

Texts, readers and usability

How do readers use texts, and how can texts serve their readers?

Research Methodologies in European Cultures and Societies

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Housekeeping

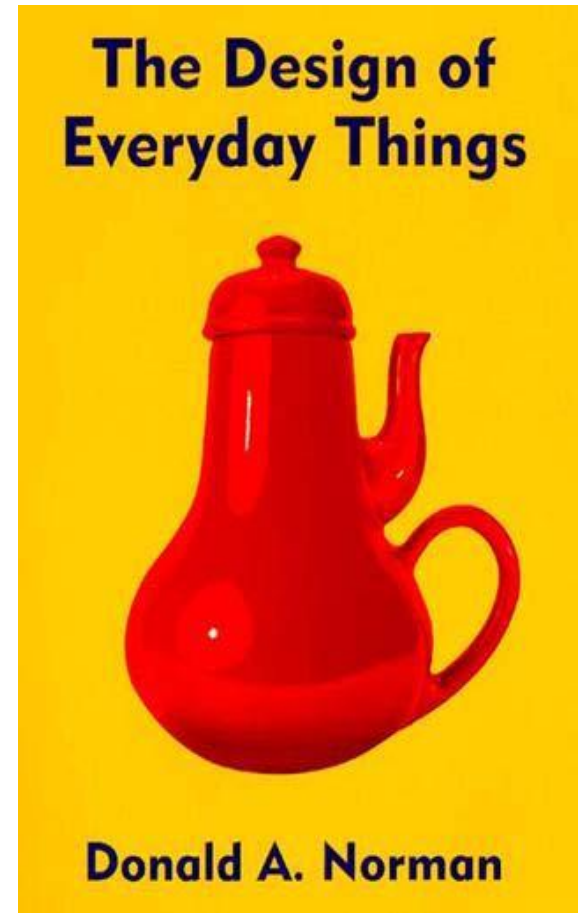
- Feel free to ask questions or comment throughout the lecture either via the chat or by raising your hand
- Think about how you would apply the ideas from this lecture and the next one to texts (or other forms of communication) that interest you

Reading texts – using texts

- Do we read texts for a purpose?
 - User manuals
 - Websites
 - Administrative forms
 - Literature?
 - Children's literature
 - Comics/graphic novels
 - Poetry
 - Instrumental texts
 - Can you think of texts that are instrumental in nature?
 - What texts are not instrumental?

What is usability?

- Origins in engineering, product development and human-computer interaction
- ISO definition: "The extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use." (ISO standard 9241-11)
- "when a product or service is truly usable, the user can do what he or she wants to do the way he or she expects to be able to do it, without hindrance, hesitation, or questions" (Rubin & Chisnell 2008: 4)
- Text production and text analysis



“Usability is about human [behavior](#). It recognizes that humans are lazy, get emotional, are not interested in putting a lot of effort into, say, getting a credit card and generally prefer things that are easy to do vs. those that are hard to do.”

— David McQuillen, ex-Swiss banker and founder of Sufferfest cycling workout resources

<https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/usability>

Usable texts?

Beginner notice

NOTES

When the helicopter crashed into a barrier or fall on the ground that is, when you release the left under control; aircraft fuselage using high-strength plastics naturally fall far greater than that of high-speed motor in an abnormal state of twisted fuselage of the light damage.



Usability and context



Usability and culture



(See Pitkäsalo 2018.)

Elements of usability (Jakob Nielsen)

Learnability

→ Is the text easy to follow and make sense of, even for someone inexperienced with the text type?

Efficiency

→ Can an experienced reader process the text quickly and without too much effort?

Memorability

→ Does the text meet a casual reader's expectations and have a familiar feel? E.g. norms, conventions

Errors

→ Does the text contain elements that cause misunderstandings or disrupt the reading?

Satisfaction

→ Is the reading experience enjoyable?

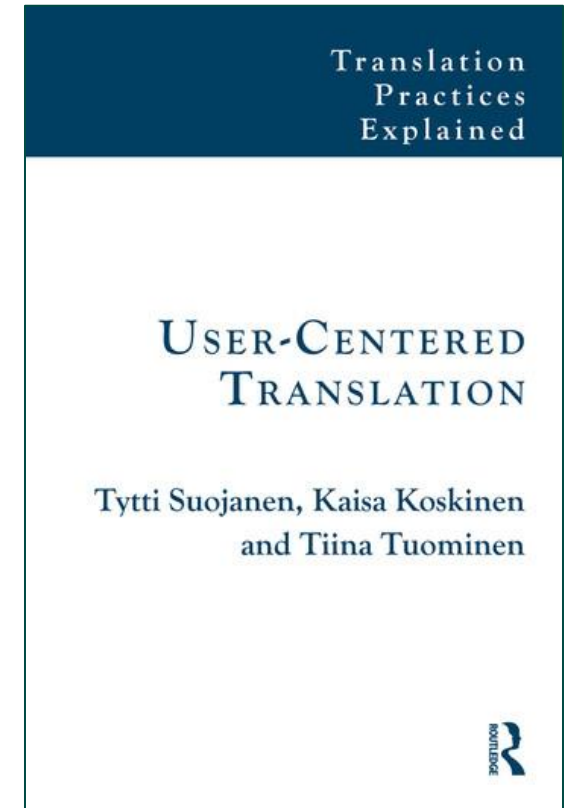
How could you use the elements of usability to discuss the characteristics of this text?



Is the usability of this text related to the cultural context?

User-Centered Translation (UCT)

- Based on the concept of usability
 - What happens to the usability of a text when it is translated?
 - Do we use translations?
- Information about users is gathered iteratively throughout the translation process and through different methods, and this information is used to create a usable translation
 - for particular users
 - in a particular context
 - for particular purposes



Task for next time

- Find a text for which usability could be a relevant consideration
 - It can also be a video or a visual message
 - Do you think it is usable? Why/why not?
 - Does its cultural/linguistic context affect its usability?
 - Can you use Nielsen's elements of usability to analyse the usability of this text?
- Next time, we will explore some methods that can be used to assess the usability of a text, particularly in multilingual and cross-cultural situations. You will be able to use your own texts to experiment with some of those methods.

Literature

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- Nielsen, J. (1993). *Usability engineering*. Academic Press.
- Pitkäsalo, E. (2019). Images without words—the focus group as a method of examining the reading experience of comics. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series – Themes in Translation Studies*, 17. <https://doi.org/10.52034/lanstts.v17i0.466>
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