

ADJECTIVES IN JOB ADVERTISEMENTS IN ENGLISH IN HELSINGIN SANOMAT

A Semantic Analysis

Bachelor's Thesis

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaisia adjektiiveja käytetään kuvailemaan työnhakijaa, työnantajaa ja itse työtä englanninkielisissä työpaikkailmoituksissa Helsingin Sanomissa. Työpaikkailmoituksia on aiemmin tutkittu keskittyen mm. työnhakijalta vaadittaviin taitoihin, ilmoituksissa käytettyihin eufemismeihin, ilmoituksen rakenteeseen ja sanaston tutkimiseen. Tutkimusta on tehty ulkomailla ja Suomessa mutta Suomessa tutkimuksen kohteena ovat olleet lähinnä suomenkieliset työpaikkailmoitukset. Koska Suomessa työelämä kansainvälistyy ja työnhakijoita haetaan jo usein Helsingin Sanomissakin englanninkielisillä ilmoituksilla, on tarpeen ulottaa tutkimus myös muihin kuin suomenkielisiin ilmoituksiin. Adjektiiveilla kuvataan haettavan henkilön persoonallisuutta ja työnantajaa, joten tarkastelemalla adjektiivien käyttöä ilmoituksissa voi saada selville mitä työpaikkailmoituksissa oikeasti haetaan.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin yhdeksästä syksyllä 2012 ilmestyneestä Helsingin Sanomien numerosta. Jokaisen englanninkielisen työpaikkailmoituksen adjektiivit kirjoitettiin ylös ja jaoteltiin sen mukaan, kuvasivatko ne työnhakijaa, työnantajaa vai itse työtä. Tämän jälkeen adjektiiveista muodostettiin semanttisia luokkia. Tulokset osoittavat, että työnhakijalta odotetaan mm. hyviä yhteistyötaitoja, hyvää työmotivaatiota ja erinomaista kielitaitoa. Työnantajaa kuvattiin lähinnä positiivisilla adjektiiveilla ja työnantaja kuvattiin mm. menestyneiksi, kansainvälisiksi ja laadukkaiksi. Työtä ja työpaikkaa kuvailtiin mm. kehumalla tiimihenkeä ja kuvaamalla työtä hektiseksi ja ainutlaatuisiksi. Tulokset vastasivat aiempien tutkimuksien tuloksia.</p> <p>Jatkossa lisätietoa työpaikkailmoituksista voisi saada tutkimalla kokonaisia lausekkeita, niiden merkitystä ja mitä ne kertovat ilmoituksista. Nykyään myös lisääntyvä rekrytointi Internetin kautta tekee sähköisistä työpaikkailmoituksista tutkimisen arvoisia.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Finland has become an increasingly multicultural and multilingual country in the last few decades. Foreign people come here to look for work and the companies in turn look for international professionals to work for them. Excellent language skills, especially in English, are not an advantage anymore for job applicants. Instead, they are nowadays a necessity in many jobs. The language used even as an internal language inside the company might be English, for example in Nokia where employees around the world use English for official communication (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto 2009). Therefore it is not surprising that every week in the *Helsingin Sanomat*, the biggest daily newspaper in Finland, there are several job advertisements in English, without any Finnish translations. The working life has become more international so it is natural that companies want to attract foreign people and people willing to work in an international environment. Job advertisements in English might be a good way of doing that.

Most studies on job advertisements have concentrated on the contents of the advertisements, what they include and analyzing the requirements for the job applicant. There have also been studies conducted about the evaluation of job advertisements throughout the history, examining what kind of competence the employer has emphasized in the advertisements now and in the past decades. Semantical analyses have also been made, for example Lago and Hewitt (2004) have analyzed job advertisements in the Spanish press. However, little research has been conducted about Finnish job advertisements and especially on those in English. My research will therefore concentrate on job advertisements in English in *Helsingin Sanomat*. I chose HS because it is the biggest daily newspaper in Finland and it includes several job advertisements in English every Sunday in its employment supplement. I chose to study advertisements in newspapers instead of on internet websites because I wanted to study the traditional way of recruiting and because there are so many recruitment websites that it was difficult to know which one of them would include the most advertisements relevant for this study.

It is important for readers and job applicants to be aware of the strategies used in job advertisements in order to be able to read them critically. Also, if the job applicants for a particular work position better understand what the employer is looking for in an ideal candidate, they can showcase these characteristics for example in their job applications, thus improving their chance to be chosen for the position.

In the first chapter of this study I introduce the background information that is relevant for the topic. First I will discuss the use and status of English in Finland, and then I move on to describe job advertisements as a genre. Next I will present four previous studies that relate to my own study. After that I move on to the present study. First I will introduce the data and the methods that I used in this study and then I will discuss the actual analysis and results of my study.

2 FINNISH IN FINLAND AND JOB ADVERTISEMENTS AS A GENRE

2.1 English in Finland

Finland, although located at the peripheral areas of Europe and having few historical ties with the Anglo-American society, has efficiently adopted English as the lingua franca. One cannot fail to notice that English is everywhere in Finland: from the company names to the TV.

One reason for the strong status of English in Finland is the education. Most Finnish children start learning their first foreign language in their first or third year in the primary school. Although families can choose which language their child starts with, English is by far the most popular, and, in most cases, the only option. Indeed, in 2010, 91% of the children in the primary school started learning English as their first foreign language

(http://www.sukol.fi/toiminta/kannanotot_ja_julkilausumat/sukolin_nakemys_perusopetuksen_tuntijakoesityksesta_6_2010). The students will continue learning English for the next 7-10 years, depending on which school they attend after the secondary school. There are also schools where part of or all of the classes are taught in English, for example IB-schools. (Taavitsainen and Pahta: 2003). However, CLIL-classes where different subjects are taught in English have been notably less popular in the last decade than in the 1990s (Roiha: 2012). All in all, it seems that the students benefit from all the years of studying English, for a study by Leppänen et al. (2008) shows that 70.9% of the people from age 15 to 24 think that they can read English at least relatively fluently. It is worth noting, however, that most young people learn a great deal of English in their hobbies and free time as well.

English is also widely used in research and in higher education Finland. In order for Finnish universities and researchers to gain access to the international research community, they have to

use English in the education and in scientific publications. It is already common for universities to offer master's degree programmes that are taught completely in English and which are open to both Finnish and international students. The University of Helsinki, for example, offers 30 international master's degree programmes from different faculties

(www.helsinki.fi/internationalprogrammes/subjects). But internationalization goes even further at the Aalto University's School of Business and Economic. All the Master's degree programs will be held in English in order to attract more international students. Internationalization and International students, teachers and researchers are seen as a way to improve the quality of education (http://yle.fi/uutiset/kauppakorkeakoulu_hylkasi_suomen_maasteriopinnot_vain_englanniksi/6494336). English is also widely used in dissertations. In 2011 at the University of Helsinki, in the Faculty of Medicine, out of the 119 published dissertations, 118 were written in English (Taavitsainen and Pahta: 2003).

As was mentioned earlier, knowing English is not an advantage anymore in the working life, it is a necessity. According to an inquiry made by Elinkeinoelämän Keskusliitto (the central association of business and commerce in Finland) in 2009, 88 % of all the companies surveyed reported that English skills are an important factor in recruitment. Services, construction and industry all rank English as the most important foreign language in the working life, although other languages, especially Russian, are also increasingly important. However, the required knowledge of languages depends on the post one is applying for. Only 36 % of the companies emphasize English in the recruitment of workers whereas over 80 % emphasize it in the clerical worker and expert position recruitment. (EK: 2009). So, the higher position a person has in the company, the more language skills she or he is expected to have. This is of course due to the nature of the work: Clerical workers and experts are more likely to be involved in situations where they have to communicate with foreign people. Same kinds of results have been found when asking people how much they use English in their work. In the survey by Leppänen et al., 46% of the people in work life answered that they use English in their work weekly. When taking into account their educational background, around 60% of the people with a Bachelor's or Master's degree use English weekly in their work whereas about 42% of the people with a vocational or comprehensive degree do so. Most of the people, regardless of their educational background, who use English weekly in their work reported that they use English to read instructions or to seek information on the internet. Whereas people with a Bachelor's or a Master's degree use English for more versatile purposes,

does not mean that English is not essential in vocational work too. People with a vocational degree might not need to speak or write English but they need English to know, for example, how to use, repair or assemble machines. The results of the survey also show that the older the person is, the less he or she uses English in their work. This may be due to their educational background: few older people in Finland have studied English in the school whereas the younger generations have studied English for several years. Also, the number of people with a degree from tertiary education tends to be higher in the younger generations, which might lead them to work in a position where English is needed more.

2.2 Job advertisements as a genre

Muikku-Werner (2009) has studied Finnish date advertisements and her conclusions can partly be applied to job advertisements too because the motive of them both is, after all, advertising. Muikku-Werner states that dating advertisements tend to have a specific structure and style and therefore they comprise their own text type. Job advertisements also often have a similar structure and language. Ryan et al. (2000) note that recruitment advertisements usually contain similar information. There is the basic information about the job itself, the ideal future employee and instructions on how to contact the employer. Ryan et al. (2000) also point out that in order for the job advertisement to stand out from all the other ads, they can contain photos of people, the workplace or a scenery or then use the company logo in the advertisement. Written text is often not enough to catch the readers' attention and therefore it is common to invest in the visual aspect of the advertisement. The text contents, the layout and imagery together create a unity that is supposed to rouse the readers' interest and attract them to react to the advertisement.

In the body text of the job advertisement the employer gives more or less detailed information about the nature of the work and requirements for the job candidate. The employer can choose to tell what kind of a degree the candidate should have, what languages they should master and what kind of personal qualities are important in the work. The requirements can be explicit or general. Mentioning that the employee should speak fluent English is quite explicit whereas expecting him or her to be cooperative or flexible is less explicit since it is difficult to explain what these adjectives mean in the context. The title of the job is mentioned too, as are instructions on where to ask for more information. The company is also often introduced in a separate paragraph

to give information about it and to give the reader a chance to consider whether they want to work for the company in question. There is often information about the owner, the field of business, the annual revenue and the number of personnel of the company. (Lavón: 2001).

Muikku-Werner (2009) states that the purpose of dating advertisements is to attract the reader and create a positive image of the writer. The writers want the readers to get in touch with them so they try to 'sell' themselves to them. The same strategy is applied in job advertisements: the employer wants to hire the best possible candidate so the advertisement has to sell the job to the readers. The advertisements, thus, work on two levels: they give information about the company but they also aim to create a positive and desirable image of the job and the company. The text and the visual layout of the advertisement together show the reader what the company is like and what it can offer for its employees. (Lavón: 2001). The words used in the advertisements, therefore, tend to be positive and flattering. It makes a difference to offer a job *in our global and high-profile company* (HS 28.10.2012) than just *in our company*. Adjectives, especially, are important in improving the company image. The company's motive is not only attracting the best employees, it is also boosting its image. The job advertisements, are, after all, also read by others than job applicants. By creating an attractive job advertisement and introducing the company's best qualities, the company tries to impress its readers and improve its image. This is called *image boosting*. (Lavón: 2001).

2.3 Previous research on job advertisements

In Finland for example Liisa Lavón (2001) has analysed Finnish business job advertisements to find out what they tell about the job and its requirements. The employer might prefer people with certain education or emphasize some personal characteristics. Lavón found out that certain skills were emphasized in throughout the job advertisements she examined: language skills, social skills such as the ability to co-operate and work with different people and leadership skills. Among other more specialized skills mentioned were good IT skills. Since the job advertisements in Lavón's study were business related, so was the preferred degree of the job applicant. Lavón also found out that there were no references to the ideal job applicant's age. Instead, experience was valued in many advertisements.

Kaukua (2009) has studied the use of euphemisms in Swedish job advertisements on a Swedish website. Euphemism can be defined as "that figure of speech which consists in the substitution of a word or expression of comparatively favourable implication or less unpleasant associations" (www.oed.com). Euphemisms can be used in advertisements to create as positive an image of the company as possible in order to make a good effect on the reader. The disadvantage of this, Kaukua mentions, is that the applicants can get a wrong impression of the job and the wrong person is chosen for the position. Kaukua analyzed euphemisms used to describe different qualifications and competences and how these can be divided into different categories for euphemisms. Her conclusion was that euphemisms are used in job advertisements and that the competence these euphemisms describe was often so called *core competence*, for example self-knowledge and motivation. She categorized the euphemisms in six categories: metaphor, metonym, jargon and politically correct speech, loan word, implications and specification. It seems, thus, that job advertisements tend to use overly positive or optimistic language to describe the nature of the job.

Lago and Hewitt (2004) found out in their study of job advertisements in English in the Spanish press that companies tend to emphasize values related to team work, individualism and intellect in their advertisements. This means that companies look for people who are good at working with others but who are also independent and innovative. Lago and Hewitt also made a lexical analysis related to these qualities. Values related to team work were described with phrases such as *team spirit*, *interpersonal skills* and *collaborative working*. For individualistic qualities phrases like *business sense*, *talented professionals* and *sharp entrepreneurs* were used. It will be interesting to compare Lago and Hewitt's results with mine, since the studies concentrate on the same topic, but with different viewpoints and data.

Ryan et al. (2000) examined 62 recruitment advertisements in a UK newspaper in 1998 in terms of the characteristics of marketing oriented recruitment advertising. Marketing oriented means here that the companies see employment from a marketing viewpoint. The jobs are products which are designed to attract the ideal employees, make them apply for the job and stay with the company for a long time. Ryan et al. found out that these advertisements have different characteristics to rouse the readers' interest in them. They have for example humorous headlines, graphic images or photographs or a summary of the company history. The most important characteristic when thinking of the present study is the language used in the advertisements. Out of these 62 ads, 65%

use formal language, whereas conversational or familiar language was used only in 35% of the advertisements. This study shows that employers take recruiting and job advertisements seriously and want to invest in them. The data of the study was collected in 1998, over 10 years ago, so to see if the job advertisements still use the same strategies nowadays is interesting.

2.4 The present study

The aim of this study was to find out what kinds of adjectives are used to describe the job applicant, the workplace and the job itself in the job advertisements in English in the *Helsingin Sanomat*. I wanted to find out if they seem to form categories based on what they are describing. I also wanted to see how the adjectives shape the image of the job applicant, the workplace and job itself. My hypothesis was that the adjectives relate mostly to business or technology since the job advertisements seem to be mostly from those fields. Because the job advertisements are in English it is also likely that the adjectives create an international picture of the person wanted for the job, the company and the job itself. Using English in Finnish job advertisements widens the target group of the advertisements and implies that also people who do not speak Finnish are welcomed to work at the company.

My research questions for this study are:

- What kinds of adjectives are used to describe the potential employee, the employer and the job itself?
- What kind of an image do the adjectives create of them?

3 DATA AND METHODS

My data consists of 9 copies of the Sunday edition of the *Helsingin Sanomat* that were collected between 16/9- 11/11/12. In these editions there were in total 514 job advertisements, out of which 36 were relevant for my study, meaning that they were in English and included adjectives. *Helsingin Sanomat* is the biggest daily newspaper in Finland. It has about 617, 000 regular readers and the total circulation number is 365, 994. Alone in the Helsinki area it has about 428, 000

readers, which is about 52% of the population in that area. In the whole of Finland the reach is about 20% of the population (www.hs.fi). An interesting fact is also that according to a survey made by the *Helsingin Sanomat*, the biggest reader group are people who have attended a higher education institution. This means that also the job advertisement section reaches most of all university or polytechnic graduates.

In total I analyzed 36 job advertisements. The aim was to analyze all the job advertisements that were in English but I decided to omit a few that were very short and had no or very few adjectives and therefore nothing to analyze. Most of the companies or organizations appearing in the job advertisements were related to business or technology. Many of them were foreign companies operating in Finland, such as *Dr. Oetker* or *Nissan*, or Finnish companies that export their products abroad, for example *UPM* and *Outotec*.

When analyzing the data, I decided to omit adjectives that were part of a compound word, rather than a modifier for a noun. Sometimes it was difficult to decide whether an adjective was describing the employer or the job itself but I made the decision based on my own discretion. In presenting the results I sometimes added the noun to which the adjective is a modifier for to clarify the context and to better show why the adjective belongs to this certain category.

This study was a qualitative study, meaning that the data was consciously collected to suit the needs of the study, the aim of the study was to observe the data in detail and then draw conclusions rather than to test some previous theory or to make statistical generalizations.(Hirsjärvi et al: 1997). I had no previous model according to which to analyze the data. Therefore the analysis was very data-based and I had to use my own discretion to analyze the data. The advantage of this was that I had to reflect what the data actually seems to bring about and what it means in relation to job advertisements in general. What the adjectives seemed to describe had to have a purpose: to tell something about the ideal applicant, the employer and the work to the reader.

When beginning to collect the data, I first collected all the adjectives I found and classified them in three classes: adjectives describing the job candidate, adjectives describing the employer and adjectives describing the work. Then I calculated all the adjectives regardless of their class and then the adjectives in each class separately. After that I categorized the adjectives describing the job applicant according to what personal qualities or skills they were describing. I formed eight

categories and each of them includes different adjectives that fundamentally describe one common personal quality or skill. The adjectives describing the employer I categorized in five categories, according to what aspect of the company they described. Similarly, I categorized the adjectives describing the work in five categories, again according to what aspect of the work they described. The names of the categories are listed in the section Results and Analysis.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In the job advertisements I examined there were in total 740 adjectives, out of which 318 described the job candidate, 170 described the employer and 252 described the work itself.

4.1 The adjectives describing the job applicants

I categorized the adjectives describing the job candidate in eight categories. I based the categorizations on what personal characteristics or qualities the adjectives seem to describe.

Table 1. Adjectives describing the applicant in job advertisements

The 1 st category (vague adjectives)	good, excellent, strong
The 2 nd category (ambition)	ambitious, business-driven
The 3 rd category (inner motivation)	dedicated, self-motivated
The 4 th category (work attitude)	open-minded, flexible
The 5 th category (way of thinking)	logical, pragmatic
The 6 th category (language skills)	fluent, written, spoken
The 7 th category (degree)	relevant, technical
The 8 th category (creativity)	innovative, visual

The first category includes adjectives that I call *vague* adjectives. *Vague* adjectives were for example *good, excellent, strong* and *ideal*. These words do not stand alone but are rather used as modifiers in noun phrases, for example *good technical skills* or *excellent work planning skills*. *Good, excellent* and *strong* were usually used with the word *skills*. This, naturally, tells that the employee seeks people who are good at what they do and hopefully above the average. It is the genre convention to use only positive adjectives to describe the company and the ideal job candidate. The use of *good, excellent* and *strong* is, however, somewhat vague since it does not tell explicitly anything about the person. It is difficult to know what it actually means to have *strong presentation and negotiation skills* or *excellent cooperation skills* and therefore people may interpret such phrases differently. This might then cause problems when recruiting people if the employee's and the job candidate's views contradict.

The second category includes adjectives that describe the applicant's ambition for business and money making and they form a major part of all the adjectives. Indeed, there were many different adjectives used for describing basically the same thing: ambition. There were ordinary adjectives like *ambitious* and *committed* but also more imaginative and explicit such as *sales-oriented, business-oriented, entrepreneurially driven* and *customer-oriented (attitude)*. Adjectives with the ending in *-oriented*, were, perhaps surprisingly, used in several advertisements. The use of such words seems to imply that the company or organization value profit-making, ambitious individuals, which is only natural if the job is about marketing, selling or otherwise supporting the business of the company.

The third category comprises of adjectives that describe ideal applicant's inner motivation for work. The employer naturally wants its employees to be motivated to work and, most importantly, that their motivation be inner, rather than external motivation. Inner motivation of a person helps them achieve new goals and be excited about their work, which in turn benefits the employer because they want personnel who are loyal and hard-working. There were many instances in the data where the employers search for people who are *self-motivated, enthusiastic, determined, dedicated, and passionate* or the company seeks *energetic and committed candidates*. Although these adjectives may not sound quite realistic, they tell nevertheless about the desired attitude of the applicants.

The fourth category comprises of adjectives describing what kind of a work attitude the applicant should possess or what kinds of qualities are important in succeeding in the position. Being *cooperative, open-minded, flexible, multicultural, global (mindset), reliable* and *positive (attitude)* is essential when working in an international environment. The use of such adjectives shows that the employee wants to hire people who have good social skills and are able to work with international colleagues and customers.

The adjectives in the fifth category describe the skills or ways of thinking that are important in the position. Adjectives such as *rational, logical, analytical (skills), pragmatic (attitude), practical (knowledge)* and *interpersonal* seem to describe people who are able to think logically, know how to apply their knowledge in real situations and can make conclusions based on facts. These skills are important in business and technology because people there work with numbers and they often aim to develop new ideas and innovations.

The sixth category includes adjectives that describe the language skills that are required from the job applicant. *Fluent (English), spoken, written* and *oral (English skills)* were all used quite frequently in the ads. This shows that excellent language skills are not an advantage but a necessity in many jobs, especially if the work community is international. Since the job advertisements examined were in English it is clear that the employer expects automatically the job applicants to speak fluent English.

The adjectives in the seventh category describe the type degree the job applicant is expected to have. Sometimes it is sufficient that the degree is *applicable* or *relevant* whereas sometimes the educational background of an applicant is explicitly mentioned, such as *technical* or *doctoral* degree. Some work positions require expertise or knowledge that only people with certain training have, such as engineers or scientists whereas in some positions it is only necessary to have a Bachelor's or Master's degree regardless of the subject.

The eighth category includes adjectives that describe the creative or artistic side of the ideal job applicant. The applicant is, for example, expected to have *a strong visual touch (Helsingin Sanomat, October 14, 2012)* or she or he has to be *creative* or *innovative*. In order to succeed in the global markets, companies need something that makes them stand out from the rivals. Whether the company succeeds in marketing and in the development of new products can be crucial for its success. Therefore creative people who see new possibilities and know how to

improve the image of the company and its products could be the company's key to success. Major companies such as *Apple* know this as they write on their website about their employees: "we expect creative thinking and solutions from everyone here" (www.apple.com/jobs/us/).

All in all the study shows that employers tend to value people with good interpersonal skills as well with good co-operation skills. This correlates with the studies of Kaukua (2010) and Lago and Hewitt (2004). Education and language skills are also valued but more important seems to be the personality of the applicant.

4.2 Adjectives describing the employer

I categorized the adjectives that describe the employer in five categories.

Table 2. Adjectives describing the employer in job advertisements

The 1 st category (the success of the company)	successful, strong
The 2 nd category (globalism)	international, global
The 3 rd category (the quality of the company)	reliable, high-quality
The 4 th category (the company spirit)	innovative, inspiring
The 5 th category (environmental values)	sustainable, renewable

The first category includes adjectives that describe the success of a company. The company can claim to be *a leading (manufacturer), successful, innovative, the best, strong, growing (organization), advanced* or to claim to have *prestigious (brands)* or products that are *the highest technological excellence*. Using such positive words in job advertisements seems to be image advertising as Lavón (2001) calls it. Describing the company in the best possible way not only attracts job applicants but also tries to impress the other readers. The adjectives also tell something about the employer to the job applicant. The company can already have a strong position in the market and can perhaps offer interesting job opportunities or it can be expanding and it thus needs new competent people to improve its operations.

The second category includes the adjectives that describe the multiculturalism or globalism of the company or the workplace. Companies export their products, have offices abroad and employ

people from all over the world. Therefore it is good to mention already in the job advertisement that the work community is *multicultural* or *international* and that the company is a *global* leader in its field. Highlighting the internationalization of the company is also company advertising (Lavón: 2001). If the company operates worldwide it is perhaps worth noting in the advertisement in order to impress the readers.

In the third category there are adjectives that describe the quality or efficiency of the company. The company wants to show that their products are of a good quality and the company worth working for. With adjectives such as *reliable (customer service)*, *high-quality (technology)*, *efficient* and *cost-effective* the company tries to tell that it does what it promises and does it in the best way possible.

The fourth category includes adjectives that describe the company spirit. *Innovative, dynamic (environment)*, *active, innovation-driven* and *inspiring (environment)* are perhaps supposed to tell the reader that the company appreciates people's creativity and want them to reach their full potential in the work. The atmosphere in the work community is thus important in enabling the employees to use their talents and do their best at work. Nowadays people might appreciate a workplace where they can fulfill themselves and enjoy their work. It is then only smart to accentuate the spirit of the company in the job advertisement in order to show how good a workplace the company is.

The adjectives in the fifth category are related to ecology and environment. Since companies need to take environment into account in their operations, it is no wonder there were quite many such adjectives used in the job advertisements. The products the company produces were described as *renewable* or *recyclable* or the company aims to lower its *environmental impact* or the company's actions promote *sustainable development*. People are nowadays conscious about the environment and its protections and therefore it is perhaps wise to mention in the job advertisement that the company operates in a sustainable way or even helps to develop new innovations to protect the environment. This might improve the company's image and attract job applicants to whom environmental values are important.

Based on these categories one could say that the main task of describing the employer in the job advertisements seemed to be image boosting. As Lavón (2001) stated in her article, overly positive language is often used in job advertisements in order to impress the readers and possible job

applicants. Describing the quality of their products, their company spirit or claiming that the company is the market leader, seem to tell the job applicants: this is the place to work in!

4.3 Adjectives describing the work

I categorized the adjectives describing the work in five categories.

Table 3. Adjectives describing the work in job advertisements

The 1 st category (the nature of the job)	hectic, challenging
The 2 nd category (the uniqueness of the job)	unique, excellent
The 3 rd category (the team spirit)	dynamic, dedicated
The 4 th category (the line of work of the job)	financial, mechanical
The 5 th category (the geographical area)	regional, pan-European

The first category includes adjectives that describe the nature of the job. The work can be hectic, *challenging (tasks)* and *demanding*. These seem to show that one requirement of the employer is that the employee is able to operate within a tight schedule and multitask. These skills are important nowadays and the job advertisement itself already seems to be addressed to people who are willing to take a job like that.

Adjectives that describe the uniqueness of that particular job form the second category. To attract job candidates there are several instances in the data where the job is described as special or one of a kind of an opportunity for the applicant. The position was said to be *a unique insight into the administrative functions* (HS 21.10.2012) or *an excellent opportunity* for the applicant. More neutral were phrases such as *interesting projects* or *tasks* that the position is supposed to have. Using these kind of phrases is also image boosting (Lavón: 2001) because the employer tries to make the readers believe that they are the only one who can offer a position and responsibilities like that.

The third category includes adjectives that describe the team spirit in the workplace. The support and attitude of the others in the workplace might affect how well people do in their work. If the colleagues support and respect each other, everyone can achieve their best. To showcase this

spirit in the job advertisements, there were adjectives such as *dynamic, professional (team), dedicated (professionals)* describing the team in which the future employer will work.

The fourth category comprises of adjectives that describe the line of work that the particular job is about. The work can be *technical, financial, forest-related, electrical (design) mechanical, bio-medical* or it can include *administrative* tasks. Stating the line of work in a job advertisement is necessary if the company wants to employ people with a certain degree. It profits both the employee and the job applicant if the job advertisement includes enough information about the job.

The fifth category includes adjectives that describe the geographical area that the applicant would be responsible for in the work position. The job can require the employee to *closely cooperate with our global network of partners (Helsingin Sanomat, October 28, 2012)* or the employee has to participate in *relevant processes on pan-European and global level (Helsingin Sanomat, September 30, 2012)*. Other such adjectives were *local, regional* and international. The employer perhaps wants to show how much responsibility the work position includes or which geographical area the applicant would be responsible of in the work. It is not, after all, the same thing to manage the company's global operations in comparison to the local operations. It is also important to tell the applicant whether the workplace is located in Finland or abroad and whether the job requires travelling. These factors might limit the amount of applicants, as not everyone is able to move abroad for work.

As Ryan et al. (2000) stated, jobs are often marketed as products, aimed to attract job applicants in the media. My results seemed to correlate with this statement. When describing the job in advertisements it was often mentioned how special or unique the work opportunity is and what the work can offer for the right person. The work can offer for example a team of professionals to work with, a great deal of responsibility or the possibility to work abroad. It was also mentioned what the work requires from the applicant. The work can be hectic or requires expertise in some area and therefore the applicant should think, if he or she is suitable for this particular work position.

5 Conclusions

I had two aims in this study: to find out what kind of adjectives were used to describe the ideal applicant, the employer and the work itself in job advertisements and what kind of an image do the adjectives create of them. In my study I did not find any single answer to the first question. There were different kinds of adjectives used but overall they tended to be positive. I discuss the adjectives more specifically in the next paragraphs. As for the second research question, I did not manage to find adequate answers to that. To find out more specifically what kind of an image the adjectives create of, for example, the employer, would have required more extensive focus on that question. What I also could have done, was to have previous guidelines to help me analyze the data. Now I relied solely on the data and my discretion, which made the research very data-based. However, considering that I wanted to see what kinds of adjectives are used in job advertisements and if the adjectives seem to form any certain categories, explains why I did not have any previous model when analyzing the data.

My hypothesis in this study was that there are many adjectives related to business or technology. As my studies show, there were indeed adjectives related to business or technology but they were only a small group. Adjectives related to business or technology were used to describe the type of work the work position will include. My other hypothesis was that the adjectives used in the advertisements would paint an international picture of the employer and my results showed that this is true. There were adjectives describing the language skills that are needed in the work as well adjectives describing the international work environment and the global setting of the company's operations.

The results of the study correlate with the previous studies. Kaukua (2010) and Lago and Hewitt (2004) state that employers seek for people with not only good education and language skills but also with good interpersonal skills and personal qualities that are important in the job. According to my results, inner qualities, such as motivation, passion, logical thinking, good attitude and the ability to work different people were appreciated. The employers wanted, for example, the applicant to be ambitious to succeed in the job and to be committed and dedicated to work for the company. They also wanted the applicant to be flexible and able to work in multicultural environment and with different people. Based on the results of my study, the job applicants could benefit from introducing their own personal strengths that relate to inner qualities in their job

applications and interviews. It might be that sometimes the personality, not the university degree, is the determining factor when recruiting people.

The job advertisements also had motives other than just searching for employees. As my results showed, the companies use positive adjectives and phrases to describe itself and the job. While advertising a vacant position, the company can promote itself for example by using positive adjectives or by adding a section where they describe the company history and its present operations to the advertisement. (Lavón: 2001, Ryan et al: 2000). According to my results, the companies tend to accentuate the company's success, quality, environmental values and the spirit and multiculturalism in the company and among its employees. The purpose of this is to show that the company is a reliable and good workplace that is worth working for. The adjectives used to describe the work were also mainly positive. The work position was described as unique and the team spirit in the workplace was praised. This relates to the theory of Ryan et al. (2000) of marketing jobs as products.

As I have mentioned, one important motive of job advertisements is image boosting (Lavón: 2001). The language in the advertisements is often overly positive and as my results showed, the companies tend to try to impress the readers by praising themselves. Therefore it is important to evaluate job advertisements critically and to remember that it might not be the whole truth. Even if the employer compliments the spirit among the employees or claims to be the market leader, it will not guarantee that the company is a better employer than others. Also, the employers had many requirements for their ideal job applicants. They were, however, describing the ideal applicant. If someone thinks that they would suit the job well but do not possess in their opinion for example *excellent work planning skills*, it might not matter. More important could be that the person has motivation to work and to learn. Hopefully my study has shown that job advertisements' motives are often other than just giving information about the job and should therefore be regarded critically.

In this study I have concentrated barely on adjectives used in job advertisements and therefore the image they give of the advertisements is only partial. The contents of job advertisements could be examined more diversely and accurately by studying whole phrases and their meanings. Also focusing solely on the qualities required from the job applicant or the information the employer

gives about itself is worth research, since these aspects affect the impression the reader gets of the advertisement. Another suggestion for further research is recruitment websites on internet.

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