

Comparing Professional Translation and Fan Translation

A User-Centered Case Study on the Manga *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*

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Master's Thesis

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The aim of this thesis is to compare two English translations of the same Japanese comic book or *manga*: one made by professionals and one by fans of the text being studied. The text in question is a part of the manga *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*, which was chosen as the material of this study due to the fact that fan translations were the only way to read the manga for much of its existence.

The translations were studied from the angle of *user-centered translation*, an approach to translation that emphasizes the reader's experience. The translations' *usability*, or the ease with which the reader can read and enjoy the translation, was evaluated and compared using *heuristic evaluation*. Heuristic evaluation in user-centered translation studies involves using a list of guidelines or heuristics to thoroughly evaluate multiple different aspects that affect the usability of a translation. The secondary goal of this study was to create a modified list of heuristics for studying comic book translations.

The professional translation was found to be the more usable of the two translations. The main reason for this was the fan translation's frequent typographical errors, while other usability issues, such as mistakes in the translation's usage of speech bubbles, also harmed its usability to a lesser extent. Additionally, some usability aspects were found to be more equal between the two translations. The modified list of heuristics was found to be effective, but it could be edited further in future studies of similar texts.

Key words: translation, fan translation, usability, user-centered translation, heuristic evaluation, comic books, manga.

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List of Abbreviations

ST = source text

TT = target text

UCT = user-centered translation

PT = professional translation

FT = fan translation

1 Introduction

It is reasonable to assume that, as long as multiple mutually unintelligible human languages have existed, there has been a need for translation in some form. While discussions on translation often focus on translation done by professionals, translation in a non-professional context is likely as old as human languages themselves. And as professional and non-professional translation have coexisted for much of human history, today they, in the form of fan translations and professional translations in this thesis, can even be competitors to each other in certain ways. In recent years, fan translations have become a popular research topic in translation studies, and this study will attempt to expand on that research. In this thesis, I will explore the different qualities of professional and fan translations through an evaluative case study. Specifically, I will evaluate the usability of both a fan translation and a professional translation of a *manga* (a Japanese comic book) and describe what aspects of usability are different between the two.

The translations I will study are of a manga called *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*, which I chose largely because of how long its non-Japanese fans have relied on fan translations. The manga began releasing in 1987 and is divided into 9 “Parts” (capitalized in this study to distinguish from the word ‘part’). This division into Parts is somewhat similar to how many television shows are divided into seasons, because each Part has its own separate story while also connecting on some level to the previous Parts. The professional translation of the series is currently unfinished, having only released Parts 1 through 6, with the translation of Part 7 ongoing as of early 2026, which means that fan translations remain the only way for English-speaking readers to read Parts 7 and 8 fully, along with the currently ongoing Part 9. The commercially released English translation of Part 4, a part of which will be used as the main material for this study, was only completed in 2021, meaning that fan translations of it were the only way to read it for almost thirty years after it was originally released in the 1990s in Japan. The lack of a professional translation for such a long period is especially notable given that the series is among the best-selling manga in the world (Ahmad 2025) and had reached over 100 million sales by 2016 (Komatsu 2016). Additionally, an anime (Japanese animation) adaptation of the manga produced by David Production adapted Part 4 in 2016, and this version was available subtitled in English as it was airing. With this adaptation bringing additional attention to Part 4, the lack of a translation for its original version became all the more noteworthy. These facts together imply that fan translations of the work have played a

large role in making the manga available to new audiences when no other options were available. The arguable importance of this fan translation is the main reason for its choice as the subject of this study.

There are many known and well-researched differences between professional translation and fan translation, with the translation process especially attracting much attention in academic research (e.g., Valero Porrás and Cassany 2017). This study, however, will focus specifically on the end product of a fan translation project and compare it to a professional translation of the same source text.

I will use a heuristic evaluation framework developed and described by Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen in their book *User-Centered Translation* (2015) to evaluate the *usability* of both translations. Usability, in this context, refers to “the ease with which users can use a product to achieve their goals” (Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015, 2). In the field of translation, the usability of a product consists of aspects such as understandability, consistency, and alignment with the target culture (Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015, 90). *Heuristic evaluation* is conducted by an expert using a list of guidelines or *heuristics* to evaluate the usability of a product (Korvenranta 2005, 112–113). In essence, these heuristics provide a way to evaluate the quality of these translations from the end user’s perspective.

The main goals of this study are as follows. As a case study on a professional translation and a fan translation of the same text, it will examine the usability differences between the two translations. Rather than comparing the target texts (or TTs) to the source text (or ST), I will compare the translations to each other in order to focus specifically on their usability rather than, for example, their accuracy. While these results are simply a case study and may not be generalizable to these translation types as a whole, this study will attempt to provide further understanding of the unique qualities of the two types of translation. Additionally, this study will also function as a test of heuristic evaluation in the as-of-yet untested environment of comic translation by developing a new set of heuristics for this purpose and testing their efficacy. Thus, this thesis will answer the following research questions: (1) What usability differences are there between the professional translation and the fan translation? (2) What are the strengths and limitations of the new set of heuristics in the study of comic book translations? This study also further tests heuristic evaluation as a tool for comparing the usability of two translations, which is also a relatively new angle of study in user-centered

translation (see, for example, Hiidenvesi 2025 for another usability comparison of two translations of one text).

This thesis consists of five main chapters, some of which are further divided into subsections. In Chapter 2, I will explain the theoretical background of the thesis: I will first explain the concepts of usability and user-centered translation to establish this study's core approach to translation, then discuss the medium of comics and the unique features of manga, and finally discuss previous research into the culture and features of fan translation. In Chapter 3, I will introduce the material and methods of the thesis. I will first explain how the material was gathered and why it was chosen as the subject of this study. Then I will describe the methods used in the analysis, with a strong focus on the new set of usability heuristics. In Chapter 4, I will present the results of the analysis by first focusing on each translation separately and then comparing the translations' usability to each other. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the implications of the study and future possibilities of research on fan translation and user-centered translation.

2 Theoretical background

In this chapter, I will explain the theoretical background of the study. I will first discuss the concept of usability and how it can be used as a tool in the field of translation research. After this, I will discuss the medium of comics in general and manga in particular in order to explain the unique features and requirements of both. Then, I will discuss the theoretical aspects of fan translation with a focus on how it differs from professional translation.

2.1 Usability and user-centered translation

Here, I will establish the concept of *user-centered translation*, the core approach to translation that this study will focus on, as a basis for the rest of the theoretical aspects of this study.

User-centered translation (henceforth UCT) was built from the base of usability research in order to create a methodology for teaching, evaluating, and researching translation from a deeply user-focused point of view (Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015).

First, it is crucial to define *usability* in general and in the context of translation to be able to explain how it will be evaluated in this thesis. Usability can be concisely defined as “the ease with which a user can use a product to achieve their goals” (Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015, 2). Usability research and usability engineering generally focus on the usability of computer tools and applications and work to research and improve the ease and efficiency with which those tools can be used, but it has later been adapted into other forms of research and used to target other types of products as well. Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen’s (2015) concept of UCT is based on the idea that the principles of usability research can be applied to translation. High usability in computer science can mean that the user of a product can 1) understand and begin to use the product quickly, 2) use the product efficiently and with few errors, and 3) enjoy using the product (Ovaska, Aula, and Majaranta 2005, 14). When applied to translation, high usability can then mean that the reader of a translation can 1) understand the text easily, 2) read the text quickly and easily while not misunderstanding it or rereading often, and 3) enjoy reading the text. These principles, among others, are directly reflected in the usability heuristics that will be used in the analysis of this thesis.

When the product whose usability is to be evaluated is a piece of text, using the product mainly entails reading and understanding the text, but other aspects need to be taken into account as well. These aspects can depend on the genre of the text: For example, an

instruction manual is usable if it is readable and understandable, but it also needs to present its instructions in a logical order and give enough details in these instructions to minimize user error, but it does not need to be an entertaining text to read. On the other hand, a fictional novel normally needs to focus on the reader's enjoyment of the text, which may even be enhanced by an irregular ordering of the events of its story.

UCT is inherently focused on the viewpoint of the eventual user of the completed translation, which differs from traditional evaluation of translation to some extent. Traditional approaches to translation emphasize the match between source and target text primarily (Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015, 90). UCT, on the other hand, does not concentrate on this because accuracy arguably does not affect the reader's experience significantly if they are unaware of the original text. It should be noted, though, that accuracy is still not completely ignored in UCT, but it is only one part of a larger evaluative process that emphasizes the user's expectations and culture, for example, before accuracy.

In order for a translator or an evaluator to focus on the users of a translation, it is necessary to first attempt to build an accurate image of those users. The recipients of translations have been a focus of many translation studies in the past, and there are multiple different ways to describe how a translator imagines the eventual user of their translation while targeting their translation to a specific audience (Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015, 62). For the UCT approach, Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen (2015) describe three tools that can be used to create such *mental models* of the users: intratextual reader positions, audience design, and personas. This thesis will use audience design to help describe the target audiences of the translations studied. Audience design was originally created as an analysis tool in sociolinguistics by Bell (1984), and it is based on the idea that speakers and writers adjust their language based on who their audience is and how this audience receives the message conveyed (Suojanen, Koskinen and Tuominen 2015, 68). Mason (2000) divides these audiences into five categories, which Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen summarize concisely:

- **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 favor the speaker seeks. (Suojanen, Koskinen and Tuominen 2015, 68)

Audience design helps with defining a translation's target audience and separating the groups that should be prioritized from the less likely audiences. In this study, previous research into the culture of readers and fans of the types of texts being studied will inform the audiences that are considered in the analysis. These audiences will be defined in Chapter 3.

The main method that will be used to evaluate the texts in this study is *heuristic evaluation*, sometimes known as expert evaluation, which is one of the core tools of UCT. In heuristic evaluation, an expert or multiple experts use a predetermined list of *heuristics* to evaluate a product, often in an iterative process during the development of the product (Nielsen 1994, 25–26). Heuristics are a set of rules or guidelines derived from prior research, which the evaluator can use to identify issues in a product's usability (Korvenranta 2005, 112–113). The usability heuristics used in this study are mainly based on a list of heuristics for UCT developed by Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen (2015, 90) and their revised version by Suojanen and Tuominen (2015, 279). This list and the bases for the edits made to the previous lists will be explained in detail in Chapter 3.

2.2 Comics as a medium

With the base of this thesis's approach to translation now explained, it is important to consider comics both as a whole and through a usability-centered point of view. Because comics are a very different medium compared to simple written text, for example, this study must account for the unique qualities of the medium. This is especially true because of this study's focus on usability, since factors such as space constraints and other factors related to the medium's visual nature are important considerations in its usability.

Comics are inherently a multimodal medium that uses the modes of image and text together to build their meaning, and this multimodality adds certain limitations that affect translation. These limitations are also partially shared between comic translation and subtitling, and thus comparisons between the two can provide useful insight. The most crucial of these similarities may be their space constraints, which has led to the term *constrained translation* seeing some usage since the 1980s (Celotti [2008] 2014, 34). Subtitles can only consist of a limited amount of text on screen at once without covering too much of the screen, and they must remain on screen long enough to be legible. Similarly, most text in comics must fit into speech bubbles that are placed and sized in a way that obstructs as little of the art as possible, and the translation of this text must usually fit into the same bubbles that were used in the ST. This is because any additional editing besides simply changing the text adds additional costs

and time-consuming labor to the translation process (Zanettin 2014, section 3.1), and it would thus most often be advisable to avoid such changes, if possible. It should be noted, though, that in subtitling, the original audible speech does not have the same restriction, and there can thus be a large disparity between how much text fits on screen versus how much audible speech is included if, for example, multiple characters speak over each other very quickly. By comparison, in comics, the ST mainly uses the same restricted speech bubbles as the TT, so the translator does not have to reconcile a disparity between spoken and written language, but the translator does still have to work with speech bubbles originally intended for a different language. In addition to this, a certain level of cohesion between the text of a multimodal translation and its visual content should be maintained. In audiovisual translation, the translator should take into account all of the nonverbal meaning that the audio and visuals of the text communicate and attempt to make the text cohesive with them, as they together form the whole meaning of the text (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2021, 68). Similarly, the reader of a comic forms their understanding of the comic through both the written text within it and through the artwork surrounding it, and thus the translator should take the nonverbal communication of the artwork into account and attempt to synchronize the written text with it.

It has been noted, however, that focusing on comic translation as a particularly constrained subcategory of translation may be an unproductive approach. Celotti ([2008] 2014), for example, emphasizes that the meaning conveyed to the reader of a comic is built by its text and images working together, and that the visual language of a comic's images can even be a resource for the translator. Still, the reality of restricted space and cohesion with images influencing the translator's work cannot be ignored completely, but these aspects can be seen as less a pure restriction and more a neutral feature that can affect the translation process in both complicating and beneficial ways.

It is important to consider comics from a usability-centered approach as well. It is self-evident that reading a book and reading a comic effectively require different approaches from the user simply due to the multimodality of a comic's combination of text, images, and composition versus a book's comparatively simple structure. Understanding multimodal texts in general requires combining multiple modes of meaning-making into one whole within the reader's mind (Stöckl 2004, 16). While the human mind may be cognitively predisposed to handle multiple modes with ease (*ibid.*), this kind of cognitive process is clearly different from reading plain text. One can, of course, divide a plain text work into multiple modes as well, since the reading experience is affected by not just language but also the typography and

layout of the text (Stöckl 2004, 11), but it is clear that the multimodality of comics is much more crucial to the meaning-making of the text. Kaindl (2004, 173) even argues that the multiplicity of comics' meaning-making systems makes it difficult for monomodal disciplines that focus on only one type of system to study comics as a multimodal whole. Therefore, comics are commonly only studied according to the more singular expertise of the researcher (ibid.). I acknowledge this study's heavily linguistics-oriented bias toward the topic, but I will attempt to take into account the unique nature of the comic medium in the methodology.

The usability of comics may also have inherent benefits compared to other types of text. Cognitive studies have shown that the average human brain processes plain text and text in conjunction with images differently, leading to a better understanding of texts that use images to help illustrate their content (see, for example, Mayer 2005). This cognitive advantage could then suggest that comics are inherently a more understandable and 'memorable' medium than plain text, which also further validates Celotti's ([2008] 2014) warnings against considering comics and other multimodal texts a particularly constrained medium of text. The possibilities of this multimodal communication have also raised interest in using comics to improve the accessibility of often difficult-to-grasp but vital texts, such as contracts and healthcare-related documents, through the creation of easily understandable and usable alternatives, such as *comic contracts* (Ketola and Pitkäsalo 2024, 130). However, this study is not meant to imply any sort of superiority between different media of literature, but instead this only implies that comics as a medium may have certain benefits when it comes to usability, if one considers the definition of usability established before, where the understandability and ease of reading of a text are emphasized. It should be noted, though, that if usability is considered simply as the previously established "ease with which a user can use a product to achieve their goals", these goals may not be entirely focused on the understandability of the text, and a more usable text can, for example, be one that allows the reader to use their imagination to interpret the events of a text. A fictional text with no images can give the reader a much better opportunity to imagine how its scenes unfold visually, while a comic more clearly establishes this visuality and leaves less to the imagination. Thus, I do not claim any medium of text to be inherently better than the other, but this shows a clear connection between the nature of comics being able to facilitate understanding a text, and ease of use and understandability being at the core of UCT. This then makes comics an appropriate and novel angle of study within UCT research.

2.3 Manga in contrast to Western comics

A manga is a Japanese type of comic book, which, similarly to Western comics, utilizes speech bubbles and other text inserted on top of images. Manga is a particularly important topic of study in the study of comics because of its monumental rise in popularity in a relatively short period of time. Manga only began publishing in foreign markets in the 1980s and started gaining popularity in the 1990s, but it had still become the largest sector of all published comics in much of the West by the 2010s (Zanettin 2014, section 3.1), and sales have continued to grow since this time (Hibbs 2023). The study of manga in the West is also, of course, inherently connected to translation studies, given that most manga released in the West must be translated from Japanese and that it is such an important sector.

There is some discussion about how manga should be defined and where its borders lie. At its simplest, manga is defined as a Japanese type of comic book read from right to left. However, Kern (2021) suggests that manga should perhaps not be defined as just Japanese comics but rather as Japanese-style comics. This is because many manga are not actually Japanese in origin or originally produced for a Japanese audience, and describing manga as a “subtype” of comics can imply that Japanese comics are imitations of Western comics rather than their own entity, when such an implication would be historically inaccurate and politically problematic (Kern 2021). It is also common for popular Japanese manga to be adapted to numerous different forms, which makes defining their fandoms as simply “manga fandoms” somewhat inaccurate, or at least not reflective of the whole truth. The topic of this study, *JoJo’s Bizarre Adventure*, has been adapted from a manga into officially licensed anime adaptations, live-action film and television adaptations, stage adaptations, multiple video games, and even escape rooms. This also shows that such manga fandoms are not entirely homogenous since most fans will have experienced only some of these products. However, these murky definitions do not limit this analysis but rather help with establishing the wide reach and popularity of manga and the series being studied.

In the early years of Western localizations of manga, it was common to heavily domesticate each release not just in its language but in its visual representation as well, although this domestication has reduced over time. Readers largely prefer manga to be authentic to the original Japanese culture of the work (Jüngst [2008] 2014, 74), but when Western localizations were first being published in the 1980s and 1990s, relatively heavy domestication was still a common practice (Zanettin 2014, section 3.1). A common and

significant change was that the reading order was changed from the Japanese right-to-left to the Western left-to-right, meaning that the orientation of the entire book would be reversed (Rampant 2010, 223). Other changes included redrawing elements such as sound effects and speech bubbles, and some manga would even be colored (Zanettin 2014, section 3.1), which is uncommon in original Japanese releases. With the rise of the medium's popularity and the general public's familiarity with it, manga are now domesticated less significantly for Western markets for the sake of authenticity (Jüngst [2008] 2014, 59; Rampant 2010, 230–231). However, minor adaptations remain for the convenience of the readers. Many manga include a page at the end of the book (which would be the first page with a Western reading order) that tells the reader they are reading the last page and should instead start at the other end of the book, still showing a need for slight adaptation even with the medium's current popularity. The necessity of authenticity is sometimes even directly stated on this guiding page (Jüngst [2008] 2014, 59). The professionally translated manga used in this study also follows this practice, with its ending page citing the need to “preserve the orientation of the original artwork” (Araki 2019), which similarly implies authenticity.

The textual representation of sound effects is a feature that is shared among both Western and Japanese comics, but certain differences create additional challenges for the translator. As discussed by Sell and Pasfield-Neofitou (2016, 251), two main facts pose challenges for translating sound effects in manga into English: The first of these is the wider onomatopoeic vocabulary of Japanese compared to English. This also includes an extensive vocabulary of *mimetic words*, which are presented visually the same way as onomatopoeia, but they describe a variety of non-sound phenomena such as motion, emotion, and even silence, which is quite unique to Japanese (Sell and Pasfield-Neofitou 2016, 252–253). As a further illustration of the extensiveness of Japanese onomatopoeic and mimetic vocabulary, they mention a nearly 1000-word dictionary of such words made by Makita in 2004 (Makita in Sell and Pasfield-Neofitou 2016, 251). The challenge this vocabulary poses is straightforward, as when the source language's vocabulary is significantly more extensive, functional equivalents can prove difficult to find, and so the translator may have to invent their own. The second challenge Sell and Pasfield-Neofitou (2016, 251) mention is the thorough integration of sound effects into the artwork. Because these words are considered part of the art on the page, translating them requires visual editing besides simply switching the word for an equivalent. Such editing must be done manually, and doing so is time-consuming and thus costly (Zanettin 2014, section 3.1).

Jüngst ([2008] 2014, 64–68) describes three core strategies that can be taken while translating onomatopoeia in manga: transcribing the original Japanese word into the target language's spelling, translating the sound with either an equivalent onomatopoeia or the meaning of the original word, or not adapting them at all. The last of these is interesting, as in a translation, one would expect all linguistic content to be translated in some way. However, considering the additional work and cost the translation of onomatopoeia requires (Zanettin 2014, section 3.1) – and the fact that the choice of whether it is done at all is often made by the publisher (Sell and Pasfield-Neofitou 2016, 260), whose responsibility it is to manage the finances of the project – it is understandable that some publishers choose to forego the process. Jüngst ([2008] 2014) also provides other reasons this decision may be made, such as the fact that it makes the work appear obviously and authentically Japanese, and that it is clearly an important part of the aesthetic value of a manga, and changing it would thus infringe on the art of the work. In the manga being studied in this thesis, for example, sound effects are an especially large part of the art, as they can take up as much space as the characters in many panels. Considering that leaving onomatopoeia untranslated means that a significant part of the work is in a language the reader is unlikely to speak, Jüngst ([2008] 2014, 65–67) asserts that readers may be able to have some understanding of these effects even without knowing Japanese, because the meaning of the onomatopoeia is often purposefully accentuating what is otherwise happening on the page. On the whole, it seems to be most common to adapt sound effects in some way, but Sell and Pasfield-Neofitou (2016, 261) found that indeed 29 percent of the publishers they studied would predominantly leave sound effects as they are.

One issue related to the space constraints of manga specifically is the fact that manga tends to have tall rather than wide speech bubbles due to the fact that Japanese is often written vertically (Rampant 2010, 223). This clearly exacerbates the issue of restricted space in comic translation, because in addition to possibly having to omit information from the bubble due to less concise wording in the target language, the translator may also have to adapt their language to an inconveniently thin speech bubble. One may have to avoid long words in certain speech bubbles to not cut those words off in multiple places, and wording in general may have to be very precise in order to use each row of text that fits into the bubble effectively.

2.4 Conceptualizing fan translation

The main features that differentiate fan translation from professional translation are described here. Sometimes the specific kind of fan translation studied here, where scanned manga are translated by fans, is referred to as scanlation. Scanlation is commonly done by fan translators who physically purchase a manga in its original language and convert it into a digital form by scanning it (Fabbretti 2025, 454). These digital scans are then translated by fans who can speak the original language, and the scanlated manga is then usually released on the internet as new translations are finished (ibid.).

Insight into the culture of fan translation can also help understand the process of creating fan translations. Vázquez-Calvo et al. (2019), for example, approach it as a *participatory culture*. Participatory culture was defined by Jenkins et al. (2009, xi) as “a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices”. This description clearly fits fan translation, with Vázquez-Calvo et al. (2019, 50) having described it as one of the clearest examples of such a culture. O’Hagan (2009) also focuses on fan translation as a form of participatory culture and additionally uses the term *user-generated translation*, highlighting the fact that these fans are both users and creators of translations.

Viewing fan translation as a clear example of a participatory culture may help to support its position as a relatively high-quality form of non-professional translation. O’Hagan (2009, 101–102) identifies certain key features that enable high-quality translations, such as the high degree of motivation that fan translators show through their willingness to work for free, and the efficiency of many fan translator groups’ workflow, which she considers to be often “comparable to professional production” (see also a thorough description of the process by Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006). In addition, their knowledge of the genres or properties they are translating may compensate for their lack of formal translator training (O’Hagan 2009, 102). The latter aspect is especially clearly connected to the translators’ participation in the culture of the work they are translating as both active readers and creators of translations. Fan translators of Japanese media seem to factor in that their translations’ audiences are highly knowledgeable fans just like them, with Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006, 46) finding that foreignisms particular to Japanese are often preserved in fan-made subtitles to maintain authenticity and nuances that mostly only people knowledgeable on the

source culture would understand. Rampant (2010, 227) similarly notes that since scanlations are produced by fans for other fans, they “do not make allowances for uninitiated readers and instead tailor their translations for their ‘in crowd’, which results in a lot of foreignization”. In addition, it is logical that the core readers of these translations could find fan translations to match their expectations especially well, because the translators’ participation in the fan culture as both users and creators of translations should make them highly aware of what their fellow fans expect from a good translation – an advantage which professional translators may lack. Therefore, from a user-centric perspective, fan translators may have some unique advantages in delivering their readers exactly what they expect, in addition to the other previous aspects that support the quality of their work from a more objective standpoint.

While discussing the high quality of fan translation, O’Hagan (2009) also notes that the value that fan translation provides seems clear even to the owners of the original works being translated. As she describes it (2009, 101), fan translation is largely accepted by copyright holders despite its dubious legality, at least partially due to the free exposure and promotion of the translated work to a new audience. In addition, fans seem to actively support this idea: According to Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006, 44), fan translators of anime have had a consistent rule to stop distributing their translations once the work becomes commercially available in that target language. This rule seems to extend to manga, as some websites for sharing fan translations, such as Mangadex, provide links to websites where readers can purchase a manga’s officially published translation once it becomes available to buy (Mangadex n.d.). Similarly, the fan translator group whose work is studied in this thesis encourages their readers to support the official release of the manga on multiple occasions on their blog (The Invincible Trio 2009) and directly refuse monetary compensation from other fans (Boco 2012). It seems that the rule of stopping distribution is not entirely set in stone, however, since both Mangadex and this fan translator group continue to allow access to their fan translations on their websites, even while the work is currently available to purchase officially, but some level of willingness to support the official release remains clear.

With all this in mind, it should be noted that there is also research highlighting issues in some fan translations’ quality, but no general statements can be made about all fan translations as a whole based on these studies. Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006), for example, list multiple erroneous fan-made subtitles that have gained notoriety in fan translation communities. The issues highlighted in that study are, however, mere examples and not a wide-ranging study. O’Hagan (2008, 178) also notes numerous errors in a case study on a fan

translator's work, but she also found the translation to be "beyond the work of a novice" in total. Fans' lack of professional experience or education in translation could, logically, make their work somewhat prone to quality issues, but studies on the topic are limited, and the previously highlighted research on the merits of fan translators would suggest the opposite.

The nature of how fan translations are found by readers differs so significantly from traditionally published works that it implies a difference in their target audiences. A publisher may purchase advertisements for a translated work and will normally attempt to place the work on store shelves and online stores in order to drive sales. Fan translations, on the other hand, can normally only reach their audiences through channels meant specifically for fan translations: Originally, they were often shared directly on a fan translator's own webpage or certain community websites, but later it became more common for them to be shared on websites meant specifically for the purpose of sharing fan translations (Rampant 2010, 226), such as Mangadex. Fan-made subtitles, as a further example, were originally often shared in physical form as videotape copies at anime fan clubs (Heller 2025, 39). Fan translations are also unlikely to use or benefit from formal advertising, except for advertisements meant for the ST's audience that some fans may stumble upon, as there are no financial incentives involved in the creation of fan translations, and the illegality of the practice is unlikely to encourage advertising. The websites where many fan translations are now gathered can facilitate finding fan translations, but before they were commonplace, potential readers would need to first be connected enough to a fan community to hear about a work through word of mouth, and then either be knowledgeable enough to find out where to procure the translation or receive it directly from another fan. In the case of the fan translation studied in this thesis, it was originally shared directly on the fan translator group's blog (The Invincible Trio 2009) and was only later uploaded to Mangadex and other similar websites. The blog also shows a clear difficulty in finding fan translations of *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* as a whole and the Part of the manga studied in this thesis in particular at the time, as multiple discussions, especially at early points of the translation project, show rumors and speculation about the existence of different translations that other fans were not able to locate (The Invincible Trio 2009). This implies a difference in the activeness and knowledgeability of the audiences: traditional publications can reach both active fans and a passive audience that is not actively searching for the work in question (such as when a customer encounters a book unintentionally in a bookstore) and whose only barrier for procuring the work is usually its price. Fan translations, on the other hand, can mostly only reach a target audience that actively participates in these

fan communities and whose barriers for procuring the work are more numerous, especially when these translations are shared similarly to the one studied in this thesis: One must know of the work through active participation in the culture, learn where to find the work on the internet, be willing to support the practice despite the legal concerns mentioned before, and sometimes be willing to download such translations from the internet through dubious links as was the case for the material for this thesis.

3 Material and methods

In this chapter, I will introduce the materials that will be the primary focus of this study and then explain in detail the methodology of the study. First, I will explain the reasons for the choice of the material and the background behind it. Then, in the methods section, I will begin by explaining the general methodology and then describe the usability heuristics framework that will be used for the main evaluation of the materials. I will also critically discuss the use of these heuristics in the context of comic translation. As the heuristics are a general guideline that can be applied to many kinds of translations, they can be edited to answer medium-specific questions more accurately.

3.1 Material

The main material for this study is two translations of the first 3 chapters or 69 pages of the fourth Part of Hirohiko Araki's manga *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*. This Part is titled *Diamond is Unbreakable*, but I will refer to it as *Part 4* for brevity henceforth. The chapters studied form the beginning of the story of *Part 4*, which mainly establishes the world and main characters of the story to follow. The professional translation was published volume by volume by Viz Media starting in 2019, with translations by Nathan A. Collins. The fan translation studied here began releasing in 2009 (The Invincible Trio 2009) and was created by a group of fan translators known as "The Invincible Trio", who released the translation volume by volume on their blog. As is common among fan translators, the members of this group do not normally use their real names online, so they will be referred to by the group's name henceforth.

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure is a story spanning multiple generations of the Joestar family line, each nicknamed JoJo, who battle against various supernaturally powered antagonists with their own supernatural powers. In *Part 4*, the reader mainly follows the Japanese high-schooler Josuke Higashikata, who is introduced to the concept of *stand users*, people with the ability to control ghostly manifestations of their spirit. In the early chapters studied here, Josuke is introduced to the reader through other characters' points of view, namely Jotaro Kujo, an older relative and earlier protagonist of the series, and Koichi Hirose, a boy who is about to start high school at the same school as Josuke at the start of the story. These chapters also set a clear goal for the main characters to follow afterward. The genres of the different Parts of *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* shift somewhat, although all of them include a fantastical

action-adventure plot with elements of horror. *Part 4*, in particular, also mixes its high-concept action with humor and slice-of-life elements, with a portion of the narrative spent on much lower-stakes situations than the life-threatening action that the characters often find themselves in. *Part 4* is a shōnen manga, meaning that it is targeted at adolescent boys. This classification of age and gender is not very rigid, however, as the readership of manga can reach beyond the intended audience, with shōnen especially being popular across a wide range of readers (Fabbretti and Idone Cassone 2025, 371). Additionally, despite being targeted toward young readers, shōnen manga can depict content that readers outside Japan may consider mature (Fabbretti and Idone Cassone 2025, 368), with *Part 4* including, for example, depictions of graphic violence and strong language.

The popularity and importance of this manga within the sphere of Japanese media alone make it a valuable topic of study. It had sold over 100 million printed copies in total by 2016 (Komatsu 2016), and later sources place it as among the best-selling manga series of all time with over 120 million sales (Ahmad 2025). It is also an older manga, starting in the 1980s, and has thus cemented itself in Japanese media over its long and successful publication period, which can be illustrated by an extensive fan-made list of references to the series in other works in *JoJo's Bizarre Encyclopedia* (2026).

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure becomes a truly unique topic of study in translation specifically due to its popularity in combination with the troubled history of its English localization. Despite its popularity, the manga's English translation has progressed very slowly and has been through many complications. The manga originally started publication in 1987, but the first commercial English localization of it only began publication in 2005. The English publisher has claimed that the lack of localization for such a long period of time was caused largely by concerns with the manga's use of the names of artists, bands, and other copyrighted works as the names of characters and their abilities (Green 2023). Even now, the English localization changes almost all such names, which are a majority of the named characters and abilities in the series. In addition to these production delays, the order of this publication was unorthodox: The first English localization was of *Part 3*, presumably because it is commonly considered the most well-known Part of the series, and after this, *Parts 1* and *2* were released instead of moving ahead to the next Part in the series after *Part 3*. These issues have led to, for example, the official English release of *Part 4* beginning approximately 27 years after the original Japanese version began publication in 1992 and 9 years after the English release of the previous Part of the manga had ended. Thus, this fan translation has a certain level of

importance within its niche: Its international fans had to rely on fan translations for most of its existence and for nearly a decade after they were able to read an official adaptation of the previous Part. All of these factors compound to make fan translations of this manga exceptionally important for the series and its fans, and to some extent, the history of the fan translation of manga in general.

The particular fan translation that is used in this study was mainly chosen because of its availability, but also because of issues with other possible options. This fan translation is not the only one made of *Part 4*, but it seems to have been one of only two fully completed versions at the time of its release. The other full translation of *Part 4* at the time is infamous in the fandom, often called the “Duwang translation” due to a translation error that changes the name of the story’s setting to Duwang. It is considered of such poor quality that it remains infamous to the fandom (as discussed on the fan-run wiki page in JoJo’s Bizarre Encyclopedia 2022) and a target of often affectionate ridicule to this day, with some even describing it as a rite of passage for fans (as seen in fan discussions in Aritz 2015). It was thus logical not to choose the Duwang translation for this study, because its reputation clearly shows that it is not taken seriously as a translation by fans, and its poor quality would not have made for a fair comparison to a professionally made translation. Some other translations of *Part 4* seemed to have been worked on at the time, and a part of one was even linked to by The Invincible trio in their blog (Phangry 2009b), but these translations seem to be incomplete, as other parts of them do not seem to be available online. There were more claims of other translations existing at the time, but they seem to have been either very elusive or no more than a rumor, so that even many dedicated fans were unfamiliar with them and unable to find them even after being told about their existence, as shown in multiple discussions on The Invincible Trio’s blog at early points of the translation project (The Invincible Trio 2009) and in discussions on the blog implying that the Trio’s translation is the first alternative to the Duwang translation (such as Boco 2012). I have also been unable to verify the existence of the other translations mentioned in the blog’s discussions, which may be caused either by them being mere rumors all along or simply being lost over the years since these discussions. In either case, such possible translations cannot be considered very significant to the fanbase if they are unavailable to most fans, unlike the translation studied here.

One of the major problems of this study was gathering the material reliably, because of the fragmented release of the manga’s fan translations. Multiple other fan translation projects of *Part 4* have existed over time, but most of them have only partially translated it. Because of

this, it was difficult to make sure that the translation studied here could be traced to a single group of translators that translated the whole Part, rather than accidentally using parts of an incomplete translation or misattributing the translation to someone else. There are currently traces of at least five English fan translation projects of *Part 4* available on the internet. Two of them were released before The Invincible Trio started releasing their translations on their blog: the first was the aforementioned poor-quality Duwang translation, and the second was new scans of the first few chapters by one of The Invincible Trio's members before they started working as a group, and these scans were then replaced by the Trio's work some months later. Two more are currently labeled as the Trio's work on Mangadex, one with no additional information, and one labeled a "remake version" (Mangadex n.d.). The group's own blog, however, links to the so-called remake version (Phangry 2009b), meaning that Mangadex may have labeled some of the translations incorrectly. Further, after chapter nine, the "remake version" label is removed, and only one translation is marked as made by the Trio, while another is marked as made by the "Wonderland Scanning Group". This version is missing some chapters and later ends completely, once again leaving only the Duwang translation and The Invincible Trio's work. The non-remake version and the Wonderland Scanning Group version may be the same, but since both of them seem to be unfinished, they cannot be used as the subject of this study. In addition to all of these versions, there is also a fan release of an officially released colored version of the manga, which was released digitally in the 2010s. This fan release seems to have used The Invincible Trio's translation as its base, which can be seen from nearly identical wording between the two in the manga's early chapters, but it is unclear whether any retranslation was done for this project. In any case, the colored release of the manga has not received an official English translation and is thus not as applicable to this study as the non-colored versions.

The formation of this translator group is also important to note to understand the process of the translation's creation. Reading through the blog that became the group's main publication forum for the manga provides an interesting overview of the whole project. The blog originally started as a project by a person going by the username of Phangry, who attempted to release scans of the manga that would be of better quality than others released before, while seemingly rewriting some of the translated text, although they did not retranslate the work themselves (Phangry 2009a). Soon after, though, the then-solo fan discovered that another translation was being worked on at the same time as they were working on theirs (Phangry 2009c), which eventually led to this person and the group coming into contact and then

joining together to work on the translation as a team (Phangry 2009b). By July of 2014, the group had finished translating the entire *Part 4* manga. By their own admission (The Invincible Trio 2010), they consider themselves “casual newbies” as fan translators, which is an interesting additional detail to consider when discussing the usability of the translation.

O’Hagan’s (2009, 101–102) mention of a high degree of motivation is interesting to compare with what the Trio’s blog shows about how difficult the project was for them at times.

Laptops being stolen, health issues, and other problems made them take long hiatuses at times (The Invincible Trio 2009), but they never completely stopped working on the project, despite the fact that all of their work was done for free and simply for the sake of other fans.

Translating all of *Part 4* took them five years in total, but the project was still finished, despite all of the issues that the group experienced.

The group’s blog provides some interesting insight into both how the group operated and how the readers would interact with the translators as the process was ongoing. Readers would often contribute by commenting on errors in the translation, offering their help with parts of the process, and even offering to send the translators donations as signs of gratitude (The Invincible Trio 2009). It seems that the group did not accept these donations (Boco 2012) and would instead encourage others to support the original creators and publishers of the manga financially.

3.2 Methods

Here I will explain the methods that I will use in this study. I will use a qualitatively evaluative method to describe and compare the usability of the two translations.

It can be difficult to compare the usability of two translations in an objective manner, as the perceived usability of a work of fiction can depend largely on the reader’s subjective experience and enjoyment. In order to mitigate this issue, this study uses heuristic evaluation, one of the core methods of UCT. With a consistent and comprehensive list of heuristics, the texts being studied may be evaluated more consistently, which allows this study to gather more reliable results.

This study will be conducted through heuristic evaluation. The list of heuristics I will use is mostly based on the revised UTC heuristics framework by Suojanen and Tuominen (2015), albeit with minor changes. The analysis will be conducted qualitatively by evaluating both texts according to the heuristics framework that will be introduced in Section 3.2.2. I will

analyze both texts thoroughly with the heuristics in mind and make notes on all significant usability issues that I can find. In Chapter 4, I will first go through my findings from the professional translation in the order of the heuristics, followed by the fan translation in the same order, providing relevant examples from both that illustrate both the unique overarching tendencies of each text and the most notable singular instances of usability issues. After this, I will compare the usability of the two texts and then discuss the implications of the results and the effectiveness of the methods of the study. While the texts will be analyzed one after the other, neither of them will function as a “control subject” for the analysis, nor will either be assumed to be of higher quality than the other, despite one being made by a professional and the other by amateurs. While it may be likely that the proficiency of the professional translator has led to the professional translation being more usable than the fan-translated text, fan translations also have their own benefits, especially from their core users’ perspective, as stated earlier. Because of these factors, I will approach both texts with as little bias as possible, and the comparison between them will be built on both texts being on equal footing.

In order to focus on the users of the translations as much as possible in the analysis, the tool of audience design will be used here to describe the likely target groups of each translation being studied, which informs which aspects of the texts should be focused on. These audiences are based on the previously established information about manga fans and the users and creators of fan translations. Fans of manga commonly appreciate authenticity (Jüngst [2008] 2014, 74), and publishers of manga in English-speaking and other Western markets adjust their translation strategies accordingly (Jüngst [2008] 2014, 59; Rampant 2010, 230–231). Thus, the core target audience or *addressees* of both the professional and fan translations studied here are readers who expect relatively little domestication. The professional translation may also have less experienced and less knowledgeable readers who have encountered the work through, for example, advertisements, and the translation may take this into account. However, these audiences are likely relatively small, because *Part 4* is only part of a longer manga; Readers are unlikely to start here, and if they have read the earlier parts, they already have experience with at least the first three parts of the manga, which already adds somewhat to their experience with the medium. These less knowledgeable readers can be described as the *auditors* for whom the translation was not directly designed, but who may still be taken into account to some extent. The fan translation, on the other hand, is unlikely to focus on such readers: Rampant (2010, 227) notes that scanlators tend not to adapt their translations to less knowledgeable readers but rather focus on other fans. This may

be exacerbated by the previously established barrier to entry to accessing fan translations, especially in the case of the fan translation studied here: As it was originally shared only on the Trio's blog, the translation may have been, near the time of its release, unlikely to even reach less active fans or non-fans. Thus, these readers could be described as *overhearers*, whom the translators largely do not take into account. Additionally, due to this barrier to entry, the core readers of this fan translation are likely especially deeply rooted in the fan community, meaning that its addressees are likely even more knowledgeable than those of the professional translation and may, for example, place even more value on authenticity.

3.2.1 Usability heuristics

The core of the methodology of this study is based on the UCT heuristics framework described in Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen (2015, 90). This framework is largely based on Nielsen and Molich's (1990) well-known list of heuristics for user-centered design, with some influence from other heuristics within and outside the fields of translation and linguistics. 10 heuristics were originally described by Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen (2015, 90), but they have been revised later. The revised list of heuristics – which will work as the basis for the heuristics used in this study – is shown in Table 1 (Suojanen and Tuominen 2015, 279):

Table 1 List of heuristics for user-centered translation by Suojanen and Tuominen (2015, 279, my translation)

Name of heuristic	Explanation of heuristic
1. Match between translation and specification	Does the translation fulfill the requirements of the specification?
2. Match between translation and users	Does the translation respond to the information needs of its users, and are different groups of users taken into account? Are the translator's assumptions of the users realistic?
3. Match between translation and real world	Is the translation in line with its cultural context? Is there a need for further cultural adaptation?
4. Match between translation and genre	Does the translation match the conventions of its genre? Do, for example, the terms and register used in the translation fit its genre?
5. Consistency	Are the translation's style, terms, phrasing, and register consistent throughout the text?
6. Legibility and readability	Is the translation easy to read visually? Is the translation understandable, and are there chances of multiple interpretations or misinterpretations of the text?
7. Satisfaction	What is the experience of using the translation like? Is the user's experience in line with expectations and the specification? Can the translation, for example, entertain or teach the reader, help the reader complete a task, or deepen the reader's understanding of something?
8. Match between source and target texts	Is all of the relevant content of the source text translated? Does the source text cause interference, i.e., verbal or structural issues? Are there errors in the translation?

The revised heuristics have reduced redundancies in the categories in order to make them clearer and more efficient to use (Suojanen and Tuominen 2015, 279). The changes that were made are based on Suojanen and Tuominen's (2015) testing with translation students from universities in Tampere and Turku. The students were given the task of evaluating the usability of a text with the help of the original list, and they were then asked to provide comments on the usefulness and usability of the heuristics (Suojanen and Tuominen 2015, 274). These comments were then used to review the heuristics and change parts of the list where necessary.

There are some benefits to the revised list of heuristics. Suojanen and Tuominen (2015, 277) found, for example, that the original 6th and 7th heuristics (legibility and readability & cognitive load and efficiency, respectively) and the 8th and 10th heuristics (satisfaction and

error prevention, respectively) had significant overlap, which made the list of heuristics a less effective tool. Thus, aspects of these heuristics were moved to others so that they could be combined, leading to an 8-part list instead of the original 10 parts.

It should be noted that these heuristics have a somewhat different focus from what are commonly seen as the most important aspects of a successful translation. While each heuristic is a crucial tool of evaluation, the order of the heuristics is somewhat hierarchical (Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015, 90–91). Thus, it may seem unusual that the match between source and target texts is last in the list, which runs somewhat counter to the traditional emphasis on accuracy in translation, but this is intentional (*ibid.*). As UCT is centered on the end product and the end user, aspects relating to the original text are not given as much emphasis as they are in other types of translation evaluation. This also allows for other aspects that are crucial to the user experience of the reader to be brought to the forefront of the evaluation.

A weakness of heuristic evaluation is the lack of testing with actual end users of the product (Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015, 78). While the method is efficient, it would be ideal to support the results of heuristic evaluation with user testing to build a more complete picture of the product being evaluated (Nielsen 1995, n.p.). This has especially been stated in the context of product development – corresponding to the translation process in translation – but it applies to empirical research as well. As it stands, this study is based on what usability issues I am able to find within the translation, but the results would be more objectively provable if supported by testing with multiple non-experts as readers of the translations in question. However, as stated by Nielsen (1994, 57), while heuristic evaluation may not be able to detect all the problems that user testing can, it is at the same time able to reveal many usability issues that user testing normally would not on its own.

3.2.2 Heuristics in detail

I will now explain each heuristic in further detail and how I have edited them to better respond to the needs of the following analysis. One of the benefits of heuristic evaluation in general is its adaptability (Tuominen, Suojanen, and Koskinen 2015, 246), and it is often necessary to make changes to or even create a completely new list of heuristics when using heuristic evaluation in a new context (Korvenranta 2005, 122). Originally, these heuristics were mostly used with nonfiction texts, such as recipes and technical instructions (Suojanen and Tuominen 2015, 272), but they have since seen some use with other types of text (e.g.,

Hiidenvesi 2025). However, they have not yet been used in the study of comic books, so some critical evaluation of the list is needed.

As the first category is called “match between translation and specification”, I must first establish what the word ‘specification’ means in this context. In 1989, Vermeer explained that a translation specification “ideally informs translators of the intended skopos and thus allows them to base their decisions accordingly” and that “[t]arget recipients are also part of the specification, but although they are acknowledged, they are not centrally involved” (Vermeer in Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015, 41). In a best-case scenario, the specification would be carefully negotiated with the client requesting the translation (Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015, 5), but when these heuristics are used for the evaluation of a completed text, having the original specification for the translation is unlikely. Changes to the heuristics have been suggested later that can help mitigate this issue. Tuominen (2024) proposed a new list specifically designed for assessing the usability of subtitles, which also importantly replaces the original 1st heuristic (specification) with “match between subtitles and local norms and conventions”. Thus, it combines aspects of the 3rd heuristic (real world) with aspects that can replace the often difficult-to-define specification that the heuristic calls for. Since these specifications are not available, it is logical for an evaluator to look to more general norms of translation to provide some sort of standard to hold the translation to. The decision to shift focus from the translation’s particular specifications to general norms was also motivated by the fact that often in the case of subtitling, the translator is given relatively few other specifications aside from being expected to follow local norms (Tuominen 2026). Thus, the new heuristic refers to these norms and conventions, providing a clearer standard for the evaluation. This is especially useful since subtitling often has extensive guidelines to compare to, such as those provided by services broadcasting subtitled content (e.g. Netflix 2025) or guidelines by local translators (e.g. Käännöstekstityksen laatusuosituksset [Guidelines for Translated Subtitles] 2020).

Tuominen’s (2024) new heuristic cannot be used directly in this analysis, however, because unlike subtitling, comic translation does not seem to have publicly available and commonly established conventions or guidelines. However, because many of the guidelines for subtitling are clearly designed in response to the medium’s unique requirements – such as describing what is most important to include in subtitles when the available space is limited (Netflix 2025) – a similar heuristic that focuses on the unique challenges and opportunities of the medium of comics can answer similar questions about the effectiveness of the translation as a

representative of its own medium. Thus, I will use a new heuristic in this analysis called “match between translation and medium”. This category can apply to a relatively broad range of situations that pertain to the visual nature of comics: Because the narrative of a comic text is built upon both its linguistic content and visual representations of the events transpiring, it may be unnecessary to explain in text form what is already shown clearly by the artwork. On the other hand, sometimes the artwork shown must be complemented or contextualized by the accompanying text. Similarly, if the artwork shows a character clearly displaying a strong emotion, the language in a speech bubble pointing to that character should reflect this emotion. The style of the speech bubbles themselves is also an important visual element in a comic and should be taken into account; For example, a jagged speech bubble often implies yelling or shock, which should be reflected in the tone of the speech inside it. This heuristic will be added to the beginning of the list of heuristics similarly to how Tuominen’s (2024) heuristic responding to the needs of subtitling was added as the first in that list because of how core these aspects are to the translation’s usability and because it can answer similar questions to the original “specification” heuristic.

As established, the heuristic of “match between translation and specification” is difficult to study extensively in this thesis. It could be acceptable to simply ignore the heuristic completely, as some of the questions raised by it are answered in the new heuristic focusing on artwork. There are, however, some unique aspects that can be studied in this thesis by forming a sort of specification that can logically be expected from the material. These specifications will likely be broader than ones provided by a client, but this is necessary in order not to hold the translations to an arbitrary standard that does not reflect the original specification. As the material for this study consists of the early chapters of the *Part 4* manga, the translation should sufficiently establish elements necessary for the story to begin, such as the characters, their motivations that move the story forward, and the world they inhabit. This type of introduction to a narrative is often described in narratological frameworks of heroic stories, such as the *monomyth* described by Campbell ([1968] 2008) or the *sympathetic plot* described by Singh (2021), where a heroic character sets out to achieve a goal, is faced with obstacles or enemies along the way, prevails over these obstacles, and returns changed by the experience. The plot of *Part 4* largely follows this type of pattern, as the main character is introduced to a supernatural side of his world that he was not aware of, has to defeat numerous dangerous opponents, and eventually prevails, having developed as a person along the way. Thus, it is reasonable for the reader to expect that the early chapters of the story

introduce the world and characters well enough so that the story can continue effectively, forming a certain specification for the translation. Due to the difficulty of establishing a reasonable specification, this heuristic will be placed low on the list, so that its importance in this study is not overstated.

The second heuristic “match between translation and users” refers to how the readers of the translation are taken into account in the translation process, that is, how the translation responds to the needs of the user. By extension, it explores whether the translator’s assumptions about the readers of the text and what they expect are appropriate. This is shown, for example, in what the translator assumes is known to the average user of the translation. If the translator’s expectations do not match with the text’s real users, the reader may have trouble either understanding the TT fully or otherwise not being able to connect with it. A user-centered translator should attempt to build an accurate idea of the translation’s most likely target audience and tailor the translation to them, along with, if possible, considering other audiences that may read the text by coincidence.

Cultural aspects are at the center of the heuristic called “match between translation and real world”. It refers to the world of the target culture, and whether the translation is appropriately adapted to this culture. Debates on how much a text should be adapted to the target culture are a constant in the field of translation. However, in focusing entirely on usability, it is fair to consider adaptation to the target culture to be necessary to a moderate extent. This study will not take a stance on the importance of foreignization (for example, in improving the visibility of the translator, famously discussed by Venuti [2008] 2018), but it is clear that the usability of a translation hinges in part on whether the cultures represented in the text are at all familiar to the intended reader or not. Large cultural differences may lead to misunderstandings in any context, and the translator of a text must be a mindful mediator between the cultures of the languages being worked with. This mediation may not need to be in the form of domestication, but the translator should take these issues into consideration and make mindful translation decisions accordingly.

The heuristic “Match between translation and genre” is concerned with whether the language of the translation fits with the conventions of the genre of the text. The register and vocabulary of the translation in relation to the genre are perhaps the most obvious aspects to consider. If the linguistic conventions of the genre are broken without good reason, the reader may be caught off guard, and their immersion into the text may be broken, which is harmful

to the overall user experience. The translator should be familiar with the conventions of the genre in both languages and cultures and consider their differences to make the TT function as well as possible in its own genre.

The heuristic “consistency” concentrates on the translated text in relation to itself. It is used to evaluate how consistently the translation’s style, register, and terminology, for example, are used. Besides having pre-formed expectations of the genre of the text, the reader quickly becomes somewhat familiar with the style of writing of a text while reading it, and with it, develops an expectation that this style remains throughout the text. Breaking these self-created conventions and expectations unexpectedly will surprise the reader, similarly to breaking any other established conventions, and this should be avoided unless it is used as a deliberate literary device.

Some additional emphasis is required in this study for the heuristic “legibility and readability” due to the visual nature of the comic book medium. This heuristic focuses on how easy the translation is to read and understand. This is both in relation to how visually legible the text is and how understandable the language is. Generally, a usable text should avoid possibilities for misunderstandings and unintended interpretations of its subject material, and it should try to minimize the effort required to understand the text. In addition, a usable comic translation must take into account the unique physical limitations of a comic text: If, for example, a speech bubble is unusually small for any reason, the translated text inside should adapt to this size – perhaps even at the cost of omitting something the original text included in it – lest the text become too small or too dense to be readable. Due to the relative importance of this category in the study of comics, it will be raised higher in the list, similarly to Tuominen’s (2024) heuristics for audiovisual translation.

The simply titled heuristic of “satisfaction” requires additional discussion when it comes to empirical research. As found in Suojanen and Tuominen’s testing (2015, 278), the inherent subjectivity of satisfaction has been seen as an issue in the past. However, they defend the preservation of this category by mentioning that user satisfaction is too crucial a part of usability to be removed from the list when used as a quality assurance tool in translation (Suojanen and Tuominen 2015, 278). There is currently no truly empirical way for me to evaluate satisfaction with the text, as user testing and other similar methods are outside the scope of this study. With both the supporting and detracting factors in mind, I have decided

that satisfaction will be explored in this study, but its lack of objectivity is acknowledged and will be taken into account in the comparison of the usability of the two texts.

The original list of heuristics will be altered slightly in this analysis. Mainly, this analysis will not focus on the final heuristic “match between source and target texts”. This difference is due to the researcher at the time of writing not having the resources needed to make thorough comparisons to the ST. This should not be a very significant issue, however, because as explained before, the match between source and target text is not given much emphasis in UCT in general. This study attempts to compare differences between specifically the usability of two types of translation, which hinges mainly on the quality of the translation as its own piece of text. How the translations differ in their accuracy is mostly a question of the linguistic prowess of the translators, and it may not have much of an effect on the reading experience of a reader who is unfamiliar with the original text. Also, as mentioned before, the specific list of heuristics was designed first and foremost as a tool to be used in the translation process to help translators create better translations. In that context, accuracy can be crucial, especially since the heuristics were originally used with nonfiction texts that are meant to convey accurate information to the user (Suojanen and Tuominen 2015, 272). In general, a translator should not ignore accuracy completely simply because of an emphasis on usability, since the translation usually has a duty to deliver the message of the source text to a new audience. However, an academic evaluation that focuses on usability exclusively may not need to evaluate accuracy and can instead be an evaluation of the ease of use of the target text, rather than an evaluation of the translator’s linguistic prowess. It should be noted, though, that this heuristic also includes the aspect of error prevention, which was originally its own heuristic in the unrevised 10-part list (Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen 2015, 90).

Although this study cannot focus on translation errors that have to do with lack of equivalence between the ST and TT, typographical errors and unclear language are obvious even without comparisons to the ST. Because of this, error prevention needs to be separated from this heuristic and used somewhere else. Errors are an obvious aspect that can reduce the reader’s enjoyment of the text, which makes it logical to add error prevention to the heuristic of “satisfaction”, which also adds more objective value to the relatively subjective heuristic.

With the reasoning and details of the heuristics now explained, the final framework used for the following analysis is as follows:

Table 2 List of heuristics for comic book translation (based on Suojanen and Tuominen 2015, 279; Tuominen 2024)

Name of heuristic	Explanation of heuristic
1. Match between translation and medium	Does the translation respond to the needs and limitations of the comic medium? Is there cohesion between the verbal and visual content of the comic?
2. Match between translation and users	Does the translation respond to the information needs of its users, and are different groups of users taken into account? Are the translator's assumptions of the users realistic?
3. Match between translation and real world	Is the translation in line with its cultural context? Is there a need for further cultural adaptation?
4. Match between translation and genre	Does the translation match the conventions of its genre? Do, for example, the terms and register used in the translation fit its genre?
5. Legibility and readability	Is the translation easy to read visually? Is the translation understandable, or is there a risk that the reader could misinterpret the text? Is the art of the comic legible?
6. Consistency	Are the translation's style, terms, phrasing, and register consistent throughout the text?
7. Satisfaction and error prevention	What is the experience of using the translation like? Can the reader enjoy or be entertained by the text? Are there errors in the text's writing or grammar?
8. Match between translation and specification	Does the translation fulfill the requirements of the specification?

4 Analysis

This chapter will describe the results of the evaluative analysis of the professional translation and the fan translation that was conducted. The texts will be referred to with abbreviations from this chapter onward for the sake of brevity, as they will be referred to numerous times throughout the text. The professional translation will be referred to as the PT, and the fan translation will be the FT. Consequently, the translators themselves will be referred to as the PT translator and the FT translators. In addition, the heuristics will also be shortened to their keywords henceforth: medium, users, real world, genre, legibility, consistency, satisfaction, and specification, respectively.

The PT will be discussed first according to the previously established order of the heuristics. After this, the same will be done for the FT. In these sections, the focus will be on the usability issues found in the texts and overarching trends related to the heuristics, but notable features that enhance the usability for the core audiences will be described as well. Once the main findings from both texts have been described, I will compare and contrast the two translations in order to determine which is a more usable translation for each translation's core user.

Some example images will be provided in this chapter to help illustrate my findings. It should be noted that, like most manga, JoJo's Bizarre Adventure is mostly released in black and white, but some pages at the start of their volume releases are partially colored as an added visual effect. The PT keeps these colors, but the FT seems to have been scanned in black and white from a release with these colored pages, and this difference can be seen in some of the examples. While reading this chapter, one should also note that all example images should be read right-to-left, as neither translation has changed the reading order of the manga from the original Japanese. This reading direction should also be kept in mind when I refer to anything in these examples as being placed before or after something else.

4.1 Heuristic evaluation of the professional translation

Overall, the PT is a very usable translation. Only a few usability issues were found throughout the text, and most issues are relatively minor. Other particularly successful translation decisions are also worth noting in this section.

The heuristic of “medium” includes a relatively wide range of subjects that affect the usability of the manga, with the translation of sound effects demanding the most attention in the PT. The issue of the translation of sound effects is solved in a very user-friendly way: Translated sound effects are most often deeply integrated into the art on the page without drawing much attention, while still effectively helping the reader understand each effect. Picture 1 illustrates well how the PT translates a large cluster of sound effects without significant changes to the art. This moment follows a character falling after bumping into another character; He drops his bag, and its contents fall out, but the other character utilizes his supernatural powers to pick these items back up.



Picture 1 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by Nathan A. Collins.

The original Japanese sound effects take a large portion of the panels in this example and are laid out on top of complex images, and so removing or replacing them would require thorough editing of the art on the page. Instead of this solution, the PT translator has opted to add English sound effects in a small font beside the original Japanese ones. These effects are placed dynamically on a case-by-case basis rather than following the same pattern every time, such as placing each translation just above its respective sound effect, for example. Their placement seems to be clearly motivated by both the layout and placement of the original Japanese effects and the drawings under them, since they are placed such that they do not cover any important visual information in the art. In Picture 1, the first translation is placed

below the original, which follows the general shape of the sound effect and leads the reader's eye directly to the next effect. This translated effect then leads the eye further to the drawings under it, from where the reader moves to the next sound effect, whose translation is again placed to follow the shape of the original. Another aspect that shows the attention to detail put into these effects is the fact that the coloring of the translations matches the original ones in both their outlines and fill colors. This is likely to have required additional work, as most other text in the manga only changes in size and occasionally adds bolding or italicization. In total, the translation of sound effects is executed in a very usable manner that takes into account both the manga-savvy users who want as much authenticity as possible and the users with less experience who might not understand why sound effects are used so frequently throughout the text and what each sound effect means. Thus, the PT's method for translating sound effects also improves the usability of the text from the perspective of the heuristic of "users".

As many of the core audience's expectations of these translations are related to their authenticity to the manga's Japanese source culture, the heuristics of "users" and "real world" overlap significantly. The PT's usability in these heuristics is quite high, as its balance of domestication and foreignization is mindful in a way that responds to its addressees' desire for authenticity while also taking into account the potential auditors that have relatively little experience with manga. One of the more notable moments of foreign elements being preserved in the translation is shown in Picture 2, where the Japanese text on the cover of a notebook is left as is, with a translator's note below the panel explaining that the text contains the name of the notebook's owner:



Picture 2 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by Nathan A. Collins.

This grounds the setting and characters of the text in the real world; a piece of Japanese text being physically part of the world of the story clearly signals to the reader that the owner of the notebook is Japanese. This moment also occurs during a conversation where the owner of the notebook asks for directions from a character who is local to the Japanese town the story is set in; thus, this establishes that the notebook's owner is local to the country but not to the town, and that the other character realizes this fact. This moment happens on page 7 of the manga, providing a brief opportunity to help immerse the reader into the world very early while simultaneously adding to the authenticity of the translation. The FT, by contrast, replaces the Japanese text with a transcription of the name on the book. While this removes the need for a separate translator's note outside of the panel, it also removes this small opportunity to further establish the world and characters. This moment is also connected to the heuristic of "specification", because the specification of these translations is mostly focused on establishing the world and characters of the manga.

One of the most important moments of successful handling of foreign elements happens when the main character's name, Josuke, is explained to the reader through dialogue. Picture 3 shows the panel where this happens in the PT, and Picture 4 shows the same panel in the FT for the sake of comparison:



Picture 3 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by Nathan A. Collins.



Picture 4 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by The Invincible Trio.

The explanation of the name Josuke, which includes Japanese words for “tough” and “to help”, is a clear early hint to the core personality of the character, which is useful since this character was only introduced to the reader a few pages earlier. In addition, the reasoning for why the main character’s name is shortened to JoJo is explained, which is important given that the nickname is in the name of this manga series and because the reasoning for the nickname is otherwise not obvious to readers who cannot speak Japanese. The importance of this thorough explanation becomes clearer when compared to the FT’s version of this panel, in which only half of Josuke’s name is translated, and his nickname is not explained at all. The partial translation of the name ignores the twofold nature of the character’s core personality traits of being someone who is both resilient and willing to help others, while the lack of an explanation for the nickname might confuse the reader. While the core readers of the FT may be highly knowledgeable of the source culture of the text, the translation is still primarily meant for readers who do not speak Japanese fluently. Thus, domesticating this panel is less connected to the heuristic of “users” than most other factors of the “real world” heuristic in this analysis, as no matter how knowledgeable of Japanese culture the users of these translations may be, an explanation of the name is necessary for anyone who does not speak Japanese in order to fully understand its meaning. However, since this moment relates to establishing the main character of the story, it is also notable to the heuristic of “specification”.

No issues were found in the heuristic of “genre” in the PT. As *Part 4* is an action manga that juxtaposes humor and lighthearted content with horror elements and brutality, its translation should ideally reflect this balance of tones. The PT often accentuates moments of violence or brutality with strong language, while more humorous situations normally have a lighter tone.

The heuristic of “legibility” addresses some of the relatively few usability issues of the PT. The first of these issues is two cases of speech bubbles that are filled with such small text that they can make reading them slightly difficult. Both of these instances are shown in Picture 5, which shows a full page that includes both of the problematic speech bubbles, along with three speech bubbles that are filled with text whose size is representative of most text throughout the manga:



Picture 5 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by Nathan A. Collins.

Both the uppermost and leftmost speech bubbles on this page include text that is significantly smaller than the text in the other bubbles, which may require the reader to make an additional effort to see the text clearly, such as bringing the manga closer to their face or zooming in if they are reading a digital copy of the work. While there are many speech bubbles with slightly smaller text than the average, the text size in these two bubbles was a notable exception, and no other bubbles caused difficulty reading for me. Interestingly, the issue here is not caused by the speech bubbles being difficult to work with due to being particularly tall or thin, which is how many speech bubbles in manga are drawn (Rampant 2010, 223), since both bubbles are relatively round. It should also be noted that the FT's version of this page does not experience the same issue: The text within the uppermost speech bubble is much shorter than in the PT and was thus able to be written in a larger font, while the leftmost bubble's text is nearly the same length but is still in a slightly larger font. Although the additional effort required to read these speech bubbles clearly reduces the PT's usability, it is only a minor issue given its rarity in the chapters studied here.

A wider-reaching issue of the "readability" heuristic is related to some of the sound effect translations in the PT: Some of these translations are so deeply integrated into the art on the page that they can be slightly difficult to find or to read. Often, the most prominent sound effects in this manga are added to visually complex moments, such as action, and thus the translations that are commonly set in a relatively small font can be somewhat drowned out by the other visual stimuli on the page. Picture 6 illustrates one such moment, where a character has just been struck with enough strength to knock them toward two other characters:



Picture 6 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by Nathan A. Collins.

The translation of the sound effect here is added to the bottom right corner of the panel, which is also populated by ink splatter and lines expressing fast motion, making the corner visually crowded and reducing the legibility of the text. This position may also seem surprising to the reader at first, as most of the effect is placed at the top of the panel, and only part of it is in the lower corner with the translation. Issues with indistinct translations of sound effects may be a significant problem for less knowledgeable readers who need help understanding the sound effects, but likely less significant for the core audience, who prefer authenticity. If the reader can understand the original effect, the translation being difficult to read may be less important to them than the translation being “out of the way”, so to speak, which may be the more preferable outcome for such a reader. Still, if the reader wishes to read the sound effects’ translations or needs to do so to understand the text properly, low legibility is still an issue.

The issue of occasionally obscure translations of sound effects is additionally underlined by the fact that it is also an issue in the heuristic of “consistency”. Even if the reader is experienced enough with manga not to need these translations, they may still become accustomed to the idea that the translations are normally available to them while reading the text. If the reader then tries to read one of these translations and cannot see one or finds it difficult to read, the user experience is changed abruptly, which may be distracting to the

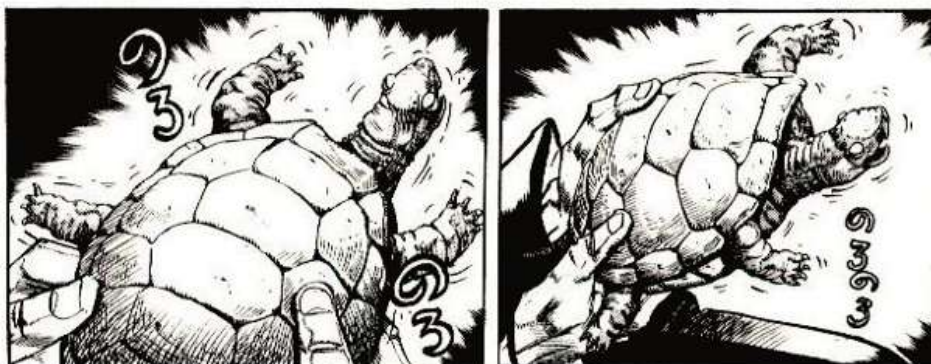
reader. Less knowledgeable readers may be especially affected by this issue, because they are likely to rely on these translations much more and may thus be even more distracted by the inconsistency. Other issues relating to the heuristic of “consistency” were not found in the PT.

The PT performs well in the heuristics of “satisfaction” and “specification”. No typographical errors were found in the translation, and the writing overall was both entertaining and effective. The earlier positive findings in the heuristics of “users” and “real world”, on the other hand, were also particularly beneficial in the “specification” heuristic, because they helped the reader understand the characters and immerse themselves in the world of the manga.

4.2 Heuristic evaluation of the fan translation

The FT has numerous issues with typography and errors, which significantly hinder the text’s usability. Other aspects of the translation, however, are more successful and hinder the text’s usability much less.

The heuristic of “medium” covers both positive and negative aspects of the FT. The first of these subjects is sound effects, which the FT translators have primarily opted not to translate in the chapters studied here. While this may not always be an issue for the core readers of the text, Picture 7 shows that translating sound effects can be somewhat necessary to get a thorough understanding of the text. Here, the main character heals a critically injured turtle with his supernatural powers, and the changes happening to the turtle are illustrated by these two panels in Picture 7:



Picture 7 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by The Invincible Trio.

Here, it may be unclear what exactly is happening to the turtle without knowing what the sound effects mean. The reader can deduce that the turtle was healed in these panels after a

character states so two panels later, but the moment may appear confusing to a reader at first. While the reader can eventually understand what happens here, they may have to go backward and reread these panels after they have read the explanation that comes later to achieve that understanding, which is clearly not an optimal reading experience. Apart from this instance, though, no other notably unclear sound effects were found in the chapters studied here, especially considering the level of genre-knowledge that the core readers of the FT are likely to have. Most sound effects are used simply to accentuate events that happen clearly in the art and are thus easily understandable, such as when a large, jagged sound effect is added next to a character getting slapped in their face; in this moment, it is logical to assume that this sound effect refers to the sound of the slap. Many other effects in this manga are also used as a marker of a mood or ambiance rather than a sound, such as in Picture 8:



Picture 8 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by The Invincible Trio.

The sound effects at the bottom and top of these two panels are used as a marker of the intensity of the standoff the two characters are locked into, but they are not meant to express any sound that might be happening in this situation. A reader who has little experience reading manga would likely be confused by such large visual elements that they do not understand, but the avid manga fans to whom this translation is targeted have likely seen such effects before and are familiar with the concept of these mimetic words. Thus, not translating sound effects may not be a significant issue for the addressees of the FT.

Speech bubbles are another important aspect of the “medium” heuristic, and the FT occasionally exhibits issues in their usage. For example, some speech bubbles seem to have been attributed to the wrong character by the translators, as seen in Picture 9, while Picture 10 shows the PT’s version of the same panels to make the issue clearer.



Picture 9 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by The Invincible Trio.



Picture 10 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by Nathan A. Collins.

In the FT's first panel, the speech bubble at the bottom of the panel is pointing to the character on the right, while the text continues the statement from the two previous speech bubbles that belong to the character on the left. The PT correctly attributes this lower speech bubble to the character on the right, which helps the dialogue naturally flow into the next panel, where this character continues speaking.

Another issue related to the FT's handling of speech bubbles is that dialogue is sometimes cut off in unnatural ways, such as in Picture 11:



Picture 11 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by The Invincible Trio.

Here, it is easy for the reader to assume that the first panel is not cut off at all, but that the phrase “he’s the one” is complete on its own. However, the next panel reveals that the dialogue is cut in the middle of the noun phrase “the one related to the old man”, which can make the start of the second panel seem like a typographical error, since “related to the old man” is not a full sentence. Mistakes such as these are relatively unique to media that combine text with images or other visual elements, and they can clearly hinder the usability of the text, either by distracting the reader or being more difficult to understand and follow. In the heuristic framework, these issues also partially fit into the category of “legibility” due to the difficulty of understanding the text.

The first heuristic also covers a lack of cohesion between the text and the image, which the FT experiences at times. The clearest example happens at a moment after the main character is angered by a group of other high-school students, shown in Picture 12, while Picture 13 shows the PT’s version of the panel for the sake of comparison:



Picture 12 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by The Invincible Trio.



Picture 13 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by Nathan A. Collins.

The character in the image is drawn with an angry but stoic and almost silent expression, while the text attributed to him in the FT is very expressive and dramatic. This type of separation between the message of the art and the message of the text is unlikely to cause problems with understanding the text, but it creates a juxtaposition that seems illogical. By

contrast, the PT’s version of this panel uses much more muted language that suits the character’s expression, while still maintaining the threatening tone of the character’s statement. As established in Chapter 2, the multimodality of comics can be a benefit to their usability, and the multiple modes work together to form a whole meaning within the reader’s mind. A disparity between the meanings provided by these modes works against this benefit, however, and may confuse the reader.

The FT uses a significant amount of minor foreignization strategies, which relates strongly to the heuristics of “real world” and “users”. These minor strategies mostly do not hinder the understandability of the FT, but they bring the culture of the ST to the forefront in a way that the translation’s addressees are likely to enjoy due to their desire for authenticity to the text’s original culture. These minor foreign elements include, for example, exclamations that seem to be transcribed from the original Japanese, along with typographical conventions and punctuation that are clearly foreign to Western readers. These exclamations include, for example, “Hugaaaaaa!” when a character is hurt and “Gyaaaaasu!” as an expression of exertion. These are translated in the PT as “Yaaaarrgh!” and “Gyahgh!”, respectively, both of which are more familiar to English-speaking readers. However, similarly to how sound effects are often understandable due to the contexts they are found in, the more foreign exclamations can also normally be understood from their contexts. The foreign typography and punctuation found in the FT include, for example, occasional speech bubbles with text placed vertically rather than horizontally, and ellipses that are made to fill entire speech bubbles rather than consisting of only three dots. The latter example is illustrated in Picture 14:



Picture 14 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by The Invincible Trio.

Some of these features could be distracting to readers who are not experienced with manga, but as established, the FT is more unlikely to reach such readers than the PT. Thus, the FT's addressees are likely to find these aspects of the text to be positive features.

As with the PT, no significant issues were found in the heuristic of "genre" in the FT. The language fits the tones of the text well, with similar uses of strong language in intense moments and a lighter tone during humorous moments. However, the translations' word choices differ slightly because the FT uses somewhat more vulgar language than the PT. This is a relatively neutral feature of the text, though, because the manga is otherwise filled with significant amounts of mature content, such as graphic violence, so expecting it to avoid such language would be inconsistent.

The FT's legibility is found to be good throughout most of the text, with only a small exception at the start of the study material. The partial coloring of the first ten pages of the manga (which can be seen in the earlier Picture 1, for example) was not properly captured by the black-and-white scans used in the FT, which has caused some of the early pages to appear somewhat unclear. Picture 15 shows a panel where a character is knocked back after bumping into another character, while Picture 16 shows the same panel from the PT in color for the sake of comparison:



Picture 15 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by The Invincible Trio.



Picture 16 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by Nathan A. Collins.

The lack of contrast in Picture 15 makes the panel slightly difficult to decipher, while the colored version shown in Picture 16 is visually quite clear. This lack of clarity did not prevent me from understanding any of the FT, but it required slightly more effort than the colored images of the PT. It should also be noted that the lower-quality scans of these pages do not reduce the readability of the text within them. Still, the clarity of the images is also an important part of the “legibility” heuristic in the study of comics because they form meanings with images in addition to words. Overall, this issue is quite minor because the legibility of these pages is hindered relatively slightly, and the issue only persists through the first ten pages of the manga that were originally colored, after which the visual quality of the FT is good.

There is one notable exception to the FT’s rule of not translating sound effects, which harms its consistency. Picture 17 shows this exception: Here, one of the villains of the story appears, and a translation of a sound effect is added as a translator’s note above the panel:



Picture 17 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by The Invincible Trio.

This may be distracting for the reader, as the manga before this point has been consistent about not translating any sound effects. The choice to add this translation is especially inconsistent, because the same sound effect appears many times throughout the manga (such as in the earlier Picture 7), although in those cases it does not seem to refer to “stretching” as this translation claims. If the choice to avoid translating sound effects was made for the sake of authenticity and the audience, this translation could then work against that goal. This exception, however, raises the question of whether this method of translating sound effects could have been used effectively throughout the FT. Adding the translation as a note outside of the panel could be a useful way to provide translations without obstructing any of the art, which could help readers understand the text more thoroughly while still satisfying their desire for authenticity. While most sound effects in the manga are relatively easy to understand for an experienced reader, perhaps some nuances in some of their meanings can be lost without knowledge of Japanese.

The heuristic of “satisfaction” includes the most extensive usability issues of the FT, because of the translation’s frequent errors in writing and grammar. Most of these mistakes are simple typographical mistakes where letters or punctuation are missing or in the wrong place, but some mistakes involve both missing and unnecessarily repeated words, along with entirely ungrammatical sentences. Three examples are presented here as an illustration of the types of mistakes found in the FT:

- (1) *Looks like I found the guy I was lookin for!
- (2) *This town is kinda big, there's around 53,000 people living here, you know...
- (3) *Take off your school uniform and off!

Errors such as these permeate the whole translation and significantly hinder its usability. For example, 10 of the 23 pages of the manga's first chapter include either a typographical error or missing or misplaced punctuation, and two of these pages have no translated text. Thus, nearly half of the first chapter's pages with text include errors, and even though many of these errors are relatively minor and do not prevent the reader from understanding the text, they are undeniably a noticeably distracting issue.

The FT's usability in the "satisfaction" heuristic suffers further from certain phrasing that may feel unnatural or somewhat confusing. This is seen, for example, in moments where the translation uses unconventional wording in places where a conventional alternative would sound more natural: Near the end of chapter 3, a criminal armed with a knife exits a store while holding a hostage. In the FT, nearby police then shout, "Hey throw your knife away!" [sic], when it would be more conventional to say, "drop the knife!", for example, which is the phrasing used in the PT. Other times, the writing in the FT can even be slightly confusing, and Picture 18 shows one such moment; This moment happens after the main character Josuke has become uncontrollably angry from an insult to his hairstyle, and he then tries to explain the reasoning behind his anger:



Picture 18 Art by Hirohiko Araki, translation by The Invincible Trio.

The sentence “I guess I just naturally hate you!” feels somewhat disconnected from the reality of the situation: Josuke’s angry reactions to negative remarks about his hair are a consistent character trait that is showcased multiple times during the early chapters of *Part 4*. Thus, Josuke saying that he naturally hates the character who insulted his hair seems inconsistent, because he is shown to become angry regardless of who comments on his hair and does not seem to harbor any ill will toward this particular character outside of this instance. This inconsistency could potentially be explained by Josuke acting illogically due to his anger, but the PT’s version of this moment contradicts this and is more logically consistent, because in it Josuke instead says, “I don’t even know why I get so furious. I doubt there’s even a reason. It’s like an instinctive reaction!” Here, the reasoning for his anger is the opposite of the FT’s version, because he specifies that his reaction is instinctual and does not imply that the other character specifically angers him, which is consistent with how this anger is shown to come about. Thus, the PT’s explanation of Josuke’s anger is logically consistent and provides more information to the reader, while the FT’s explanation is intentionally illogical at best and a mistake at worst, providing less information in either case. The FT’s unsatisfactory translation of this moment is also an issue of the heuristic of “specification”, because this trait is clearly an important part of the character, since each of the three chapters studied in this thesis showcases it.

Only two notable issues were found in the heuristic of “specification” in the FT, and the translation otherwise largely establishes the world and characters of the story well. As mentioned before, the FT only partially explains the main character’s name Josuke, which, according to the PT, includes the Japanese words for “tough” and “to help”. This explanation functions as a brief introduction to two of the character’s core personality traits, those being his resilience and his willingness to help others. These personality traits are still established throughout the translation, both in moments where he places others’ needs above his own and others where he stands firmly against threatening foes, but they are not emphasized by the knowledge that they are so core to the character that his name is based on them. The second issue in this heuristic relates to the previously mentioned contradictory explanation of Josuke’s tendency to become angry when his hair is insulted: The FT’s version of the explanation claims that his anger stems from a hatred toward the other character in the scene. This explanation may confuse the reader because it seems inconsistent, as the rest of the manga shows that his anger is clearly independent of who insults his hair, and that he does not

seem to hate the other character. The PT's explanation, on the other hand, provides an explanation that is consistent with how this character trait is shown to manifest.

4.3 Comparison of the usability of the two translations

Overall, the PT is found to be a more usable translation than the FT. However, the FT's worse performance is caused largely by the FT's significant issues in the heuristic of "satisfaction" and somewhat less significant issues in the heuristic of "medium", rather than a wide range of different issues. The FT's other issues were often relatively minor, meaning that in these respects, the translations were relatively comparable to each other in usability, if not completely equal. With this knowledge, the FT translators' note about being "casual newbies" as fan translators (The Invincible Trio 2010) is interesting: In some respects, the usability of their work could be seen as relatively good considering that they are not only not professionals, but also beginners as non-professionals. This may be explained by some of the features of fan translators O'Hagan (2009, 101–102) identifies, such as a high level of motivation and genre knowledge.

The FT's poor performance in the "satisfaction and error prevention" heuristic, particularly its frequent errors, is a significant hindrance to the text's usability compared to the PT's error-free and rather satisfactory writing. This issue was somewhat expected because it is unlikely that a professional translation project would allow many errors in a commercially published translation due to relatively rigorous quality control procedures. Some previous research has also found examples of relatively low-quality fan translations (O'Hagan 2008; Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006). The FT translators' blog shows a unique type of quality control, where readers of the translation would occasionally comment on the blog with errors that they noticed while reading the text (The Invincible Trio 2009), but this system seems to have provided relatively little benefit. Aside from the errors, the FT's writing in general was found to be somewhat less satisfactory than that of the PT. Due to the inherent subjectivity of the heuristic, I attempted to base my findings on relatively objective issues with the language and writing of the texts. Some of the FT's phrasing was found to be somewhat unnatural, or at least uncommon, to the English language, along with an example of a logical inconsistency in its writing. No such issues were found in the PT, and its writing was therefore found to be satisfactory.

The PT also compares favorably to the FT in the heuristic of "medium", but less significantly than in the previously mentioned heuristic. While the PT largely used the comic medium's

unique features effectively and without being hindered by its limitations, the FT included some errors and inconsistencies, mainly in the usage of speech bubbles. These issues were not as widespread as the ones in the heuristic of “satisfaction”, but they were still relatively notable.

One of the most obvious differences between the two translations is also related to the heuristic of “medium”: the PT translates all sound effects while the FT translates almost none. While this is technically a substantial difference – given that most pages of the chapters studied here have sound effects in them and thus the FT has translated much less of the actual linguistic content of the manga – its effect on the core audiences of each translation may be small. The PT translator’s choice to translate sound effects factors in auditors who may have relatively little experience with manga, providing a natural way for such a reader to understand as much of the text’s content as possible. At the same time, these translations are delivered in a way that obstructs as little of the art as possible and leaves the original sound effects as the much more visible element on the page, sacrificing very little of the text’s authenticity and aesthetic value. Thus, the PT’s solution for sound effects is a very usable one for both the text’s addressees and its auditors. The FT’s solution, on the other hand, does not help the reader understand these effects, which could be seen as a substantial usability issue. However, because the FT’s addressees are likely to be highly experienced with how sound effects are used in manga and expect as much authenticity to the original text as possible, leaving the sound effects untouched may be the most preferred solution by the FT’s target audience. As noted earlier in the analysis of the FT, most sound effects in these chapters of the manga are relatively easy to understand without knowing any Japanese, which is consistent with Jüngst’s ([2008] 2014, 65–67) similar assertion.

The trend of the FT foreignizing more than the PT is seen in other aspects apart from the translation of sound effects as well. The FT, for example, uses clearly foreign exclamations and some foreign typography many times throughout the text. The PT occasionally uses clearly deliberate foreignization strategies as well, such as leaving pieces of Japanese text untouched, likely in order to establish the setting and characters of the manga further, but it does so less than the FT. Whether these foreignization aspects make either text more usable than the other for the core audiences is somewhat inconclusive without user testing, but it is clear that the PT factors in its less knowledgeable auditors more than the FT, which includes a significant amount of minor foreign elements that showcase the ST’s culture without making the text difficult to understand. Taking auditors into account through domestication makes the

translation more usable for them and thus makes it accessible to more people. A significant amount of foreignization may put off these readers, but on the other hand, it could be preferable to the translations' addressees due to their desire for authenticity. Additionally, it is important to note that the FT is much less likely to have these less experienced readers as a significant part of its audience due to its barrier to entry, possibly reducing the need for domestication. Thus, both translations seem to take their users into account well.

One notable usability difference was found that relates to the heuristic of "real world" without being as connected to the translation's relationship to its users as the other findings of this heuristic. In one panel, the PT provided a thorough explanation of the name and nickname of the main character of the manga, while the FT explained this name only partially. As the translations' target groups mainly do not speak Japanese, this panel is a short but relatively important moment that calls for a thorough explanation, so that readers can glean the same information from the main character's name that native Japanese speakers can while reading the ST. Thus, the FT's handling of foreign elements is, on occasion, detrimental to its usability, even if its readers might largely prefer very little domestication.

Both texts had some minor issues in the heuristic of "legibility", but the PT's main issue was somewhat more widespread and simultaneously had a stronger effect on the translation's consistency. The FT's issue was related to the poor visual quality of some of the translation, but this issue became irrelevant after the tenth page because it was caused by the partial coloring of these pages in the ST. The PT's issue with indistinct sound effects, on the other hand, was more widespread because, unlike the colored pages, they appear often throughout the manga. While their translations were not often difficult to read in the chapters studied here, the frequency of sound effects in general means that even occasional occurrences of indistinct ones may eventually lead to a relatively substantial accumulation of issues over time, given that the manga continues for many more chapters beyond the ones studied here. The PT's issue is also related to the heuristic of "consistency", because the legibility of the sound effect translations fluctuates on a case-by-case basis. It should be noted, though, that this issue's significance may be slightly reduced by the fact that, as discussed before, the translations of sound effects may not be very important to the addressees of either translation.

The PT seems to have fared somewhat better than the FT in the "specification" heuristic, although this difference is not only caused by negative findings in the FT, but also by the fact that the PT included additional small instances that could immerse the reader in the characters

and setting of the story. This particular difference between the translations' usability is not very large, however, because overall, both texts still managed to establish enough to make a functional beginning to the story.

5 Conclusions

The goal of this study was to evaluate and compare two translations of the same text from the angle of usability using a new set of heuristics for comic book translation, while also testing the effectiveness of heuristic evaluation in such a process. The professional translation of the manga being studied was found to be more usable than the fan translation. This difference hinged mostly on the fan translation's frequent typographical and grammatical errors and, to a lesser extent, its mistakes in navigating the comic medium's unique requirements. At the same time, many other aspects of it were relatively comparable to the professional translation. Both translations seem to have taken their target audiences into account especially well: The PT remained mostly authentic to the original text to cater to the most dedicated manga readers and fans of the series, while selectively domesticating at certain points of the work in a way that can help less experienced readers understand the text better. The FT, on the other hand, focused mainly on authenticity, which, based on previous research on fans of Japanese media and fan translation culture, is especially important for the translation's main audience. And as the FT is less likely than the PT to reach many inexperienced readers, domestication was a less important goal as well.

This study should not be viewed as an attempt to make generalizable claims about the quality differences of fan translation and professional translation, but rather as a case study to expand on our knowledge of fan translations and as a test of the heuristic evaluation model. With only two translations to compare to each other, this case study mostly provides a look into what kind of differences one might find between the two types of translation, but not proof of widespread commonalities in either type. Additional comparative studies in the future could add further knowledge on similar cases, and eventually, more general trends and tendencies of fan translations could be found. Future studies could also attempt to make more generalizable findings through larger sample sizes of multiple texts and their different versions. Of the tools of the UCT approach to translation, heuristic evaluation may be more suitable for a smaller sample of texts due to its thoroughness, but user testing could be an efficient method for collecting data from a larger number of texts and their users.

Comic translations are a new environment for the heuristic evaluation method, making this study a useful test of the method in that environment. As a preliminary study using heuristic evaluation in this new environment, this study was able to show that heuristic evaluation can be used effectively in the study of comic translations. Additionally, while not the first study to

use heuristic evaluation to compare two translations of a single text (Hiidenvesi 2025), this is still a relatively unexplored use case of heuristic evaluation that this study has added to. The proposed new set of heuristics for comic translation evaluation was able to evaluate the translations from varied angles, but its effectiveness will be discussed further in this chapter.

Overall, the usability heuristics were a very useful tool for the study, and the edits made to the heuristics helped them answer questions specific to this study's particular use case. Despite these edits, they still followed the same core principles of previously created versions of the heuristics. Thus, they provided a consistent approach for studying the usability of translations. Heuristic evaluation has the potential to improve further through more studies that use and iterate on the heuristics, and it could eventually become a highly useful tool throughout translation studies and for translators who wish to create translations that are as usable as possible. Additionally, heuristic evaluation could be further adapted to more genres and media of text in the future, as there are still numerous types of text and translation that have not yet been studied with this method. Translation education on a wider scale may also have much to gain by training new translators to take their readers into account using UCT methods.

One of the core limitations of this study is the lack of user testing with the translations in question. User testing is a very useful tool in usability research, as it gathers results from the actual users of the product, which can reveal new usability issues that heuristic evaluation might not be able to (Nielsen 1994, 57). Previous studies on fan translation have already shown that the expectations of the translations' intended users are somewhat unique, which would make user testing in this context especially interesting. Because of the relative lack of concrete data on the exact things different users of manga expect, there may be some level of discrepancy between these expectations and what standards this study has held the translations to. However, I have attempted to mitigate this issue as much as possible by examining previous research on the process of creating fan translations and the unique qualities of those translations, and by basing the evaluation standards of this study on this data. Further studies on the audiences of translated Japanese media and their standards for a quality translation could be immensely valuable for future evaluative studies of such media from a user-centric angle and for improving the quality of such translations in the future. By extension, user testing studies focusing on how these fandoms rate fan translations versus professional translations could provide much-needed insight into the exact details that fans focus on and what they like or dislike about either type of translation. In a 2004 study on video game localization, for example, O'Hagan and Mangiron found that "certain end-users

of localized Japanese games can be extremely critical of officially translated versions, particularly when these versions give away the translator's lack of genre familiarity" (O'Hagan and Mangiron in O'Hagan 2008, 178). This shows that in some cases, professional translations do not seem to respond to the needs of fans who expect genre familiarity from translators, while fan translators, by virtue of participating in the fan culture, can provide this exact expertise. Studies on fan discussions on the internet could also provide some insight into this topic. For example, fans of *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* have posted numerous discussions of what they see as the problems of professional translations of the work (such as Hamon Beat 2025 and Jaxks 2025). Further studies on fan reception could provide yet more insight into the core users of translated Japanese media, so that translators could provide more usable translations for these fandoms.

One of the strengths of heuristic evaluation can be seen clearly in how this methodology allowed for a thorough evaluation of many different qualities of the texts, despite one issue drawing much attention. The FT's frequent typographical errors were clearly the most obvious issue found in either of the texts, but at the same time, this study was able to discover some clear merits of the FT. The evaluation also showed that the FT's typographical errors were not its only usability issues, but that its usability suffered from some lesser problems as well. It is then interesting to note that were these fan translators given an opportunity for better proofreading or, for example, a better chance to edit their translation after its original release, its usability could have been much more comparable to the PT. This shows that fan translators have the potential to provide highly usable texts for their fellow fans, but that, at least in this specific case, certain qualities of the translation can still fall short.

The new heuristic that was added to the list of heuristics, "match between translation and medium", was a useful and necessary tool to take into account the particular qualities of the comic medium. A similar heuristic could be used in other UCT studies where the medium of the text has unique requirements, limitations, or possibilities. It should be noted, though, that the most optimal and empirical way to use such a heuristic would be to use more concrete standards for that type of translation as a point of comparison, such as in the use of local norms and conventions in the subtitling heuristics of Tuominen (2024). Such well-established norms do not exist for many types of translation, however, and thus establishing reasonable standards to hold the translation to requires significant evidence of the needs of the medium in question. In this study, previous research was found that explored, for example, the comic medium's use of sound effects and their translation in manga specifically, and the restrictions

and possibilities of speech bubbles. However, this previous research did not include, for example, discussions on how utterances that continue through multiple speech bubbles should be split, which could have helped evaluate the texts' usage of speech bubbles further.

It is possible, however, that the “medium” heuristic by itself is currently too broad a category to facilitate a thorough and efficient examination of the translation of comics. As can be seen from the comparatively large range of results belonging to it in this study, this category covers at least these aspects of comic translation: the translation of sound effects and other elements of the art with linguistic meanings, the splitting of text between speech bubbles, and the cohesion of style between the text and the art. Additionally, there may be other aspects that were not relevant to the material of this study. With such a large range of usability issues covered by this category, it may be difficult for the evaluator to make sure to note each issue thoroughly. It may be useful, then, to use multiple heuristics that relate to the comic medium in future heuristic evaluations of comic translations. Based on the findings of this study, a separate category of “match between translation and art” could be useful. The cohesion of the messages conveyed by the art and the text is an inherently language-oriented aspect of comic translation because of its focus on the meaning of the text, while the translation of sound effects, for example, includes more technically demanding visual edits of the art on the page as well (Zanettin 2014, section 3.1). This kind of split between the linguistic and artistic aspects of the comic medium could also help respond to Kaindl's (2004, 173) argument that the study of comics is often limited to the singular expertise of the researcher by specifically targeting multiple different kinds of expertise. Tuominen's (2024) proposed heuristics for audiovisual translation also include a similar category titled "match between subtitles and setting", which focuses on whether translated subtitles match the style and register of the original speech and the visual content on screen.

The overlap between different heuristics continues to be a relevant point of discussion in heuristic evaluation. Suojanen and Tuominen (2015) already found that some heuristics in the original 10-part list were somewhat redundant and combined them in order to make the list more usable, which was done based on empirical evidence from user testing with actual users of the list. Combining heuristics to reduce overlap is logical when these redundancies make the method less efficient, but some overlap between heuristics may not be entirely negative for the method's usability. A usability issue fitting into multiple categories can signal that it creates multiple kinds of problems for the reader, which can then mean that it is an especially noteworthy issue and requires fixing more than some others. Additionally, the more the list of

heuristics is reduced, the more heuristic evaluation loses one of its main benefits: The current categories guide the evaluator (or the translator) to read the text critically from many angles, reducing the chance of certain types of problems being ignored due to human error. If a single heuristic covers many somewhat related but still separate subjects because of being combined with seemingly similar heuristics, some of these aspects might receive little attention due to others demanding more of it. Overall, a balance must be struck between efficacy and efficiency, so that the tool remains thorough enough to provide value, while also not being too cumbersome to use, and a researcher using the heuristic evaluation model should be aware of this while editing the framework to fit their needs.

In the case of this study, there was significant overlap between the heuristics of “users” and “real world”. This was caused by the fact that the study’s understanding of the core users of these texts was largely limited to previous studies’ findings that mainly established two core features: The users’ high level of knowledge of the type of text being studied and the users’ high expectations for authenticity. These aspects formed the basis for the standards of the users of the translations, but they are also inherently tied to the translations’ connection to the real world and the domestication and foreignization of the texts. Further understanding of the core audiences could have been achieved through user testing so that their other expectations for the translations could have been understood better, but this was unfortunately outside of the scope of this study. As stated before, however, overlap between the heuristics may not always be a hindrance. In this case, the overlap was able to provide more understanding of each heuristic’s effect on the usability of the translations: The FT’s notable lack of domestication could have been seen as a significant usability issue, but the established understanding of the users’ expertise and desire for authenticity disputed this.

Considering all of the possible permutations of text genre and medium, a definitive, all-encompassing list of heuristics can never truly be formed, which is why iteration and editing of the existing heuristics are important to ensure their effectiveness. However, perhaps a middle ground between one general list and numerous highly specific lists can be found. Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen’s (2015, 90) original heuristics and their revised form (Suojanen and Tuominen 2015, 279) are already meant to function as a general list that can be adapted to more specific use cases. A further evolution of the current system could be to create a limited number of core heuristic frameworks; These could work as a small selection of hypernymic lists of heuristics that guide creators of new lists to the types of aspects they should consider by covering a wider range of text types without describing every possible

subtype of any given genre or medium. The creation of these hypernymic heuristics could be based on examinations of previously used lists and their effectiveness, so that their most effective shared features can be combined into slightly general lists that still take into account the shared requirements of the texts that fit under each hypernym's umbrella. For example, these hypernymic heuristics could be based on whether the purpose of the text being evaluated is to provide instructions, information, or entertainment, or what medium the text uses to achieve its purpose. Further studies using new lists of heuristics may be needed, though, before such examinations can yield good results.

Heuristic evaluation could also be used to enhance or research the usability of nonfiction comics. There has, for example, been recent academic interest in taking advantage of the cognitive benefits of comics to enhance the accessibility of certain texts, which has led to the creation of comic contracts, a usable and accessible alternative to standard contractual documents for people with difficulty understanding such texts (Ketola and Pitkäsalo 2024). Heuristic evaluation may provide an efficient way to enhance the usability of these comic contracts, especially since the heuristic evaluation model for translation is already established in the realm of nonfiction and instructional texts due to being originally used in that exact environment (Suojanen and Tuominen 2015, 272).

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Suomenkielinen tiivistelmä

Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma tutkii kahta englanninkielistä käännöstä yhdestä mangasta eli japanilaisesta sarjakuvasta *käyttäjakeskeisen kääntämisen* näkökulmasta. Tarkoituksena on verrata *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* nimisen mangasarjan osan virallista käännöstä saman osan fanikäännökseen, jotta niitä voitaisiin tutkia siitä näkökulmasta, kuinka hyvin ne sopivat omille kohderyhmilleen.

Käyttäjakeskeinen kääntäminen perustuu *käytettävyystudkimuksen* periaatteisiin.

Käytettävyystudkimus tutkii tuotteiden käytettävyyttä, eli sitä, kuinka helposti käyttäjä voi käyttää tuotetta saavuttaakseen sillä jonkinlaisen tavoitteen (Suojanen, Koskinen ja Tuominen 2015, 2). Perinteisesti käytettävyystudkimus keskittyy tietokoneohjelmien ja työkalujen käytettävyyteen, mutta sitä voidaan soveltaa myös muihin tuotteisiin. Käyttäjakeskeisessä kääntämisessä nähdään, että käytettävä käännös on sellainen, joka on helppo ymmärtää ja lukea nopeasti ilman suurta väärinymmärtämisen riskiä ja jonka lukemisesta on samalla helppo nauttia.

Nimensä mukaisesti käyttäjakeskeisessä kääntämisessä keskitytään erityisesti siihen, kuinka hyvin käännös vastaa käyttäjiensä ja kohderyhmänsä tarpeisiin. Siksi on tärkeää määritellä, millaisia tutkittavan käännöksen käyttäjät ja tärkeimmät kohderyhmät ovat. Suojanen, Koskinen ja Tuominen (2015) kuvaavat näiden kohderyhmien määrittelemiseen käytettäviä työkaluja, joista tässä tutkimuksessa keskitytään *vastaanottajakeskeiseen suunniteluun* (engl. *audience design*). Vastaanottajakeskeinen suunnittelu on Bellin (1984) kehittämä sosiolingvistiikan työkalu, joka perustuu siihen ajatukseen, että puhujat ja kirjoittajat muokkaavat kieltään viestin vastaanottajan mukaan (Suojanen, Koskinen ja Tuominen 2015, 68). Kääntämisessä työkalulla voidaan esimerkiksi erottaa käännöksen todennäköisimmät lukijat sellaisista, jotka saattavat lukea tekstin, mutta joille tekstiä ei ole suoraan suunniteltu. Tässä tutkimuksessa tutkittavien käännösten todennäköisimmät lukijat määritellään sen mukaan, mitä aiemmissa tutkimuksissa on saatu selville fanikäännösten ja mangan kohderyhmistä.

Koska tässä tutkimuksessa tutkitaan sarjakuvan käännöstä, on tärkeä myös selvittää, miten sarjakuvien kääntäminen eroaa muusta kääntämisestä. Sarjakuvien kääntämistä kuvaillaan joskus *rajoitetuksi kääntämiseksi* (engl. *constrained translation*) (Celotti [2008] 2014), koska

sarjakuvien kääntäminen kokee sellaisia rajoitteita, jotka eivät koske kaikkia muita kääntämisen tyyppejä. Käännöstekstiä rajoittaa muun muassa puhekuplien koko ja muu tekstile annetun tilan määrä. Muut muokkaukset tekstin kääntämisen lisäksi vaativat usein huomattavasti lisää työtä (Zanettin 2014, kappale 3.1), minkä takia usein tällaisia muokkauksia on hyvä välttää. Sen sijaan käännöksiä täytyy usein siis mahduttaa alkuperäisen tekstin antamaan tilaan, joka on rajattua, mikä voi aiheuttaa kääntäjälle ongelmia. Sarjakuvakääntämisen rajoitteita ei kannata kuitenkaan korostaa liikaa, sillä sarjakuvien viestinnässä on myös havaittu tiettyjä etuja. Kognitiiviset tutkimukset ovat todenneet, että kuvan ja tekstin yhdistäminen viestinnässä voi helpottaa viestin ymmärtämistä (Mayer 2005; Ketola ja Pitkäsalo 2024). Tämä ilmiö myös sopii selvästi yhteen käyttäjakeskeisen kääntämisen periaatteiden kanssa: Edut ymmärrettävyydessä ovat myös etuja käytettävyydessä, sillä ymmärrettävyys on yksi käytettävyyden ydinosista.

Mangan kääntäminen eroaa tietyillä tavoilla länsimaisista sarjakuvista. Vaikka molemmissa käytetään äänitehosteita tai onomatopoeettisia sanoja, japanin kielen laajempi sanasto sekä tehosteiden integrointi piirroksiin voivat aiheuttaa ongelmia kääntäjille (Sell ja Pasfield-Neofitou 2016, 251). Japanin kieli sisältää myös laajan valikoiman sanoja, jotka kuvaavat esimerkiksi tunnetta tai ilmapiiriä samalla tavalla kuin äänitehosteet kuvaavat ääniä, mutta koska nämä sanat pääasiassa puuttuvat englannin kielestä, niiden kääntäminen voi olla haastavaa. Mangassa käytetään myös enemmän korkeita ja kapeita puhekuplia toisin kuin länsimaisissa sarjakuvissa, koska japanin kieltä kirjoitetaan usein pystysuuntaisesti (Rampant 2010, 225). Tämä voi aiheuttaa kääntäjälle lisää ongelmia tilan käytön kanssa, sillä vaakasuoraan kirjoitettuja sanoja voidaan joutua katkomaan monesta kohdasta, jos ne ovat liian pitkiä. Mangan länsimaiset lukijat ovat usein myös erityisen kiinnostuneita autenttisuudesta eli siitä, että mangan alkuperäinen japanilaisuus näkyy myös käännöksissä (Jüngst [2008] 2014), mikä vaikuttaa käännöksen vaatimukseen kohderyhmien silmissä.

Fanikääntämistä ilmiönä on tutkittu jonkin verran käännöstutkimuksessa. Fanikääntämistä kuvaillaan esimerkiksi *osallistumiskulttuuriksi* (engl. *participatory culture*), jonka tärkeimpiä piirteitä ovat kulttuurin tuottamiseen osallistumisen helppous, kannustus kulttuurin tuottamiseen ja jakamiseen sekä jonkinlainen järjestelmä, jossa kokeneemmat kulttuurin osallistujat voivat opettaa taitojaan vähemmän kokeneille osallistujille (Jenkins ym. 2009, xi). Fanikääntäminen nähdään yhtenä selkeimmistä osallistumiskulttuureista (Vázquez-Calvo ym. 2019, 50), sillä fanikääntäjät ovat sekä näiden käännösten tuottajia että niiden lukijoita (O'Hagan 2009).

Fanikäännösten laadun voisi olettaa olevan huonompaa verrattuna ammattilaisten tekemiin käännöksiin, koska fanikäöntäjät ovat usein amatöörejä. O'Hagan (2009) kuitenkin huomauttaa seikkoja, jotka voivat auttaa fanikäöntäjiä luomaan korkealaatuisia käännöksiä: 1) fanikäöntäjät ovat selvästi hyvin motivoituneita, koska he tekevät käännöksiä yleensä täysin ilmaiseksi, 2) monien fanikäöntäjäryhmien työprosessi on tehokas ja samankaltainen kuin ammattilaisten ja 3) fanikäöntäjien kokemus ja tieto käännettävän tekstin genren lukemisesta voi kompensoida muita taidon puutteita. On myös huomattava, että käyttäjäkeskeisestä näkökulmasta fanikäöntäjillä on se uniikki etu, että he todennäköisesti tietävät, mitä muut fanit käännöksiltä voivat haluta, koska he ovat itsekin näitä faneja. Joissain tutkimuksissa on kuitenkin myös huomautettu virheellisyyksistä tietyissä fanikäännöksissä (Díaz-Cintas ja Muñoz Sánchez 2006; O'Hagan 2008).

Tutkittavien käännösten kohderyhmään vaikuttaa myös se, kuinka helppoa tai vaikeaa käännöksiin on päästä käsiksi. Koska ammattimaisesti tuotettujen käännösten luomisen motivaationa on tavallisesti myynti ja rahallinen tuotto, käännösten julkaisijat yrittävät tavallisesti tavoittaa lukijoita aktiivisesti esimerkiksi mainostamalla käännöksiä tai tuomalla niitä esiin kirjakaupoissa. Fanikäännökset taas ovat selkeästi vaikeammin saavutettavia, ja niiden löytäminen tavallisesti vaatii, että niiden lukija on jo osa kyseisen käännöksen tai vähintäänkin sen genren fanikulttuuria. Koska fanikäännöksiä ei mainosteta erikseen, lukijan täytyy olla kuullut käännöksestä jotain muuta kautta, usein toisilta faneilta, ja lukijan täytyy osata ylipäättään löytää käännökset internetistä, mikä voi olla suhteellisen monimutkaista, kuten tämän tutkimuksen analysoiman käännöksen tapauksessa.

Tutkittavina käännöksinä toimivat kaksi käännettyä versiota *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* -nimisen mangan neljännessä osasta, jonka nimi on *Diamond is Unbreakable*. Ammattilaiskäännöksen on tehnyt Nathan A. Collins ja fanikäännöksen on tehnyt ryhmä, joka käyttää nimeä "The Invincible Trio". Tämä teksti valittiin tutkimukseen siksi, että sen fanikäännökset ovat hyvin merkittäviä sen kansainvälisille faneille. *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* on suosittu manga (Komatsu 2016), mutta silti sen julkaisu englanniksi on kestänyt poikkeuksellisen kauan. Tätä mangaa alettiin julkaista Japanissa vuonna 1987, mutta sen ensimmäinen englanninkielinen julkaisu alkoi vasta vuonna 2005. Tässä tutkimuksessa tutkittava osa taas julkaistiin vasta vuonna 2019, joka on noin 27 vuotta sen alkuperäisen julkaisun jälkeen. Fanikäännökset olivat siis hyvin kauan ainoa tapa lukea tätä mangaa englanniksi.

Käytettävyyttä arvioidaan tässä tutkimuksessa *heuristisella arvioinnilla*. Heuristisessa arvioinnissa alan asiantuntija käyttää listaa periaatteista ja säännöistä tarkistuslistana ja arvioi sen avulla jotakin tuotetta. Tässä tutkimuksessa käytettävät heuristiikat perustuvat Suojasen, Koskisen ja Tuomisen (2015, 90) käyttäjakeskeisen kääntämisen heuristiikkojen paranneltuun versioon (Suojanen ja Tuominen 2015, 279). Heuristiikkoja kuitenkin muokataan vastaamaan paremmin sarjakuvakääntämisen tarpeisiin osittain Tuomisen (2024) tekstityskääntämisen arvioinnin heuristiikkoja mallina käyttämällä.

Tässä tutkimuksessa käytettävät heuristiikat selitetään taulukossa 1:

Taulukko 1 Sarjakuvakääntämisen heuristiikat (perustuu: Suojanen ja Tuominen 2015, 279; Tuominen 2024)

Heuristiikan nimi	Heuristiikan selitys
1. Käännöksen ja viestintätavan vastaavuus	Miten käännös vastaa sarjakuvien uniikkeihin tarpeisiin ja rajoitteisiin? Ovatko sarjakuvan verbaalinen ja visuaalinen sisältö koherentteja keskenään?
2. Käännöksen ja käyttäjien vastaavuus	Ottaako käännös huomioon käyttäjien tiedontarpeet ja otetaanko erilaiset käyttäjäryhmät huomioon? Ovatko käännösratkaisuissa heijastuvat oletukset käyttäjästä realistisia?
3. Käännöksen ja tosielämän vastaavuus	Onko käännös linjassa kulttuurisen kontekstinsa kanssa? Onko tarvetta kulttuuriselle adaptaatiolle?
4. Käännöksen ja genren vastaavuus	Vastaako käännös kyseisen tekstilajin konventioita? Ovatko esimerkiksi termit ja käännöksen rekisteri tekstilajiin sopivia?
5. Luettavuus	Onko käännös visuaalisesti vaivaton lukea? Onko käännös ymmärrettävä ja vältetäänkö väärinymmärtämisen riskiä? Ovatko sarjakuvan piirrokset visuaalisesti selviä?
6. Johdonmukaisuus	Ovatko käännöksen tyyli, termit, fraasit ja rekisteri johdonmukaisia kautta koko tekstin?
7. Miellyttävyys ja virheiden estäminen	Millainen tekstin käyttäjäkokemus on? Onko teksti nautittava ja viihdyttävä? Onko tekstissä kirjoitus- tai kielioppivirheitä?
8. Käännöksen ja spesifikaation vastaavuus	Täyttääkö käännös spesifikaatiossa määritellyt vaatimukset?

Tärkein muutos heuristiikkalistaan on uuden heuristiikan lisääminen, joka tutkii käännöksen ja viestintätavan eli tässä tutkimuksessa sarjakuvan vastaavuutta. Heuristiikalla tutkitaan tässä tutkimuksessa sitä, miten sarjakuvan käännökset ottavat huomioon sarjakuvaviestinnän uniikkeja tarpeita, kuten tekstin tyylin vastaavuuden kuvan tyylin kanssa ja äänitehosteiden

kääntämisen tarpeita. Tämä heuristiikka perustuu osittain tekstittämisen arviointia varten kehitettyihin heuristiikkoihin (Tuominen 2024), sillä tekstittäminen ja sarjakuvakääntäminen kokevat samankaltaisia tilan ja tekstin ympäristön rajoituksia ja mahdollisuuksia.

Toisin kuin usein muussa käänösarvioinnissa, heuristisessa arvioinnissa lähdetekstin ja kohdetekstin sisällön vastaavuutta ei painoteta. Tässä tutkimuksessa tekstien vastaavuutta ei tutkita lainkaan, sillä tutkimus painottuu nimenomaan valmiiden tekstien käytettävyyteen eikä siihen, kuinka tarkasti kääntäjä on osannut tuoda esille kaikki lähtötekstin sisällöt. Tutkimus on siis arvio pelkästä tekstin käytettävyydestä eikä kääntäjien taidoista ylipäätään.

Tutkimus pyrkii vastaamaan näihin kysymyksiin: 1) Mitä eroja tutkittavan ammattilaiskäännöksen ja fanikäännöksen käytettävyydessä on? 2) Kuinka hyvin uudet sarjakuvakääntämisen heuristiikat toimivat sarjakuvien käytettävyyden arvioimisessa?

On vaikeaa luoda tarkkoja odotuksia tutkittavien käännösten käytettävyydestä. On esimerkiksi mahdollista, että ammattilaiskääntäjän ammattitaito sekä fanikääntäjien uniikit edut aiheuttavat sen, että molemmat käännökset ovat melko käytettäviä varsinkin ydinkohderyhmän näkökulmasta. Jotkin aiemmat tutkimukset kuitenkin näyttävät, että fanikäännösten kielessä on joskus sisällöllisiä ja typografisia virheitä (Díaz-Cintas ja Muñoz Sánchez 2006, O'Hagan 2008), joten tällaisia käytettävyyso ongelmia voidaan mahdollisesti löytää enemmän tutkittavasta fanikäännöksestä. Odotan myös, että fanikääntäjät käyttävät enemmän vieraannuttamisstrategioita käännöksessään, kuten aiemmissa tutkimuksissa on huomattu (Díaz-Cintas ja Muñoz Sánchez 2006, 46; Rampant 2010, 227), mikä olisi luultavimmin suosittu valinta kohderyhmän keskuudessa (Jüngst [2008] 2014).

Ammattilaiskäännöksen todettiin olevan fanikäännöstä käytettävämpi. Tämä johtui pääasiassa miellyttävyyden ja viestintätavan heuristiikkojen perusteella löydetyistä ongelmista, kun taas monet muut heuristiikat olivat enemmän verrattavissa toisiinsa käännösten välillä. Suurin ero käännösten käytettävyydessä johtui siitä, että fanikäännös sisälsi lukuisia kirjoitus- ja kielioppivirheitä, kun taas ammattilaiskäännöksestä näitä ei löydetty. Tulos oli jossain määrin odotettavissa aiemman tutkimuksen pohjalta (O'Hagan 2008; Díaz-Cintas ja Muñoz Sánchez 2006) ja myös looginen siksi, että ammattilaisessa käännösprosessissa laadunvalvonta on usein tarkkaa.

Käännösten huomattavin ero oli se, että ammattilaiskäännös käänsi kaikki äänitesteet tekstistä, kun taas fanikäännös ei kääntänyt lähes yhtäkään. Tämä ei kuitenkaan luultavimmin

aiheuta suurta eroa käännosten käytettävyydessä kohderyhmien näkökulmasta. Ammatilaiskäännöksen strategia äänitehosteiden kääntämiseen vie hyvin vähän huomiota tekstin visuaaliselta ilmeeltä, minkä takia käännosten läsnäolo tuskin häiritsee niitäkään lukijoita, jotka haluavat mahdollisimman vähän kotouttamista ja piirrosten alkuperäisen visuaalisen ilmeen muuttamista. Samalla kuitenkin käännosten sisällyttäminen auttaa vähemmän kokeneita lukijoita, jotka eivät ymmärrä äänitehosteita yhtä hyvin ilman käännöksiä. Fanikäännöksellä taas ei luultavasti ole juurikaan kokemattomia lukijoita, jotka eivät ymmärtäisi äänitehosteita ilman selityksiä. Täten äänitehosteiden kääntämättä jättäminen maksimoi käännöksen autenttisuuden alkuperäiselle tekstille ilman että se häiritsee merkittävää osaa käännöksen lukijoista.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat yhden heuristisen arvioinnin eduista myös sarjakuvakääntämisen tutkimuksessa: Vaikka fanikäännös sisälsi paljon ongelmia yhdessä heuristiikassa, heuristinen arviointi pystyi samalla löytämään useita positiivisia puolia fanikäännöksen käytettävyydestä. Samalla kuitenkin heuristiikat osoittivat, että fanikäännöksessä oli myös muita ongelmia, jotka liittyivät muihin heuristiikkoihin.

Heuristiikkalistan lisäys ”käännöksen ja tekstityypin vastaavuus” oli toimiva löytämään tutkittavista teksteistä sellaisia käytettävyyden aspekteja, jotka vaikuttavat nimenomaan sarjakuvakäännösten käytettävyyteen. Samankaltaista heuristiikkaa voisi käyttää muissakin tekstityypeissä, joihin vaikuttavat esimerkiksi multimodaalisuuden aiheuttamat rajoitteet, kuten tilanpuute, tai hyödyt, kuten kielellisen ja visuaalisen kommunikaation yhteen toimiminen. Tällaisen heuristiikan vaatimukset olisivat optimaalisinta perustaa esimerkiksi paikallisiin normeihin, kuten Tuomisen (2024) ehdottamissa tekstityskääntämisen heuristiikoissa, mutta sarjakuvakääntämiseen sovellettavia normeja ei tätä tutkimusta varten löydetty. Aiempi tutkimus tutkittavan tekstityypin piirteistä ja vaatimuksista voi kuitenkin toimia perustana heuristiikan vaatimuksille, kuten tässä tutkimuksessa.

Monet tämän tutkimuksen löydöistä kuitenkin sopivat viestintätavan heuristiikan alle, joten voi olla mahdollista, että tämän heuristiikan jakaminen kahteen osaan voisi olla hyödyllistä tulevaisuuden tutkimuksissa. Jaon voi tehdä esimerkiksi verbaalisten ja visuaalisten piirteiden välille: Toinen heuristiikka koskisi sitä, miten tekstin verbaalinen sisältö vastaa kuvan kommunikoimaa merkitystä, kun taas toinen koskisi sitä, miten käännöksessä on adaptoitu itse kuvan sisältöä.

Tutkimuksen selkein rajoite oli se, että tekstejä ei voitu testata oikeiden käyttäjien kanssa. Käyttäjättestaus voi paljastaa asioita, joita heuristinen arviointi ei tavallisesti löydä (Nielsen 1994, 57). Tulevaisuudessa voitaisiin tehdä lisää tutkimuksia siitä, miten oikeat lukijat vastaanottavat fanikäännöksiä ja minkälaisiin piirteisiin varsinkin aktiiviset fanit kiinnittävät huomiota sekä fanikäännöksissä että ammattilaiskäännöksissä.