

Trans-Atlantic & Pacific Project

Multilateral collaborations ó Fall 2014

Procedures for students at NDSU and PARIS

DIDEROT

Writing/testing/translation project:

Participating institutions and number of students:

Ghent University, XX students

North Dakota State University, 12 students

Polytechnic University of Catalonia, 48 students

University of Padua, XX students

University of Parisô Diderot, 25 students

Vaasa University, XX students

Writing/testing/translation project commences: Oct. 2nd

Pre-Learning Report due: Oct. 2nd

Translation Brief due: Oct. 15th

Usability Test Report due: Oct. 23rd

Instructional Document in English due to translators: Oct. 30th

Post-Learning Report due: Dec. 4th

Introduction

This collaborative project will include engineering students studying technical writing in English at Barcelona Tech in Spain, software development students in a usability testing class at Vaasa University in Finland, and translation students in classes at Ghent University in Belgium, Université Paris Diderot in France, and the University of Padua in Italy.

Your role is to serve as English-language expert and project manager. Your cross-cultural virtual team (CCVT) will extend to the students in each country listed and will probably include more than one team member at each site in Europe.

A list of all team members participating to the project will be provided online with contact details for every member.

The project will consist of three phases:

1. a co-authoring-for-translation phase with partners at Barcelona Tech
2. a usability testing phase with partners at Barcelona Tech and Vaasa
3. a translation phase with partners at Ghent, Paris Diderot, and Padua

For the writing students at NDSU and Barcelona Tech there are five deliverables:

- a pre-learning report
- a translation brief
- an instructional document written for translation
- a usability test report
- a post-learning report

For the usability testing students at Vaasa there are three deliverables:

- a pre-learning report
- a usability test report
- a post-learning report

For the translation students at Ghent, and Padua there are three* deliverables:

- a pre-learning report
- the translated instructional document
- a post-learning report

For the Translation students à Paris Diderot there are two deliverables :

- the translated instructional document
- Students at Paris Diderot are required to keep a reflective diary as well.

Deliverables are described in detail below.

Phase 1: Writing the Instructional Document

The bulk of technical writing involves giving instructions to product users or consumers. Sometimes the instructions are short, as in obtaining a blood sample. Sometimes they're long, taking up hundreds of pages in a manual.

In this phase, you'll write instructions for an engineering process, software, or equipment that you can explain thoroughly in 3-5 pages.

It's important always to keep the reader in mind. That's true of any writing, but especially of instructions. That's why more and more technical communicators are developing usability tests. Along with the engineering students and a usability testing class overseas, you'll try out your instructions on users this semester and write a usability report on the results.

To plan your instructions and evaluate them, refer to the instructions planning guide and instructions checklist available on Blackboard on the folder labeled "Instructions/Procedures/New Methods materials." Your instructions will be evaluated on the basis of their readability, usability, and attention to elementary document design principles.

As soon as you know who your partners are, you should contact them by e-mail. Thereafter you may communicate by other means, such as Skype or Facebook, as long as all partners have access to them and are willing to use them. Keep contacting your partners until they answer your messages. It can take a certain time.

Technology's quick growth is contributing to a shrinking world. Not only are communications global now; so are product sales. Technical communicators for many companies, say that they are being asked more and more to prepare texts in English for translation. Some do so daily. In this phase you will take the instructions that you co-authored with your engineering partners and prepare the text for translation, using the guidelines found on Blackboard in the folder labeled "Translation materials."

Phase 2: Usability Testing Vaasa University

Once you've written your instructions, you can't know how well they work until you try them out on real readers. See the folder on Blackboard labeled "Usability testing materials" to find guidelines to set up and report a usability test of your instructions.

If you have written instructions for engineering equipment, you will conduct your testing in engineering labs in the College of Engineering. If you have written instructions for software, you may be able to conduct your testing in the English Department's usability testing lab. In either case, your subjects will need to be persons to whom the procedure is truly new and thus who need to rely on your instructions.

Phase 3: Translating the Instructional Document

This phase of the project when you send your instructions, prepared for translation, to your translation partners. No one needs to know the precise meaning of your text more than translators do. Thus, they will be contacting you and your co-authors to ask precisely what you meant to say in passages where your text is unclear or ambiguous. As writers of the texts usually have more subject matter expertise on the topic in the text than the translators do, the latter may have questions. Such questions may reveal translation difficulties, and answers to the translators' questions will greatly help the process of translation. To keep the process moving, co-authors will need to answer the translators' questions as quickly as possible.

When the translation team for each target language is finished, the team will send the co-authors and testers their translated text.

Deliverable 1: The Translation Document

During this phase of the project, the Paris Diderot students will receive a document they will have to translate. They will have to understand, write, do research, contact the US writers (technical communicators), and edit their texts.

Each member of the translation team will have to do research, translate and edit. As the documents to be translated will not be very long, it is much better to do so than to split activities.

It is a great opportunity for the French students in translation to be able to contact the writers.

Since the writers of the texts may have more subject matter expertise on the subject they documented compared to translators, the latter may have a lot of questions to ask the US Students in technical communication. The questions asked might also help technical communicators to improve their documents, to be clearer and more accurate. Questions may show translation difficulties, and answers to the translators' questions will greatly help the process of translation. US students should answer the different questions as quickly as possible.

Deliverable 2: The Reflective Diary

French students, throughout the project, must keep reflective diaries (e.g. blogs) describing each instance of collaboration and reflecting on what they are learning from the project and from their teammates. Students should document any challenges they experience and how they overcome them. Students should also comment on the tools they are using to collaborate and how beneficial (or otherwise) they are for the project. The blog entries should be *reflective* rather than narrative in nature.

The reflective diary is an individual requirement. Each student must keep his/her own reflective diary. Students are free to use whichever diary or blog tool they like (e.g. Wordpress or Blogger) but they must give their instructors access to the diary. Students should post at least two entries every week, for the duration of the project. Ideally, the entries should be categorized under suitable topics (e.g. "collaboration tools" or "writing for translation"). Students should also link to any other blogs and websites they identify that are relevant to the project.

Some blogs that students may find interesting include:

- <http://idratherbewriting.com/>
- <http://thecontentwrangler.com/blog/>
- <http://www.techwr-l.com/>
- <http://edublogs.org/community/>
- <http://blogs.adobe.com/techcomm/>

You should have a minimum of twelve blog entries throughout the course of the Collaborative Project (two per week). Of course, you may have more than twelve entries. In your final blog entry, you should include a brief wrap-up report on the project.

Be sure to discuss these topics in your final entry:

- Your impressions of working in a virtual team (including whether or not you would wish to do so again)
- The most valuable things you learned from doing the project

- New skills you developed during the course of the project
- A brief description of the leadership structure in your team and an evaluation of how effective the team leadership was

Evaluation for the French Students: Reflective Diary 50% Translation 50%