantee the quality of translations and that the conditions for its granting are not transparent. Nevertheless, all TSPs are satisfied with their current position, i.e. those supporting certification are certified and those opposing are not.

However strong the arguments of the two opposing sides are, they mostly concern the quality of the process, but not the product of translation. The problem is that translation is a creative activity depending on a number of varied factors such as the context and purpose (Vanghelof, 2004) and therefore it is difficult to outline a certain standard that it could comply with. Certification can be a useful tool depending on the TSPs’ strategy and business goals, but should not be regarded as a universal instrument of enhancing the service quality. Only if harmonized with other elements shaping the translation process it can bring about the desired effect. CZ10 who is sceptical of certification claims that the quality ultimately lies in the people involved in the translation process and the way they approach and apply it. For instance, CZ12 views the EN 15038 certification as a starting point and implements even some processes beyond the scope of the certification (e.g.
performs internal pre-delivery checking by a PM, recommends additional proofreading services to clients etc.). This added value significantly contributes to the client’s satisfaction with the overall translation and service quality.

3.6.7 Computer Aided Translation Tools
As is the case with certification, CAT tools also represent a controversial issue in terms of their contribution to translation quality. Although some TSPs use CAT tools on a daily basis (CZ2, CZ10 and CZ12), others do not assign much importance to them (CZ5 and CZ11). The usefulness of these tools draws largely on the type of projects that a certain TSP deals with. CAT tools are particularly effective for extensive projects running in the long term or for technical translations or localizations: they save time and guarantee the terminology consistency, as CZ10 confirms. On the other hand, documents that are not delivered in an electronic form, such as those intended for a certified translation, cannot be processed by CAT tools unless rewritten into an electronic form, which is rather time-consuming.

One of the drawbacks of CAT tools was identified by CZ6 who says that as clients are getting more aware of the possibilities that CAT tools provide, they prefer the CAT translation to the manual translation because they can get a discount\textsuperscript{20} for matches and repetitions within the text. In this perspective, even a worse translator has more chances on the market than an excellent translator without CAT tools. The clients’ preferences in terms of translation methods also influence the TSPs’ requirements that their suppliers must meet\textsuperscript{21}.

There is one more interesting observation made by CZ6: owing to CAT tools the translation market is shrinking: translators are processing larger volumes in a shorter time period for lower prices. They are more effective, but as a result they deprive themselves of more work.

3.7 Client’s Satisfaction and Complaints
In the previous chapter I have presented the TSPs’ perspectives on the notion of translation quality: the way they maintain their quality standard, what procedures are performed in order to enhance quality of both their translations and related services.

\textsuperscript{20} see chapter 3.5.1 Cost, Time or Quality? on clients’ sensitivity to the translation price

\textsuperscript{21} see chapter 3.8.1 The Requirements for Translators Recruitment for more details

47
In the following chapters I will change the angle of looking at translation quality to that of translation buyers: what is their understanding of translation quality, what they expect and how their requirements are complied with in reality.

3.7.1 The Client’s View on the Issue of Quality
It is not possible to offer translation buyers a service that would satisfy them without knowing their expectations. I wondered what TSPs believe that plays the major role in the clients’ perception of translation quality.

The survey shows that according to TSPs, the best client-suited translation:

- fulfils all the conditions specified by the client: the set deadline, the pre-agreed price and any specific requests in terms of the terminology, the applied procedures or any other kind of demands (CZ2, CZ6)
- is completely error-free and accurate (CZ2, GB2 and GB7), which is in fact the necessary precondition of quality (CZ9)
- is a final product that is ready for its further use by the client with no need of additional amendments or corrections (CZ1) and fully functional (such as cross-references in software products, as CZ2 notes)
- communicates the same message as the ST (CZ7)
- reads well and does not look like a translation (GB6, CZ12)
- is automatically and free-of-charge proofread by a native speaker (GB4, CZ3)
- proves the TSP’s expertise in the client’s subject matter, including appropriate style (GB3, GB6 and CZ10)

As CZ8 notes, the client expects ‘the whole package’ of the aspects mentioned above. CZ4 emphasizes that quality is always put first, while the deadline and price issues might be negotiated. In CZ11’s view, the main criterion of quality is the compliance with any requests the client makes, whatever they might concern.

Clearly, the translation buyers’ notion of quality is rather complex and to fulfil all the client’s expectations is an ambitious task for a TSP. However, since TSPs are aware of their clients’ needs, they strive to adjust the internal processes to produce translations to the high standard and offer added value to the translation buyers, e.g. by tailoring internal procedure to their needs and promoting their deeper involvement in the translation process, as CZ8 does.

CZ6, CZ7 and CZ12 highlight that each client should be approached individually and therefore a successful cooperation should draw on personal communication with each
client. It is essential to clarify what aspects they give preference to and what priorities they assign to individual projects. Only then a successful translation may be produced.

3.7.2 The Feedback provided by a Client

No business can be successful in the long term if it does not take into account the clients’ feedback. Based on the translation buyers’ reactions, a TSP should take measures to enhance the procedures involved in the translation processing.

I was, however, surprised that not all of the addressed TSPs systematically keep records of the clients’ response to their work. Some TSPs do not feel the necessity to ask for feedback or they even disapprove of its collection because it disturbs and bothers the clients (CZ6). CZ5 believes that it is the repeated business that indicates the clients’ level of satisfaction and CZ12 adds that if clients are dissatisfied, they tend to express their objections by themselves and it is not necessary for a TSP to take the initiative. Some TSPs believe that the fact that clients do not communicate any feedback means that they were satisfied – this general view is held, among others, by CZ2, CZ4 and CZ10. Mossop (2001: 88), on the contrary, claims that this argument is fallacious as clients may not be able to recognize a poor translation from a good one and therefore may consider a mistranslation to be a feature of the TT. On the other hand, no response from clients may also imply that they were not satisfied at all and therefore did not bother communicate further with the TSP or that they even decided to change the translation supplier without any notice, as CZ3 remarks.

The TSPs’ diverse attitudes towards feedback render any summarization pointless as what is considered to be a ‘positive response’ by one TSP may be understood as a negative one by another, as in the no-reaction case.

Yet, any feedback gathered is helpful and some TSPs fully realize its importance and follow procedures to collect it on a regular basis, for example they call new clients after the first three translation projects (CZ8) or address clients once a year or only after complex and long-term projects (CZ1). However, CZ9 complains that even if they actively ask their clients for feedback, only a small percentage replies.

As the addressed TSPs say, positive feedback prevails: clients express their overall satisfaction with the translation as such and with the services provided, i.e. the TSP’s professional and accommodating approach, reliability, flexibility, the high service standard (CZ1, CZ7 and CZ11). They also value the processing of large text volumes or non-standard formats, e.g. a handwritten text, the individual approach (CZ2, CZ7), a prompt reply, the compliance with their requirements, assistance in difficult situations like tight
deadlines (CZ8) and especially any added value and services provided beyond the pre-agreed scope, such as pointing out some mistakes or inaccuracies in the original text (e.g. from the point of view of legal correctness, as CZ9 says). Sometimes clients ask for the same translator for the following projects because they were very satisfied with the terminology, its consistency and the language style (CZ1, CZ10).

As far as the negative clients’ response is concerned, CZ4, CZ10 and CZ11 mentioned a high price, which is, however, not limited to the translation business environment but is often criticized in other fields of business too. CZ4 ironically remarks that price is never too low for a client to be satisfied. Other frequently disputed aspects include terminology inconsistencies or the usage of incorrect terminology (CZ7, CZ10 and CZ12), small inaccuracies in number or name transcriptions, punctuation errors and typos (CZ1, CZ3, CZ11). CZ7 says than the negative feedback frequently concerns a so called ‘collision’, which is a term they internally use for a disagreement over the stylistic quality of a translation. As the CZ7 stressed, it is in most cases the Russian language where various interpretations of a single text by different native speakers are possible and clients usually ‘have their own truth’ about the correct formulation. Another type of the negative response can be ascribed to the clients who complain ‘perpetually’, whatever it may be about, as CZ3 know from their experience. CZ6 observed that long-term clients are not reluctant to provide feedback and whenever they are not satisfied with anything, they react immediately, which is not the case with the occasional clients or ‘customers from the street’, as they call clients who usually assign small and one-shot projects. This only stresses the importance of establishing a strong relationship with a client as the cooperation is closer and any problems can be promptly solved.

There is a substantial difference between the characteristics of the positive and negative feedback: whereas the positive response tends to be rather general and related to the service aspect of a TSP’s activity, the negative one focuses on the translation as a product and the textual level of a translation. It is perhaps caused by the fact that clients naturally expect the linguistic aspect to be perfect and therefore do not praise it if it meets their expectations. On the other hand, they rarely complain about the level of services offered, such as communication, accommodativeness, added value etc. In relation to what was stated above, it raises an interesting question: are clients not complaining about the level of services because it is excellent already or because they do not consider it to be a standard, because they do not expect it to be good?
3.7.3 Formal Complaints

There is only a narrow margin between the negative response and a formal complaint as such, which was also reflected in the way TSPs answered these questions during the interview. It was not an exception that when asked about the positive and negative feedback, a TSP sooner or later came to talk about complaints. It is because defining a complaint is tricky: in general terms, it is an expression of the client’s dissatisfaction. However, a client may only express dissatisfaction when directly asked for it, as in the case of the feedback collection. In the framework of my research I understand a complaint as the initiative of a client, because the way a complaint is made also testifies the level of its seriousness: in case clients do not regard the error or inaccuracy as fundamental, they do not waste their time on complaining.

Another important feature of a complaint is its legitimacy: is the client’s argument justified or is it merely a preferential change? Did they specify the requirements that have been allegedly violated in the assignment phase of the translation project or do they communicate their priorities only after the project has been finalized and delivered? Has the complaint been filed in the way defined in the TSP’s business terms and conditions? These are all questions that must be answered first. The CZ3’s, CZ4’s and CZ8’s terms and conditions stipulate that clients must be specific in their complaint. On that account their complaint is automatically rejected if they express their overall dissatisfaction with the translation.

Some TSP’s participating in the survey, e.g. CZ7, CZ11 and CZ12, state that, despite they emphasize the importance of having as much information about the project as possible, clients often do not provide any reference material and do not specify other project aspects, such as the target group or further use of the text. Consequently, when clients find out that the translation does not fulfil their expectations, they file a formal complaint, which is, however, in such cases not considered legitimate. Similarly, when the clients do not express their requests for a special formatting or graphic design of the final text in advance, their arguments cannot be accepted later, as CZ7 says.

Nevertheless, not all disagreements are so transparent. Various misunderstandings are common, as CZ6 claims, and it often happens that although both sides believe that they have provided/received all background information, there is something missing that would have an adverse effect on the final translation’s level of quality. These are often the hidden expectations, or as Mossop (2001: 6) calls them, implied needs.²² CZ2 states that although

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²² see chapter 3.5.5 Quality Levels Determined by Text Type and Translation Purpose
they strive to learn as much context as possible from the client, not all the conflicts can be prevented. Even though TSPs are widely experienced and advise their clients on what is required for a successful translation, they may incorrectly assess the clients’ implied needs. Once a complaint is filed, TSPs must deal with it, which is usually a fast process: forthwith (CZ8) or taking no more than 3 days (CZ9). The procedure is relatively homogeneous in most TSPs: the translation is assessed in terms of the type and seriousness of the identified errors either by a PM, the translator/reviser or, particularly in the case of any disputes, by an external translator/reviser, sometimes in a reversed order. CZ2 comments on each error providing its detailed analysis and proposed corrections. The evaluation is then communicated to the client who is offered a discount based on the level of seriousness of the complaint. CZ12 adds, however, that discount is not always the best solution of the complaint: it goes without saying that the client expects primarily the correction of the concerned translation and more attention paid to his projects in the future. GB7 rectifies any professional mistakes for free but if it the case of preferential terms, they would charge client for more than a 2-hour work. The process, however, is not finished by the submission of the corrected text to the client, as CZ11 remarks. The complaint results in the subsequent remedial measures involving both translators and revisers as well as the refinement of internal processes.

Even though the reasons for dissatisfaction may be questionable, for instance when the ST quality was poor, as CZ4 and CZ7 remind, TSPs always try to settle the conflict peacefully – it is in the interest of both sides, as most TSPs confirm. According to some Czech TSPs, it is often worth sacrificing something now for the sake of a successful cooperation in the future. For instance, a proper correction of a translation that has been returned with a formal complaint is both time-consuming and expensive, nonetheless, in the long-term perspective such investment returns because clients appreciate the accommodative attitude and will return with more projects in the future. With more attention paid to the details during the translation processing and efficient communication with clients, the number of formal complaints subsequently declines, which induces the psychological effect of the awareness that ‘we do a great job, we do it right’, as CZ8 and CZ12 confirm, which in turn motivates the TSPs for even better performance.

GB3 applies a different approach to complaints that I have not encountered with any other TSP so far. They issue a so called ‘guarantee certificate’ which allows clients to get back to them in case they are not satisfied with translation quality. Based on this certificate, GB3 amend the translations according to the clients’ comments without any further costs.
Thanks to this procedure there are no formal complaints at all, since the clients eventually receive the perfect translation.

As the outlined procedure implies, the essential aspect in dealing with any kind of complaint is the TSP’s accommodativeness in terms of acknowledging ‘the client’s truth’, as CZ1 calls it, or justification of the suggested solutions together with the personal approach to each client’s needs and expectations.

3.8 Translator as the Core Element in the Translation Process

Although I originally intended to focus my research solely on the TSP’s views of their internal procedures, I have broadened the scope to include the role of a translator as well, as it emerged that he/she is assigned the key importance within the process of translation production by TSPs. And he/she rightly is. Having excellent translators minimizes possible problems and largely facilitates the whole translation process.

3.8.1 The Requirements for Translators Recruitment

Let us first investigate what TSPs seek in their translators, i.e. what requirements should candidates for translation-related jobs meet. All participating TSPs answered a multiple-choice question concerning their criteria for the translators’ recruitment and the results are presented in the Figure 5 and Figure 6 on page 56. Apart from the listing of the candidates’ qualities, the TSPs also provided their comments on the individual aspects, which are detailed below.

3.8.1.1 Qualification

My survey suggests an interesting fact: qualification in terms of a university (either BA or MA) degree seems to be more important for the English TSPs than for the Czech ones, as is clearly visible from the two charts above. There is another divergence in this area: the English TSPs require a degree in translation or linguistics whereas the Czech ones are content with any other programme. As CZ12 states, any university qualification is good because it primarily expands one’s horizons and it is extremely useful for the orientation in the area of terminology (the way terminology is applied in a professional discourse and how to work with it in general). The question arises why the English TSPs put emphasis on the professional qualification in translation while the Czech TSPs’ conditions are not so strict. One possible answer is that the higher education in the United Kingdom offers more opportunities for studies in a translation programme than in the Czech Republic where such possibilities are limited and therefore local TSPs have to relax their requirements.
3.8.1.2 Translation Practice
The practice in the field of translation ranging between 2-5 years is required both in the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom. CZ3 remarks that translators of the less common and exotic languages represent the only exception in this general rule.

3.8.1.3 Specialization and Expertise in a Certain Field
This is a similar situation to the qualification request: it is relatively more important than other criteria in the English translation environment than in the Czech Republic. The Czech TSPs add that they prefer those candidates that specialize in a certain field, especially if they have practical or academic experience with it.

3.8.1.4 Low Rate
Even though low translation rate charged by a translator is of a minor importance in both environments, there is still a significant difference as the English TSPs did not mention this requirement even once, giving thus preference to other criteria. It implies that there is more pressure on low translation price on the Czech market than in the United Kingdom.

3.8.1.5 CAT Tools Competence
Again, there is a considerable difference between the Czech and English environments. Quite contrary to my expectations, the Czech TSPs mention the competence in CAT tools more often. Nevertheless, they usually expressed that this is not a hard-set rule, but rather a candidate’s asset.

3.8.1.6 Location
The geographical location of a candidate does not play a major role. Nevertheless, CZ12 pointed an interesting finding that translations by a translator living permanently in the country where the target language is spoken are better in quality than those by translators working with language which is not native in their current environment. They attribute this observation to the unquestionable fact that the translator is staying in touch with the current language and its development. CZ2 considers a translators’ residence in the same city important as it facilitates dealing with possible problems (e.g. software incompatibility).

3.8.1.7 Native Speaker
The necessity of a candidate to be a native speaker of the target language is clearly indicated by all but one English TSPs whereas the Czech TSPs prefer native speakers, but not necessarily for all types of projects (CZ12).
3.8.1.8 References and Recommendations
The candidates’ ability to prove their experience by references is a frequently quoted criterion as well. The fact that TSPs care about the candidate’s good reputation is confirmed by GB3 who contacts two references stated by the candidate to make sure that the CV is correct and the translator has done good work.

3.8.1.9 Sample Translation
A short test translation is often required, despite some TSPs (e.g. CZ9 or GB1) argue that it does not adequately reflect the real translator’s competence as a sample translation is always perfect because a candidate expects it to be rigorously evaluated. Other TSPs adopt the policy of employing the candidate in a small project first and closely observe the way he/she deals with a real job, not exclusively in terms of linguistic correctness, but also in the way he/she communicates, as is a common practice at CZ7.

3.8.1.10 Other
Other criteria stated by both the Czech and English TSPs include the candidates’ flexibility, i.e. whether they work full-time, where and how they have learned the language/s they works with. The candidate’s CV is expected to accompany any job application, as it provides further background of the candidate’s personality.
CZ7 emphasized the interesting fact that they do not only need professional full-time translators, but they also cooperate with part-time translators or the students of translation for a certain type of projects, usually small-scale or low-budget ones. Therefore the criteria of their previous experience or the translation practice are preceded by their willingness to learn and the rate flexibility.
Another interesting perspective is shared by CZ5 that says that qualification is not everything and candidates should first and foremost have a ‘translation personality’ – they should be competent in the language, flexible, but also accommodative, pleasure to work with and honest. These qualities perhaps do not feature in TSP’s listings so often as they are impossible to ‘be measured’ and depend on the subjective evaluation of a situation.
Different TSPs usually set a different set of criteria that suits their current needs, e.g. types of projects processed. It is, however, crucial that a candidate fulfils all the conditions with no exception. In CZ3’s words, this is the whole requirements ‘package’.

### 3.8.2 Translators’ Major Weaknesses

The responses in the previous section clearly indicate the thoroughness of the translators’ recruitment procedure which should guarantee that only the best translators are employed. Nevertheless, as CZ1 says, it happens that the real translator’s qualities surface only during the first few jobs. It is ascribed to the difference between ‘knowing the language’ and the ‘translation competence’, as CZ1 adds, or to the way a translator present their skills which may considerably differ from the reality, as CZ11 say.
When asked directly what the major deficiencies of their translators are, most TSPs first mentioned the issue of terminology (CZ1, CZ7, CZ9 and CZ12). CZ9 regards translators’ incompetence to verify terms as their major flaw and wonders that terminology inaccuracies are very frequent despite the fact that translators are particularly asked to deal with it properly. Secondly, CZ1 remarks that translators are not able to formulate an idea in the target language so that it sounds naturally: a text is translated, but read alone, without the comparison with the ST, it is basically incomprehensible. The third type of translators’ mistakes concern grammar and the fourth is the overall noncompliance with the TSP’s requests, often caused by inattentiveness and little attention to detail.

The first two aspects in particular are difficult to identify during the recruitment phase, but greatly affect translation quality. The solution is either to provide appropriate feedback to the translators so that they learn from their mistakes or to terminate their employment. A single error or complaint, however, is not a reason to dismiss a translator. TSPs suspend cooperation with him/her only after a repeated dissatisfaction with a translator’s performance because they are ‘too busy to train them’, as CZ11 argues. It is primarily the translators’ task to be in touch with current market trends, educate themselves and develop their skills. CZ6 describes the situation of translators on the market nowadays as difficult because if they do not invest enough effort in their translation career, their chances to break through and earn a living wage are extremely low. They must have the knowledge, skills, competence as well as appropriate hardware and software tools.

Nonetheless, enhancing the translators’ skills and knowledge is also in the interest of the TSP, because the TSP features in the customer-supplier relationship and is eventually responsible for the final translation quality, as CZ8 rightly comments. On that account, a complete trust between a translator and a TSP is essential and that represents a mutual commitment to act responsibly. If a translator works well and complies with all conditions, the TSP happily continues in cooperation, which in return is favourable for the translator — it is a win-win situation. CZ4 confirms the effectivity of this approach: their translators’ performance is perfect because their work is appreciated and their needs are taken into consideration (such as an earlier payment upon request).

### 3.8.3 An Ideal Translator

The TSPs were asked to identify what makes an ideal translator. My intention was to find out whether meeting the formal requirements for translators is sufficient or if TSPs perhaps expect something more than they indicated previously.
Their reactions surprised me – in most cases they laughed at the idea and said that no such translators exist. There were, however, a few exceptions when the TSP confirmed they had one or two perfect translators.

In addition to the requirements mentioned above they stressed the importance of reliability and flexibility, e.g. the translator’s prompt reaction even late in the evening (CZ5). CZ8 emphasized the flexibility not only in terms of time, but also the budget, or, as they defined it, the ‘business thinking’. CZ1 believes that a perfect translator works meticulously and checks the translation not only in comparison with the ST, but also without any reference to it, to assess whether the translation sounds natural by itself. He/she should transfer ideas, not words. CZ1 and GB6 believe that most translators do not check or proofread their work thoroughly, that they ‘translate only’ and the last but important step of checking is often skipped.

As I observed from the TSPs’ response, they usually mentioned the desired translator’s qualities and character features in the first place and only then continued to enumerate the technical skills or knowledge. This is a startling revelation since they usually claim that they put formal requirements first, but their reactions show the contrary. Analogically, it was stated above that a single translation mistake does not constitute a reason to suspend cooperation with a translator, nevertheless the situation when he/she does not meet a set deadline without any prior communication or does not react to negative feedback is understood as a clear signal of his/her incompetence as a translator.

3.9 Summary of Results
Although I originally intended to propose a specific unified procedure of ensuring translation quality which could be adopted by any TSP in order to enhance the quality of their output, the research proved that due to a large variability of factors and circumstances involved in the translation process this task is too ambitious. Nonetheless, the survey has yielded some useful clues as to the individual elements shaping translation quality which are reflected in the best practices suggested by TSPs, which are summarized below. But I would like to firstly point out some general tendencies as well as marked contrasts between these individual perspectives.

3.9.1 Diverse Perceptions
As the delineation of a translation process in the previous chapters shows, the views on the notion of translation quality in the reality of translation market environment vary significantly: TSPs understand quality as both linguistic and situational correctness of the
text, clients evaluate translation in terms of its acceptability and suitability to their needs and translators consider their work to be good if there are no linguistic mistakes, if it complies with the TSP’s instructions and is submitted by the deadline. This variance of interpretation can be visualized on a scale ranging from subjectivity to objectivity of translation assessment, with a translation buyer at the attitudinal and perception-dependent and a translator at the objectivity and matter-of-fact end, while a TSP as a mediator is situated in between. The role of a TSP is to balance the views and negotiate with both sides to ensure that both of them are satisfied. This task is extremely challenging and not all misunderstandings can be prevented, but what matters is primarily the TSP’s responsible, positive and accommodating attitude.

The research also confirmed that the objectivity measurement of translation quality\textsuperscript{23} is not generally applicable in the translation business environment where the varied needs and highly subjective views of translation buyers play a major role.

3.9.2 General Tendencies and Trends

The survey strongly indicates that in the commercial environment not only the quality of translations as such, but also the quality of services is given more emphasis nowadays than ever before and TSPs are well aware of this tendency.

The translation business environment in general, the TSPs’ workflow and the quality issues they deal with on a regular basis do not substantially differ in the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom. Not a single TSP described a translation process that would considerably diverge from the others as to the types of translation projects, the roles of individual participants, their responsibilities and relationships or the quality concerns. Nevertheless, some variations can be traced especially on the grounds of the TSP’s experience on the market or in the field, its size or business strategy, e.g. a small Czech TSP where the manager is the only PM attributes its success and high quality standard to the informal atmosphere, friendly relationships and trust in its translators while a large multinational English TSP with over 22 PMs ensures translation quality by sophisticated internal procedures. Nevertheless, even a combination of the two approaches is not an exception, with one of the largest Czech TSPs where PMs abide by the company policy of focus on the customer and supplier relationships.

It has not been proven that the TSP’s size relates to the level of quality, i.e. the bigger the TSP, the more reliable in terms of translation quality, because all participating TSPs

\textsuperscript{23} see chapter on 2.3.1 Objectivity vs. Subjectivity of TQA
quantified the percentage of unsuccessful projects (those that were returned by a client and corrected within a formal complaint procedure) ranging between as little as 0.01% to the upper limit of about 5%, but no correlation was observed between this indicator and the TSP’s size. However, the English sample indicates that the large companies comply with certification standards with the only non-certified TSP being the smallest of them. There is a similar situation on the Czech market where the largest TSPs implement standardization as a necessary tool for maintaining the high-quality level they have developed or as a “brand” of quality on the market, to differentiate themselves from their competitors. The truth is that the procedures outlined within certification standards are already used by the TSPs, so official certification is just a formality.

The ISO 9001 standard defines a general quality management system, regardless of the business sector, the size of the company and any other parameters. On the other hand, the translation-specific EN 15038 certification outlines the concrete procedure of dealing with a translation project (Pastor, 2007: 70). Since the majority of the TSPs is certified with these standards, it could be anticipated that their internal processes would be fairly similar. Within quality assurance procedures, the vast majority of TSPs attach the prime importance to the checking procedures in the pre-delivery phase of the translation processing. If the proofreading/revision are done by specialists or native speakers, TSPs can be absolutely sure that the final translation delivered to a client meets a high quality standard. Moreover, in case of a client’s complaint, they have a strong argument that the text correctness has been acknowledged by professionals.

The equally important prerequisite of translation quality is the competence of translators. A strict recruitment procedure is adopted by all the TSPs and the criteria include not only professional qualification, practice and other skills, but also translator’s qualities in terms of proactive approach, effective communication, flexibility and responsibility. TSPs prefer a long-term cooperation with experienced and reliable suppliers, although for some projects the less qualified but cheaper translators may be selected. An interesting finding is that both English and Czech TSPs tend to regard their translators as colleagues, not as employers, and build friendly relationships with them if their performance is consistently

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24 the rate of complaints given by the smaller TSPs was 0.01–1% and by the larger TSPs 0.03–1% from the total translation volume
25 see chapter on 3.6.6 Certification
good over a longer period of time. Such attitude greatly facilitates future cooperation as well as dealing with possible conflicts.

Similar trends emerge, perhaps surprisingly, in the TSP-client interaction too. The majority of TSPs realize that long-term business cooperation is more profitable than occasional jobs from clients and therefore invest their time and energy into building such relationships. This greatly contributes to the positive atmosphere in the otherwise cold business environment, which in effect enhances translation quality because TSPs understand the client’s requirements better.

### 3.9.3 Contrasting Views

Even though subtle variations in TSPs’ approaches were plentiful, as outlined previously, there were few areas where the TSPs’ opinions or workflow methods significantly differed. One of such issues is the process of recruitment of translators, particularly the requirements for their qualification and practice, which are much lower in the Czech Republic in comparison with the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, this does not seem to affect the overall translation quality. The question remains whether the English TSPs’ demands are too high and that translators with even lower than expected requirements are fully capable of doing a good job, or whether the Czech TSPs compensate for the worse translators’ competence by other means, such as more thorough revisions and further corrections.

This relates to another difference between the two markets, which is the preference of native speakers for the translation, proofreading and revising jobs. While the majority of English TSPs cooperate with suppliers from all over the world and are not reluctant to use it to their benefit, it is not a common practice in the Czech Republic, because native speakers usually charge more than local translators and project budgets are tight. For that reason they do mainly the proofreading/revisions jobs. It would perhaps be interesting to learn how many corrections they have to make in the Czech translators’ work and whether it would not be more efficient to start translating from scratch. In any case, in contrast to the local limitations of the Czech TSPs, the English TSPs consider themselves to be part of the global market environment.

Despite the fact that the survey did not focus on the pricing policies of individual TSPs, there is an interesting observation: the English and Czech TSPs apply a markedly different

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26 see chapter 3.6.5 Express Projects

27 see chapter 3.5.1 Cost, Time or Quality? for an example of such situation
approach to the way they charge for translation. While the majority of Czech TSPs still follow a fairly old-fashioned calculation per TT standard page, the English TSPs charge per a ST word. The English method is more transparent for a translation buyer and the calculation can be made in advance, but with the Czech rule a client only learns the final price after the translation has been finalized. Moreover, the TT is ordinarily longer than the ST, which may not be perceived fair by some clients. The transparent method of per-word calculation unquestionably reflects the English TSP’s positive and accommodating attitude towards their clients.

3.9.4 Best Practices
Having interviewed 20 TSP based both in the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom, of various sizes, specializations or philosophies, I have recorded a number of interesting approaches to the enhancement of translation quality, both in terms of translation as a product (i.e. the linguistic quality of a translation) and a process (the interdependence of the individual factors involved in it, the quality of services provided).

The following examples of best practices reflect first and foremost the respondents’ personal views on what contributes to the ideal of quality and cannot be considered to represent a comprehensive ‘manual’ on producing perfect translations, but I believe that the offered hints will be inspirational.

1. put emphasis on your image, communication, added value for clients. The quality of services is not only about the quality of translations.
2. follow standardized internal procedures (either your company directives or formal certification standards)
3. take advantage of CAT tools or other software where appropriate, but have in mind that software is not everything
4. specialize
5. go global
6. encourage project managers to proactively approach both clients and translators
7. respond quickly to any question, demand or order
8. assign clients/projects of a similar type to a dedicated project manager
9. approach each client individually and build a relationship with them, emphasize your personal interest, do something extra for them
10. make sure your clients understand what the translation process encompasses, organize an introductory meeting at the beginning of your cooperation or send them a ‘translator’s brief’ with all the information (including terms of business)

11. think long term and ‘invest’ in your clients, they will appreciate it

12. create a termbase and/or a style guide for each, and especially a long-term, client

13. learn as much information from about a translation project and ask for any reference material as possible to prevent misunderstanding or different expectations, get in touch with possible questions, alternatively consult a specialist

14. put yourself in your client’s shoes and suggest additional services that might be useful

15. run a thorough pre-delivery check, including proofreading by a native speaker or a specialist in the subject field and a formal check of formatting, layout, typos, etc.

16. apply such translation strategies that are suited to the text’s purpose and audience

17. set priorities for each project and communicate them to a translator/reviser

18. allow enough time for express projects

19. inform clients that the quality of an express project might be impaired

20. reject a translation project if it is not feasible to deliver it to the high quality standard, e.g. due to a tight deadline

21. double-check that all the client’s requirements have been met before submitting the final translation

22. ask for feedback from your clients on a regular basis and take remedial measures drawing on it

23. adhere to strict requirements for translators recruitment and closely watch your new translators’ performance in practice

24. prefer native speakers (or residents in the target-language country) when appropriate

25. communicate to translators all the information available and anything else that may facilitate their work, make sure they understand, encourage asking questions

26. systematically provide your translators with feedback on their performance, both positive and negative; bear in mind that ‘to err is human’ and even the best translators make mistakes
27. divide your translators to **categories** according to their experience/reliability ('starred', 'to-be-verified' etc.), check them, test them and educate them, keep records of your translators’ performance

28. behave correctly to translators, appreciate their work, build a **relationship of trust**

### 3.9.5 Limitations of the Study and Implications for Future Research

Even though the outcomes of the study, both the general trends and specific differences, may be interesting or even surprising, we should take into account that the TSP sample was not representative of the market\(^{28}\) so any generalization or categorization would be misleading. On the other hand, the broad overview of the characteristics of the English and Czech translation market can also serve as an inspiration for TSPs and motivate them for further services improvement.

The methodology of personal interviews and the type of questions bring about a potential drawback in terms of the results authenticity. It may be possible that the interviewed TSPs wanted to give a good account of themselves and shared only the information that they considered appropriate. Therefore, the image I was aiming to create would be incomplete and quite different from the practical reality. Nevertheless, the scope of my research did not allow me to investigate the issue more profoundly and the way TSPs present themselves perhaps shows their attitude towards the issue of translation quality better than the bare descriptions of facts.

Within the mission to enhance translation quality, my survey is only instrumental and its role is to ask rather than answer questions. Therefore there is still a wide scope for further investigation. We still need to find answers to issues such as:

- Is it possible for a translator to perform perfectly at both the linguistic and professional level?
- Could the internal processes of TSPs be optimized so that the current quality level is maintained but the cost reduced?
- What are the most effective ways of educating translation buyers about the complexity of a translation process?
- How to approach the frequently disputed issue of terminology management?
- Does the application of CAT tools ensure higher translation quality or merely increases the translation process efficiency?

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\(^{28}\) which is, however, not the intention within a qualitative research, see chapter 3.4.1 *Qualitative Research Method*
4 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the final Master’s thesis was to map the current situation on the translation market in the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom and the interaction between TSPs, clients and translators with respect to translation quality assurance, to outline any similarities and differences and compare individual perspectives in order to propose comprehensive strategies towards further translation services’ development. A qualitative research was carried out in both countries via personal structured interviews and online questionnaires aiming to account for the wide range of views and approaches towards the issue of translation quality and their variations. The collected data were subsequently compared and interpreted in the general framework of translation business environment, taking into account my own observations.

In contrast to the theoretical approaches to translation quality and TQA, the linguistic correctness or the ST and TT equivalence are not the primary criteria in assessing the quality of translations in the translation business environment. The survey has demonstrated an enormous complexity of the translation process where a number of interrelated factors come into play. Although the translation workflow is a standardized procedure, as illustrated on the example of a typical translation processing, it encompasses a whole range of variable elements affecting the output, such as the translator's competence, the client's stated and implied needs, the PM's interpersonal and professional skills and experience, the TSP's internal procedures etc. It follows that the individual aspects and their role with respect to quality described in isolation are of little explanatory value and it is pointless to base the evaluation of translation quality on separate criteria. Only by putting all factors into the broader context of the translation process, the desired effect is yielded in synergy. In this respect the task of TSPs is indispensable: they facilitate the translation process by the interaction with other participants and prevent possible misunderstandings using their knowledge and experience.

Even though it may seem that the quality of the translation output is mostly conditioned by formal requirements (certifications, the TSPs’ internal directives etc.), the thesis shows that it is the people side of the translation processing that matters the most. It follows that the quality of services of any kind is always closely interconnected with the people side and no formal rules can substitute common sense and individual human assessment of a situation. One of the most interesting findings of the survey is the fact that the human aspect is underlying the whole translation process: the person of a PM is crucial in setting priorities,
designing the project’s schedule and distributing the work to individual suppliers so that the desired outcome is achieved. The PM is in charge of the process, while a translator guarantees a professional and flawless translation product. The cooperation of these two key participants is indispensable to the production of a superior translation. The research showed that the PM is a pivotal figure in translation processing both in the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic and largely influences the success of any translation project. Perhaps not surprisingly, the thesis confirmed that effective communication is an essential element in a successful translation process as in any other human activity. Since all other elements of the translation process draw on good communication, the interpersonal and communication skills should not be underestimated but given greater emphasis in a daily translation practice.
5 Bibliography


ABSTRACT

The final Master’s thesis deals with the issue of translation quality from the market-oriented perspective in the Czech and English business environments. Translation quality is viewed as a social rather than linguistic phenomenon. The thesis comprehensively describes the interaction between translation service providers, translation buyers and translators in the course of the translation process with respect to the quality of translation and outlines the differences and similarities in their approaches to the notion of translation quality. The objective of the thesis is to identify best practices and the major factors that in the TSPs’ view positively influence translation quality and its acceptability for a translation buyer.

The practical attitude is contrasted with two distinct theoretical approaches to the issue of translation quality: the formal source and target text equivalence and the functionalist approach. While the former one focuses primarily on the linguistic aspects of a translation, the latter takes into consideration its purpose and interaction with the receiver, which closely corresponds with the market perspective on translation quality. The question of objectivity and subjectivity of the translation quality evaluation is further discussed and exemplified by various methods of translation quality assessment drawing either on a micro-textual analysis or on the broader perspective of the translation’s acceptability for the client.

The research section consists of three main parts: the introduction of the methodology of the qualitative analysis of the Czech and English translation market, the outline of the general issues underlying the notion of quality which are often reflected in the responses of translation service providers’ representatives and the analysis of a typical translation processing and the quality issues related to its individual phases from the perspectives of translation service providers, translation buyers and translators, including the examples of specific approaches.

The final parts bring the overview of general tendencies as well as contrasting views on the issue of translation quality on both markets and suggests best practices to ensure high-quality translations.
**RESUMÉ**

Tato magisterská diplomová práce se zabývá tržním pojetím kvality překladu na českém a anglickém překladatelském trhu. Zkoumá kvalitu překladu jako společenský spíše než jazykový fénemén. Práce souhrnně popisuje interakci mezi poskytovateli překladatelských služeb, klienty a překladateli v průběhu překladatelského procesu s ohledem na kvalitu překladu a poukazuje na odlišnosti a podobnosti jejich pohledů. Cílem práce je vysledovat ověřené postupy a hlavní faktory, které dle názorů poskytovatelů překladatelských služeb kladně ovlivňují kvalitu překladu a jeho přijatelnost pro klienta.

Praktický pohled porovnávám se dvěma odlišnými teoretickými přístupy k problematice kvality překladu: s formální ekvivalencí zdrojového a cílového textu a s funkcionalistickým přístupem. Zatímco první teorie se zaměřuje zejména na jazykové aspekty překladu, druhá přihlíží k jeho účelu i interakci s jeho příjemcem, což úzce souvisí s tržním pohledem na kvalitu překladu. Dále rozebírám otázku objektivního a subjektivního hodnocení kvality, kterou ilustruji příklady různých metod hodnocení kvality překladu, které jsou založeny buď na mikrotekstově analýze nebo na kvalitu nahlíží ze širšího kontextu přijatelnosti překladu pro klienta.

Praktický oddíl obsahuje tři hlavní části: úvod do metodologie kvalitativní analýzy českého a anglického překladatelského trhu, přehled obecných témat, ze kterých představy o kvalitě překladu vychází a která se často odraží v odpovědích zástupců poskytovatelů překladatelských služeb, a analýzu typického průběhu zpracování překladatelské zakázky a problémů kvality, které se týkají jednotlivých fází, a to z perspektivy jak poskytovatelů překladatelských služeb, tak klientů a překladatelů, včetně příkladů specifických řešení a přístupů.

Závěrečná část přináší přehled obecných tendencí i protikladných náhledů na problematiku kvality překladu na obou trzích a navrhuje postupy, které se osvědčily při zajišťování vysoce kvalitních překladů.