

Abstract

This dissertation describes a research aimed at finding text-optimization techniques which would increase the comprehension and better the attitudes of the readers towards the text. The aim is to evaluate the effectiveness of these techniques considering the possibility of implementation into the text-production process of state and commercial institutions.

The theoretical basis for text comprehension is the construction of mental representations of the text. Many factors, internal and external, can influence the construction of a correct mental representation of the text. This thesis researches the factors of text quality and attitudes towards the text.

Effects of the same text manipulations of Slovak and Dutch texts were observed in three language groups. These were: a group of Slovak native speakers, Dutch native speakers and people who learned Dutch as a foreign language. For this research two texts were selected, namely the instructions provided with the tax declaration form and an instruction manual provided with a digital camera.

Parts of the texts were optimized and rewritten into two variants. The first variant is based on the principle of rewriting the text into a dialogue. The instructions for such transformation can be summarized into three points. This approach should be usable for not linguistically educated professionals working in commercial or governmental context. The more elaborate and time consuming approach is based on linguistic analysis and a more distinctive typographic rearrangement of the text.

These texts were processed into an on-line research form and presented to the respondents. After reading the text, the respondents were asked to complete several tasks. These were aimed at researching changes in their ability to answer questions about information from the texts and changes in attitudes towards the texts.

The collected data suggests is that the simple rewrite-to-dialogue approach did mostly deliver the same or even better results than the more elaborate text manipulation. The importance of the existence of prior knowledge was confirmed. The data also suggests that manipulating texts that are already considered to be of a good quality does not necessarily lead to improvements in comprehension and attitudes.