

Suojanen, Tytti, Koskinen, Kaisa and Tuominen, Tiina (2015). *User-Centered Translation*. London and New York: Routledge, 166 pp., £31.99. ISBN 978 1138795501.

In *User-Centered Translation*, Tytti Suojanen, Kaisa Koskinen and Tiina Tuominen encourage translators to consider the users of their translations by integrating their views throughout the entire translation process, from beginning to end. Published by Routledge as part of their "Translation Practices Explained" series, this is an "expanded and update volume" (11) of an earlier Finnish publication on the topic (2012). The premise of this book is that user-centred theory, which is closely linked to functional theories of translation, can help bridge the gap between theory and practice in TS. Starting from the simple idea that "reading translation can be seen as using" (7), the authors build on said functional theories of translation with the help of usability research. To do so, chapter 2 gives us an overview of usability research and establishes connections with TS. The notion of "social acceptability" in Jakob Nielsen's model of system acceptability (1993), for instance, echoes Gideon Toury's (1995) idea of acceptability (14-16). Furthermore, the authors highlight the relevance of Nielsen's concept of social acceptability for TS as it ultimately determines whether a product is usable or not in a given target culture. This, they argue, gives us new insights into acceptability in TS as we normally link social acceptability to norms, ideology or even censorship but more rarely to translation usability.

The following chapter, "Users and using texts", spends some time arguing the somewhat controversial idea that all text types, can be seen as products to be used by readers. Drawing on the literature to review reader competence, the authors then try to define these reader-users. In the process, they show how UCT may well be a new term but that the idea of taking users and readers into account isn't; reader-orientedness is, after all, a recurrent theme in TS. However, even though target recipients are acknowledged as part of the "brief" in Skopos theory, they are not centrally involved. Interestingly, this is why Suojanen *et al.* argue that Nida can be seen as the true pioneer of user-centredness in TS as his concept of dynamic equivalence ultimately focuses on the needs of the translation's end-user(s) (45). Still focusing on the theoretical grounding of UCT, chapter four presents research into textual elements of usability such as legibility, readability, comprehensibility (drawing on cognitive ergonomics) and accessibility.

In the second half of the book (chapters five to nine), we move on from theory to explore the more practical applications of UCT. Chapter five "Mental models of the user" gives us tools to profile a translation's end-

user. We are given advice on how to establish intertextual reader positions, focus on the context of reception through audience design and create fictive archetypes of users, “personas” (71). The authors bring all these processes together, showing how they form part of a global, iterative process, in a very helpful figure entitled “Mental models in UCT” (72).

Chapter six, “Usability heuristics and translation,” demonstrates how the quality checklists and styles guides widely in use in the translation industry are rather similar to usability heuristics. This chapter concludes that, even though TS can provide many ST analysis models, “translators need more concrete tools to be able to produce a target text appropriate for its users” (89) and that heuristics can help with that. In the following chapter, “Empirical usability and methods,” the authors further define UCT and bring to the fore how it differs from reader-orientedness in TS; studying empirically real translation users and their preferences is the core business of UCT. They acknowledge that, initially, translators may find actually meeting with their readers challenging but they argue that usability testing through think-aloud, eye tracking, questionnaires, focus groups and interviews reveals a rich set of contextual data that can help better cater to real users. They then cleverly prove their point by giving examples of research in TS where usability testing has been applied to great results, and show the relevance of such work to the industry.

In chapter eight, “Reception research in translation studies,” the three academics rightly make the point that, unlike reception studies, UCT “elicit[s] user feedback iteratively and during the translation process” (112). Still, reception research can feed into UCT. Leppihalme’s study of culture-bound allusions in literary and journalistic texts (1997) is one such example as it allows for the construction of “more accurate mental models” (113). Finally, in last chapter of the book, the authors argue that translation processes tend to suffer from “end-of-the-line problems” (125) and that using UCT methods could help the industry shift the focus from the client’s wishes to the end-users’ needs. It also advocates a redefinition of quality assessment along those lines, moving away from its “judgemental nature” (ibid) to focus, instead, on assessing the usability of the translation with an aim to improve “the interaction between user and product” (ibid). We can clearly see, here, how UCT in general, and this book in particular, can be useful to the industry as it can help them cater better to their users and improve their QA processes by integrating more iterative elements instead of focusing on the end-product only.

Even though it is pitched at readers who have some knowledge of TS, this book is aimed at a diverse range of users ranging from students in and teachers of TS to translation professionals. To achieve that, the authors

have created three well defined personae and made explicit the usability of the book for each of them. If it is true that the book won't be entirely relevant to all of them/us, but the user-centred way the book was conceived means that we can all find ample food for thought here. As a lecturer, I can see how this book can feed into some of my teaching; designing assignments using personae, for instance, could be both very formative and motivating for students. I have also found the case-studies and the many illustrations of cases where research can be directly useful to the industry most enlightening.

References

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