

User-centered Translation and Action Research Inquiry Bringing UCT into the Field

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Abstract

Language service providers could have much to gain by applying a user-centered approach to translation, especially when it comes to questions of translation quality and communication between different actors in the process. This article examines what topics could be addressed by applying the user-centered translation model into translation practice in cooperation with a Finnish language service provider. Issues such as translation quality and communication with clients are observed from a practical viewpoint, and ideas how to address these issues are provided from a user-centered perspective. Action research is suggested to apply a user-centered approach into translation practice.

Keywords: user-centered translation, action research, translation quality, language service provider

1 Introduction

The theory vs. practice dichotomy is common in any field, in which academic inquiry intermingles with everyday practice. Translation Studies (TS) is a good example: an academic field closely tied with actual practice, where many professional practitioners have similar academic backgrounds. Yet it is not rare to find views that question the feasibility of the theoretical side of TS in translator training programmes. As an example, I present a few quotes from a Proz.com discussion from 2011. The topic under discussion was whether theory is useful for a practising translator:

When I was in college, we read a fair amount of theory and, frankly, I don't think I understood a word of it. [...]

As I see it, translation theory for the most part is directed at literary translators, and can even be quite dismissive of non-literary translations. [...]

My other problem with theory is that it tends to ignore the purpose for which a translation is being performed.

(https://www.proz.com/forum/translation_theory_and_practice/189199-is_translation_theory_useful_to_the_practising_translator_your_opinions_please.html [accessed 10 August 2018])

These problems between translation theory and practice often seem to boil down to the argument that theory is not useful in actual practice – that academia is too removed

from the everyday practice of professional translators (see Chesterman & Wagner 2002). However, from what I have seen in contemporary translation studies, translation theory can have many practical applications and ‘theory’ in translation can be understood in various ways (Vottonen & Jääskeläinen 2018: 94–95). Even the Proz.com topic above has examples of how theory can benefit practice: for instance, one user commented on applying theoretical text analysis to meet the requirements of quality standards.

My aim is to seek practical methods for translation practice by applying the **user-centered translation** (UCT) model (Suojanen, Koskinen & Tuominen 2012, 2015a). The model suggests practical benefits, so it should be put to the test in practice. In this article, I present findings of an ongoing research project, in which user-centered translation is tested in the field in collaboration with the Finnish language service provider (LSP) Traduct.

The key question of this article is what matters concerning a language service provider could be addressed by applying a user-centered approach. I have analysed material gathered during a four-week research period on site at Traduct and identified three themes which could be addressed by adapting user-centered translation. Furthermore, I suggest an action research (AR) based approach to apply UCT into the company processes.

The article is divided into five chapters. This introduction chapter is followed by chapter two, which focuses on key theoretical concepts, including user-centered translation, translation quality and action research. The third chapter presents the language service provider Traduct in more detail. The fourth chapter is the empirical analysis of the data gathered during my fieldwork phase, where I also suggest an AR cycle to implement UCT into practice. The fifth chapter concludes the article by pondering the feasibility and benefits of applying a user-centered approach.

2 Key concepts

2.1 User-centered translation

User-centered translation (UCT) is a model that emphasizes the translation’s user/reader and context of use. The model originates from the works of Tytti Suojanen, Kaisa Koskinen and Tiina Tuominen (2012, 2015a). The model is based on the principles of user-centered design, in which the end user of a product or service is taken into account throughout the design process. In UCT, these design methods are applied into the translation process by gathering and utilizing information about the user/reader of the translation during all stages of the translation process. The goal is an iterative process, of which the user is an integral part.

A key focus of UCT is the **usability** of translations – *i.e.* how well they are suited for the task at hand. Usability might be best known in the context of user interface design, but it can be adapted to suit many different products and services. Usability refers to “the ease of use of a product in a specified context of use” (Suojanen *et al.*

2015a: 13). It is thus dependent on both the user(s) and the context of use. A translation with high usability is one the user can use effectively, efficiently and to their satisfaction (*ibid.*). These goals could be achieved by different ways in different contexts, but some basic examples could include the following: using language that is familiar to the user and suitable for the purpose in terms of style, register and terminology; presenting the information in a way that makes understanding efficient; and having the text give a satisfying (enough) experience to the user.

There are multiple usability methods presented by the UCT model – many of which are used in fields other than translation, such as audience design and usability testing (see *e.g.* Suojanen *et al.* 2015a) –, but for the sake of this article I shall only address one: **user personas**. A persona is a representation of a certain user group, a character based on information that is known about the users. The personas are used to help to visualise and relate to the target group, to make decisions based on the actual users. As Suojanen *et al.* (2015a: 70) put it, personas “represent the needs and characteristics of real users [...] rather than the designers’ conception of who they would like to design for.” Often multiple personas are created to represent the different types of user groups. The personas are given descriptions including name, background information, description of personality, and often a picture or other physical representation. The creation of the personas can vary based on the scale of the project. In a large-scale usability engineering project, information to create personas is gathered from target groups. In smaller translation projects, the persona can be created using the translator’s intuition and experiences as well as textual elements of the source text (Suojanen *et al.* 2015a: 70–71).

2.2 Translation quality

Usability might be straightforward to describe and evaluate, but the topic of translation quality could be debated *ad nauseam*. Translation quality has been widely discussed in various academic publications, such as Colina (2008, 2011), House (2015), Jääskeläinen (2016), and Huertas-Barros *et al.* (2018) – to name a few fairly recent ones. The question of translation quality is also very present in the theory vs. practice issue (*e.g.* Chesterman & Wagner 2002: 80–107), and different theoretical views “lead to different concepts of translational quality” (House 1997: 1). However, here I shall rather discuss quality in terms of what is pragmatic and relevant to my research project and the findings presented in chapter 4. For this purpose I shall use three ways to look at quality: Gouadec’s translation quality (2007, 2010), small and big quality (Juran 1992; Lillrank 2015, 2017), and Abdallah’s total quality (2007, 2017).

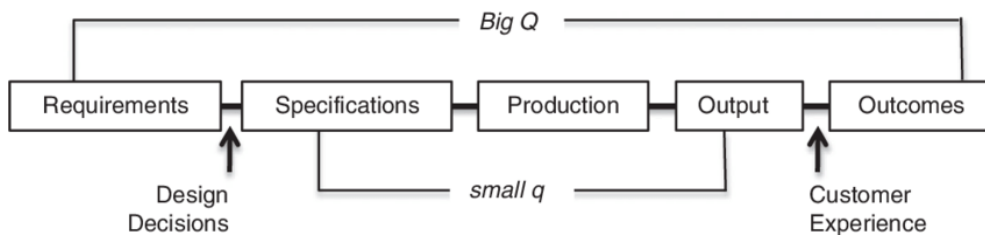
Daniel Gouadec (2010: 270) defines translation quality as “both the quality of an end-product (the translated material) and the quality of the transaction (the service provided)”. He suggests that most translation quality standards assume that a translation transaction is of good quality when both customer and service provider are satisfied with both the process and its result (*ibid.*). Gouadec also approaches the concept of usability when defining a translation’s “extrinsic quality” as opposed to its “intrinsic quality”. Under extrinsic quality, he (2010: 272) lists several functional and practical

features, such as meeting the requirements of “the applicable situation in terms of public [–], objectives and purposes, medium or media, code, and such external parameters that are relevant.” This extrinsic quality also requires the translation to be “adequate” which “means that the translator translated whatever content satisfied the particular needs of the particular ‘users’ and put it in a perfectly satisfactory form (and format, and medium).” (Ibid.).

Gouadec (2010: 273–275) also brings up another important point to consider: different grades of quality. Sometimes a so-called “lower grade” translation can meet the customer’s requirements better and be more adequate than a meticulously crafted one: “[I]f the type and mode of translation are not suited, quality is at risk – meaning quality of the service provision episode and not quality of the end product: a ‘good translation’ may not be the ‘right’ one.” (2010: 273).

In addition to Gouadec’s translation quality, I would add the concept of small quality and big quality as presented by Paul Lillrank (2017). Lillrank references Joseph Juran’s (e.g. Juran 1992) views of the quality of ‘products’ (for Juran, ‘products’ include both goods and services), and describes how quality can be divided into small quality and big quality, illustrated here in Figure 1 (with the permission of the original author):

Figure 1: Small and big quality relations (Lillrank 2015: 358). © Paul Lillrank



Small quality is the relation between the customer’s specification and the service they receive. In translation this would include specifications described in the translation brief, such as deadlines, language pairs and variants, terminology choices *etc.* as well as other specifications given by the client. However, the client might not always know how to communicate what they want from the product or service, which, according to Lillrank (2017), is one of the big challenges when focusing on small quality. **Big quality**, on the other hand, broadens the scope beyond the specifications, by adding the relation between the customer’s or user’s **expectations** (requirements) and the eventual **impact** (outcomes) experienced. This covers the whole customer/user experience, not just the part of the process where the service provider is present. So, if an LSP would want to broaden their focus to big quality, they would need to consider what the customer actually requires from the product – but may not be able to communicate in their specification –, as well as who is the end user and what is the use situation of the finished product. This is where a user-centered approach could become useful, since it is designed to cover the whole process from the customer to the end user.

Expectations can be difficult to define, and the customer might not always be capable or willing to articulate them. Such problems in communication can cause

problems in small quality. Thus a focus on big quality would require defining beforehand by what criteria the service shall be evaluated. This might even require sacrificing some aspects of “small q” in favour of “Big Q”. These could result in having to make changes to the service process. The problem also appears when the customer’s expectations contrast with what value the service will actually bring to the user, since often the customer is not the end user and the customer might not even have a clear picture of who the users are. (Lillrank 2017; Jokela 2017.)

There are certain similarities between the concepts of small and big quality and Kristiina Abdallah’s **total quality** of translation (Abdallah 2007, 2017) in which total quality is a combination of both the quality of the process and the quality of the product within a larger sphere of social quality. Product quality is what has commonly been evaluated in translation quality evaluation: the product and service. The process quality includes the tools and materials (such as computer-assisted translation software, source text *etc.*) as well as the cognitive and emotional factors involved in the translation process. Social quality includes the larger surroundings and impact of the process. It is concerned with questions of who translates, for whom, and under what kind of conditions. So, similarly to big quality, total quality is not dictated just by having a streamlined process and that the process and product are up to the client’s expectations. Total quality brings in the social aspects surrounding the process itself, involving such matters as societal impact, the different actors involved in the process and the companies and translators themselves.

Figure 2: Abdallah’s total quality (modified from Abdallah 2017 and Jääskeläinen 2016: 90–98)



2.3 Translation service quality standards

When discussing translation quality, it is worth mentioning the translation service quality standards, since they can play a notable role within a translation company. The ISO 17100 standard states requirements for ISO certified translation services. It is based on the previous EN 15038 translation service quality standard, upgraded to meet ISO

requirements. The standard specifies the requirements for “all aspects of the translation process directly affecting the quality and delivery of translation services.” (ISO 2015: vi). ISO 17100 does not apply to interpreting services, post-editing, or raw machine translation. Certain steps are required to be taken in an ISO certified process. For instance, qualified professionals must be used for each part of the process, the projects are managed by a project manager, the translations must be revised by a different person who did the translation, and so on.

While the quality standards could arguably be seen to focus mostly on small quality and the relations between customer and service provider, there are certain requirements that point towards the previously discussed total quality and big quality. For example, ISO 17100 dictates some aspects that relate to Abdallah’s social and process quality. These include minimum requirements for translators’ education and work experience, competences of project managers and revisers, as well as descriptions of both human and technological resources required to qualify for ISO certification. Similarly, the user and use context of translations are mentioned a few times, for instance when describing requirements for linguistic specification. (ISO 2015.)

2.4 Action research

When it comes to questions of bridging the gap between theory and practice, there is a way of conducting research, which addresses these questions at its core: action research (AR). Action research, as described by Peter Reason and Ray Bradbury in their preface for *The Handbook of Action Research* (2006), is a very diverse field and it is not so much a single methodology, but an “*orientation toward inquiry*” (original emphasis). It consists of a “family of approaches” which aim to improve practice by working together with practitioners or members of the group in question (Reason & Bradbury 2006a: xxi–xxii). The motivation for choosing AR as the mode of inquiry is often rooted in the goal of working together with practitioners towards practical outcomes (Reason & Bradbury 2006b: 2).

John Heron and Peter Reason (2006: 144–154) describe the practice of co-operative inquiry as an important part of AR. Co-operative inquiry involves working from an AR perspective **with** people rather than doing research **on** people. In a co-operative inquiry, the division is not drawn between mutually exclusive roles of the researcher and subjects. Instead of treating the people participating in research as passive objects, they are given the status of “co-researchers and co-subjects” (Heron & Reason 2006: 144). Thus, the participants are also taking part in the design and implementation of the study. And not just in the preliminary stages – they are an integral part of the study as co-researchers, also taking part in gathering data and making sense of the findings, as well as planning on the next stages of the study.

An action research project is often divided into three distinct phases: 1) planning and familiarisation, 2) implementation of action, and 3) post-study analysis (Nicodemus & Swabey 2016: 158; Heron & Reason 2006: 145). Phase one consists of the co-researchers coming together and planning a method of study to examine a certain “area of human activity” (2006: 145). The focus of the study is agreed and a set of research

questions or propositions are developed. In addition, the “procedures for gathering and recording data from this experience” (ibid.) are agreed upon. This article is focused on the first phase of an AR project. Phase two is when the co-researchers become engaged in the actions agreed upon in the previous phase. They begin the observation and recording of the processes and outcomes. The third and final phase is when the implementation phase has lasted for an agreed period of time and the co-researchers come together to share their findings and experiences. The practical and experimental data is analysed and original ideas are re-examined. In this phase, new ideas can be developed or old ideas and research questions can be rejected or adapted. This is also the point when the focus will start to shift towards the next research cycle.

2.5 Action research and translation

As pointed out earlier, both practitioners and scholars have seen translation research at times as somewhat detached from the actual practice. Bringing new ideas and models of practice into the field of translation requires co-operation and this is where an AR approach would prove useful. As Ana Cravo and Josélia Neves (2007: 3.1) put it, an AR approach benefits both translation theoreticians and practitioners, since “theoreticians will be given the opportunity to take a hand in the translation activity and translators will gain from the much desired visibility they will be given” and “professionals are often too involved in running their business or meeting their deadlines to find the time to research into problems and to question possibilities.” Using AR in this manner is in many ways similar to the principles of service design (*e.g.* Tuulaniemi 2011), so applying an AR inquiry in the context of language services could also be considered a service design project.

It is interesting to consider some of the similarities between the interdisciplinary modes of inquiry used throughout the years in translation studies and the experimental and multifaceted methods of AR. In TS ideas and methods have occasionally been borrowed from other fields to suit the purpose of the subject of inquiry (*e.g.* Gambier & van Doorslaer 2016: 1–13). Often these ideas and methods have become more refined and better suited for TS the more they are used. While AR has not been extensively used in the context of translation studies, in my opinion it seems like a very promising and useful mode of inquiry.

Cravo and Neves have written in 2007 about the possibility of adapting AR in various TS contexts. They raise many relevant issues, especially when it comes to bridging theory and practice, academia and the workplace. Brenda Nicodemus and Laurie Swabey (2016: 160) have also acknowledged that there is indeed a place for AR in TS, but they lament that “the [TS] literature contains more musings about the potential for this type of research than published studies that actually use this approach”. Agnes Whitfield (2017: 220) also points out that most writings of AR in TS focus “primarily on translator and translator teacher education, translator training and audiovisual translation.”

Since my research with user-centered translation has many elements of putting theory into practice, this element of AR would seem to fit the purpose well. It would

give a framework to test UCT in practice by using an AR based method of inquiry. At the same time, it would be an exercise in applying an AR approach into a TS research project. However, the point is not merely to test the feasibility of these two approaches. The goal is to produce something valuable for the community involved in the AR process, as any good AR should.

3 The language service provider Traduct

In this chapter, I shall discuss the company involved in this research project in more detail. Traduct is an established language service provider based in Turku, Finland. The company's focus is mainly on translation of business-to-business communications. It currently has nine full-time employees. Traduct was founded in 1985 by members of the translation training department of the University of Turku, so a proximity to the academic side of translation has been present from the start.

The company's translation process is divided into sections handled by different people, which gives the employees a chance to focus on their assigned tasks. Here is a simplified representation of the process: The communication with customers is handled by the contact persons who take the assignments and agree on the details, which are then documented in the translators' work orders. The jobs are then assigned to different translators by the coordinator, who keeps track of the projects and also works as a translator. The first version is done by one translator and revised by another, before it comes back to the contact person, who sends the finished translation to the customer to accept or to undergo an external revision.

The company is also certified by translation service quality standards. When this project began in 2017, the company had an EN 15038 certification and a compatible quality manual (upgraded to meet ISO 17100 requirements in 2018). The quality manual thoroughly describes the company operations, translation processes and their requirements, relations between the client and the LSP, and many other subjects. It also includes work instructions for different situations. Having a well-documented process is part of meeting the requirements of EN 15038. However, the interviews pointed out that parts of the quality manual were seen somewhat cumbersome, since the manual was not only designed to meet the needs of EN 15038, but also those of the ISO 9001 standard, which gives companies a quality management certification that meets ISO requirements. ISO 9001 is not specifically targeted for translation service providers, so switching to the new ISO 17100 certification was seen to be a solution for the problem.

The quality manual has also seen modifications along the way. For example, in the interviews, when discussing whether there is a quality checklist for the translators, some translators recalled that such a checklist exists and is used. However, when looking for the actual checklist, I found out that it had been considered redundant and was removed from the quality manual in 2012.¹ This is an interesting example of how the theoretical side is present, but might not have a very visible role in the day to day activities of the

¹ In the ISO 17100 revised quality manual, the checklist was replaced with a set of requirements based mainly on sections 5.3.1. and 5.3.3 of the standard.

company translators. This is mainly true for the staff members who have all been working in the company for many years – some since the beginning. They have a mutual trust for each other to fulfil their role in the process.

4 Empirical evaluation

The project's first research cycle, which this article focuses on, started in the spring of 2017, when I spent four weeks on location at Traduct, becoming familiar with the company and its processes. During this time, I conducted interviews, observed translation processes and daily activities, and familiarised myself with the company's quality manual and other documents. I also gave brief presentations of user-centered translation and two UCT methods were tested in a workshop setting. The data analysed here consists of the material gathered during my four weeks on site, and has been supplemented with further communication with the participants between spring 2017 and autumn 2018². The on-site material which this analysis is based on consists of transcribed interviews (36 pages), the researcher's field diary (32 pages) and other notes and observations made during the fieldwork phase. The analysis took advantage of the principles of qualitative content analysis using the Atlas.TI software. The motivation behind the analysis is to answer the research question 'what matters could be addressed in a LSP by applying a user-centered approach'. From the themes that arose from the data, the most relevant for the purpose of this article are **translation quality**, **customer feedback**, and **communication with customers**. I shall discuss these themes throughout this chapter with the help of examples from the data and suggest an AR cycle for applying UCT.

4.1 Discussion of themes

A key issue with which UCT could prove to be useful for the company would involve the concept of **translation quality**. The question of quality in a field that is facing new changes and challenges came up repeatedly in the material. According to the interviews, the company identifies itself as a quality-focused LSP. The CEO defines quality as how well the product or service meets the customer's requirements and expectations. He also adds that quality is seen in terms of internal quality (within the company) and external quality (to the customer or the field at large). A close relation can be seen here to the views of translation quality discussed in chapter 2.2, especially Gouadec's translation quality.

From the perspective of Abdallah's total quality, it could be argued that all three levels of quality (social, process and product quality) have been considered to an extent

² All participants involved in the project have been informed of the purpose and goals of the research and consented to participate in the study. Similarly, the researcher and the Language Service Provider have agreed on mutual terms of the fieldwork process and the use of research data, following good scientific practice and research ethics. As the nature of the research is based on Action Research, I would also consider the participants co-researchers, and I would like to thank them for their ongoing involvement in this research project.

in the company operations. For instance, the way the different tasks are divided between employees can be seen to boost social quality, since the translators do not need to shift their attention to such matters as dealing directly with the client. This makes it possible to focus on the translation task, which in turn benefits the process and product quality. Process quality is likewise enhanced by the tools used, such as having up to date translation memories and project management tools. The translators were also able to work remotely, which can be seen to boost social quality by giving the translators more freedom over their work environment.

However, to achieve big or total quality would also require looking beyond the customer's experience, towards what Lillrank (2017) calls the "outcomes" or "impact" of the service provided, which could benefit from an end user perspective. The interviews also seemed to confirm Lillrank's point that the customer's inability to fully communicate their requirements can cause problems in gathering feedback and achieving a broader view of quality.

According to the interviews, gathering **feedback** on the quality of the product and service was considered an important but difficult task. For instance, the interviews and other material point out that gathering feedback is not very straightforward, as is quite possibly the case in many other professions too. There had been various ways the company had gathered feedback from their clients, but a single structured process did not exist. Indeed, a repetitive need for a customer to give comments was also seen as a negative addition to the service itself. The company had complied much of the feedback they have received from the customers. Some of the material included answers to an online form used at one point, most were direct email messages from clients. The greater part of the feedback was very positive, but fairly vague. The customers' comments often praised not just the translation, but the whole customer experience, *e.g.* reliable delivery and good customer service. Some customers were also impressed by the translators' terminological skills and knowledge of the subject matters. Some minor corrections or remarks were included in the positive feedback too. There was also negative feedback, but much less than positive. Some of the negative comments included translators' apparent lack of knowledge of the subject matters, not using terms the client had wanted, and a failure to meet the deadline. The amount of negative feedback was overall quite small, and while it would look good for a company to receive only positive feedback, it would be difficult to improve based on praise alone.

Having a method to gather structured and specific feedback would greatly benefit any service provider. However, problems often result from a lack of simple means to gather customer feedback, and customers are not always familiar with matters involved in language services. The customer might not have the time or possibilities to give the kind of feedback the service provider might want, which is also connected to the theme of **communication with customers**. Since Traduct is mainly focused on business to business translation, the representatives who order language services come under various names and titles; some of them have language expertise and skills to comment product quality, while others might only focus on the service. The interviews did point out that mutual understanding and efficient communication benefit both the LSP and the client. One example that came up was that if the LSP is able to update the client's

translation memories based on constructive feedback, it is a clearly visible benefit for both parties and for the quality of future translations. Feedback and communication with customers are closely linked in many of the examples in the data.

As discussed in chapter 2.2, a broader view of quality could benefit the service as a whole. This could also be the key to mutual understanding as well as gathering more specific and relevant feedback – not just from the customer but possibly from the perspective of the actual end user too. Broadening the view from the product and transaction between customer and service provider towards “big quality” could thus be addressed by considering the end user level. However, achieving the actual end user level could prove to be difficult in an LSP setting.

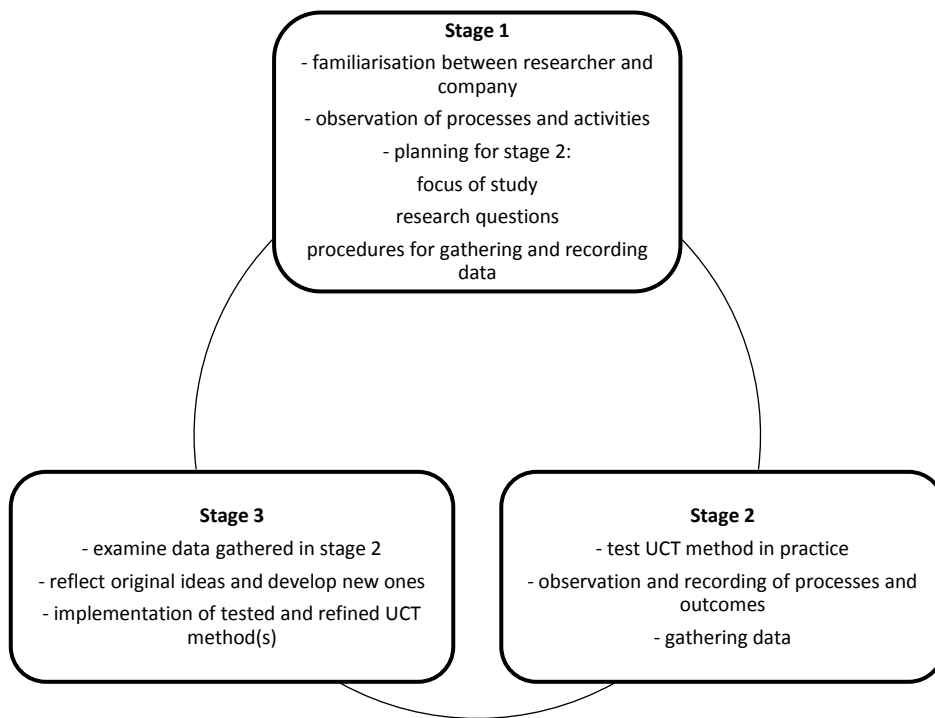
One possibility would be utilising user personas as a part of the translation process – preferably personas created together with the clients. Personas benefit from being resource efficient and relatively simple to utilise, they have also been useful in translator training contexts (Suojanen *et al.* 2015b: 152–153). When testing different usability methods in a workshop setting on site, personas were seen to be better suited for the LSP from the service process perspective. Compared to other methods, such as audience design, personas were seen to be easier to apply and to use together with the client, whereas other methods were considered to be useful mainly within the LSP. Personas could thus be used to inform the customers on what is expected of the translation and who the target group is. Here co-operation between the client and the LSP should be emphasised when creating personas to reach a shared view of the user and use context.

In my opinion, a focused view of the end user could benefit the whole process, since the same user persona would be known to the client, project manager, translators, and revisers. The client would know what kind of need there is for the translation and could negotiate with the LSP better; the LSP could better offer suitable services to each commission; the translators could base their choices on the previously agreed end user and use situation, and thus justify their choices; the revisers would know what is behind the choices made by the translator and offer suggestions accordingly. In an optimal scenario, this would benefit communications and information between all participants, since everyone would have a shared view of the end user and use situation.

4.2 Application of action research

Finding themes to address with a user-centered approach is only the beginning. The next step is to design an AR cycle, where chosen parts of the UCT model are applied and tested in practice. This requires choosing a course of action together with the company: selecting a UCT method, formulating a research question, planning the implementation, planning how to gather and record data, and setting a timeline for the cycle. This requires careful planning together with the company, so that relevant issues can be addressed, and unnecessary weight is not added to either the company processes or the clients. The design for this AR process is presented below:

Figure 3: A three-stage AR process for this study, modified from Cravo & Neves (2007) and Heron & Reason (2006)



As seen in the previous chapter, user personas would seem to be the most beneficial focus point for the purpose of this research project. Personas could help address the main themes that arose from the data – namely quality, feedback, and communication with customers. The second stage of the project now involves taking user personas into practice in the LSP. A number of translation projects need to be chosen, where personas are applied throughout the process. This requires also finding clients, who are willing to participate in the process. In my view, larger projects and perhaps even new clients could be most beneficial, but it would also be interesting to see if the use of personas could also benefit translations considered more common or routine. As seen before, neither the clients nor the LSP should be burdened too much by the process, so a streamlined application is necessary, with clearly defined instructions. The duration of the second stage needs to be long enough for the participants to become familiar with the method and gather relevant data, but not too long to cause unnecessary burden. Relevant data can include notes made by the participants, the personas created in the process, and later stage interviews. The third stage will then analyse the gathered data and ideally come up with a useful implementation of UCT, as well as new ideas and refinements for the methods and process. The practical design for the following stages should be done in close co-operation between the researcher and co-researchers. The necessity of co-operation became especially apparent when I presented ideas to the CEO, who noticed that with some adjustments the researcher’s presentations could be made “less academic” and more marketable to the clients.

5 Conclusion

As we have seen, one major point which could be addressed when implementing this kind of user-centered translation/action research model in practice would involve the concept of quality. Quality can be seen very differently from the perspective of the customer, the service provider, or the theoretical framework. Thus, having a tangible link between them could improve communication and make it easier to gather relevant feedback from the customers. The action research approach can be useful for bringing new ideas into practice. It is still too early to say how well the UCT/AR approach has worked in this case, but it does suggest significant practical potential.

It is also important to consider whether a user-centered approach is useful for a specific project or not (Jokela 2017). Analysing the potential benefits could end up showing that a user-centered approach might not give any additional value in some cases over others. Naturally, not every single translation project needs a separate process, where the linguistic requirements and end-use specification are analysed. And since fast and reliable delivery is a sign of quality for many customers, the translation process itself should not be hindered by the application of user-centered translation methods; planning resource-heavy usability tests could add unnecessary weight on the company processes. Thus, for a language service provider with established processes, minor adjustments and easier to apply methods would be preferable.

This kind of research is also close to the principles of service design, which could be used beneficially for such purposes, too. Seeing how the practical focus of translation quality seems to revolve around a service process, it could benefit from a service design perspective. Combining service design and UCT could present translation businesses with useful tools to refine their processes towards a more user-centered approach as well as provide the companies with perhaps even new services to offer. Using the principles of UCT to move away from merely product or service oriented translation quality towards **total quality** (Abdallah 2017) or **big quality** (Juran 1992; Lillrank 2017) could at the same time help a company meet the requirements of translation service quality standards.

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Research material

The research material was gathered in Turku, Finland 10 April – 6 May 2017. It consists of the researcher's field diary (32 pages), transcribed interviews (36 pages) and other notes and material produced and gathered on site at Traduct. The material has been supplemented with additional notes and personal communication with participants in 2017 and 2018.

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