User-centered tools for text design and analysis

Research Methodologies in European Cultures and Societies

13 October 2025

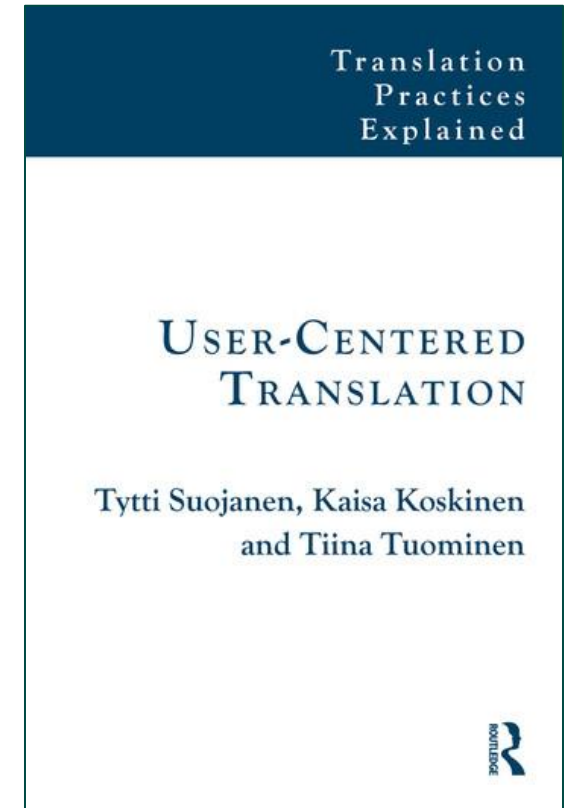Tiina Tuominen
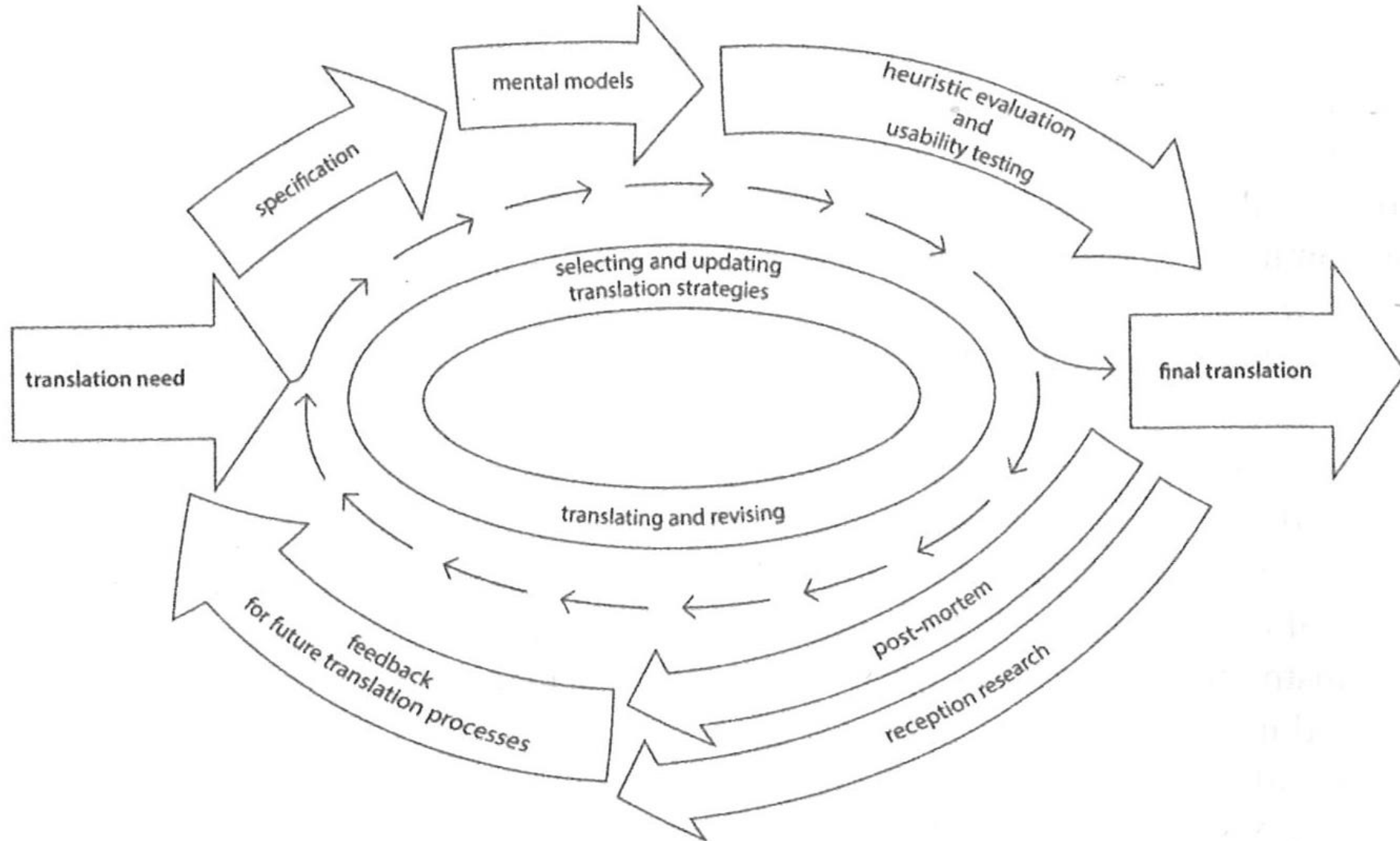
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Task from last lecture

- 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.

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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

Translation
Practices
Explained

USER-CENTERED
TRANSLATION

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The UCT process

Mental models: Persona

- User archetypes; imaginary characters who represent real user groups

- Usually based on empirical information on real users

- The translator/writer can find a connection to the user: a persona has a name, background, personality, etc.

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Persona: Emma (teacher)

Age   33 years old

Profession   Teacher of translation

Education   PhD in translation studies. Emma recently defended her PhD thesis on crowd-sourced translation. She has also completed ten ECTS of pedagogical studies.

Family   Married with two daughters aged 5 and 3. Her husband has a one-man IT company and works from the home office (part-time).

Hobbies   Yoga and Pilates

Work Experience Emma has four years' experience in teaching translation courses. Occasionally she works as a freelance translator translating a wide variety of commercial texts.

Personality   Emma leads a busy life, but she is good at multitasking. Emma has a positive outlook on life. She is not tenured, but she is ambitious as a teacher and wants her courses to prepare students well for working life. Emma is also looking to widen the scope of her research.

Emma and UCT:

Emma is in the middle of a curriculum design process, looking for new course books. She saw the UCT book in a Routledge newsletter. The UCT book offers Emma a ready-made package with reading material and assignments for a full UCT course, fresh ideas for research and potential pathways towards usability research as a whole, and avenues for professional diversification, which she can introduce in the translation classroom.

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Mental models: Audience design
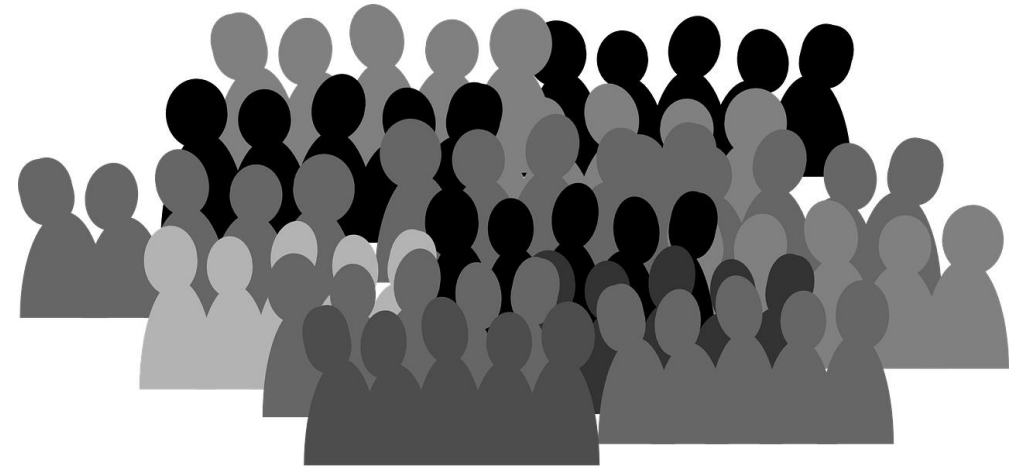
- **Addressees**, to whom the message is directly aimed.

- **Auditors**, who the speaker knows and accepts to be hearing the message but to whom the message is not specifically aimed.

- **Overhearers**, of whom the speaker is aware but who are not taken into account.

- **Eavesdroppers**, who the speaker does not know are hearing the message.

- **Referees**, with whom the speaker identifies or who the speaker particularly respects and whose favour the speaker seeks.

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Task

- Think about your own text or this one: https://www.peppapig.com/en-gb

- Use audience design to determine the audience categories for this text
  - Addressees
  - Auditors
  - Overhearers
  - Eavesdroppers
  - Referees
- You can post your list in the chat

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Mental models: The implied reader

- Reader positions built into texts

- Hypothetical readers
  - to whom writers target their texts and
  - whom a researcher can construct from the text through textual analysis

- What knowledge, attitudes, motivation etc. does the text assume the reader to have?

- Does the implied reader match what we know of the actual or intended audience?

- When a text is translated, does/should the implied reader remain the same?

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Task

- What are some characteristics in your own text that indicate its implied reader?
  - Alternative text: https://learning-corner.learning.europa.eu/learning-materials/super-microbes_en

- Do you think those characteristics match the likely actual readers?

- You can post observations in the chat

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Heuristic evaluation

= reviewing the functions of a product from a usability perspective

• Checklist of usability principles

• Usability problems are listed by heuristic and possibly assessed on severity scale, and improvements are suggested

• Quality assessment or analysis

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Eight UCT heuristics

1. Match between translation and specification
2. Match between translation and users
3. Match between translation and real world
4. Match between translation and genre
5. Consistency
6. Legibility, readability and understandability
7. Satisfaction
8. Match between source and target texts

(Suojanen & Tuominen 2015: https://www.vakki.net/publications/2015/VAKKI2015_Suojanen&Tuominen.pdf)

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Usability testing

- "a process that employs people as testing participants who are representative of the target audience to evaluate the degree to which a product meets specific usability criteria"
(Rubin, J.,& Chisnell, D. 2008, p. 21.)

- Users' behaviour is observed while they perform predefined tasks

- Suokas et al. 2015: http://www.trans-kom.eu/bd08nr02/trans-kom_08_02_09_Suokas_ua_Testing.20151211.pdf

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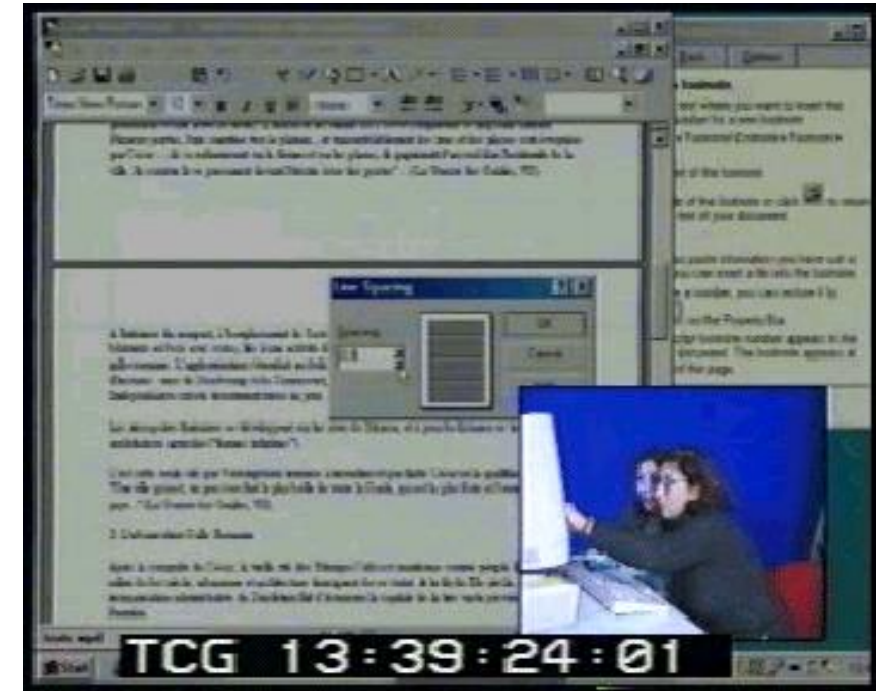
Testing the translation of a board game

Researchers observing and making notes

Test participants playing the game

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How can these ideas be applied?

- Where is usability a relevant consideration?

- Which tools suit this context best?

- How could I modify this tool to suit this context?

- What other usability tools are out there?
  - E.g. love letters and breakup letters / hate mail: Koskinen & Ruokonen 2017; Martin & Hanington 2012

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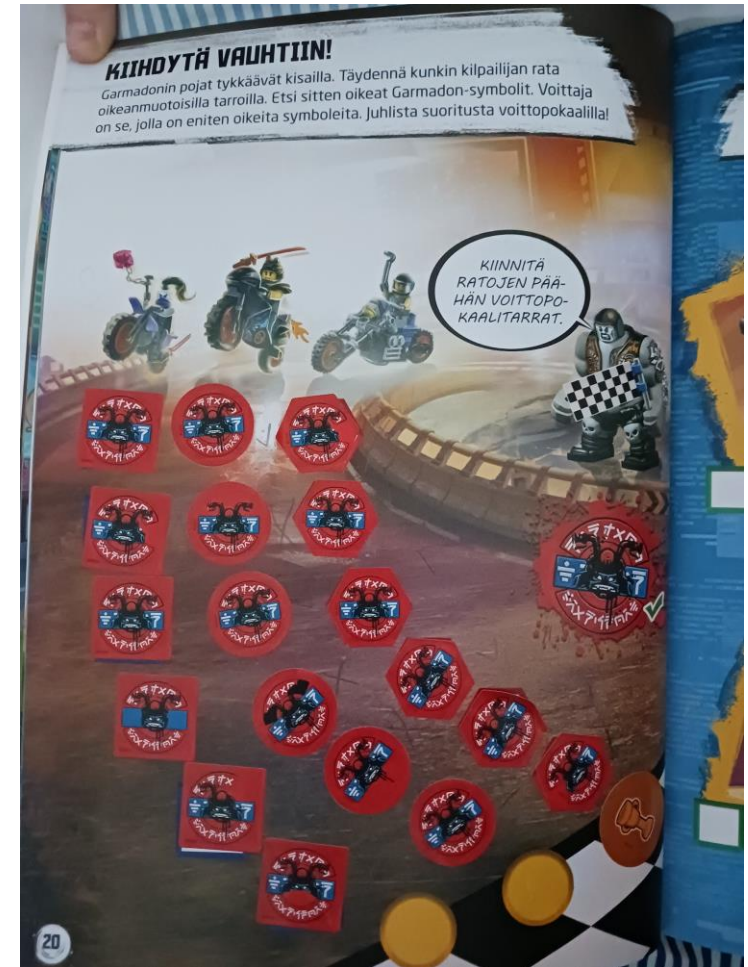
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