

Exploring website translation techniques

دراسة تقنيات ترجمة المواقع الالكترونية

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Abstract:

The companies' need to globalize and internationalize their websites so as to increase their profits has resulted into a huge demand for translation and localization services. This study endeavors to explore some of the techniques used in translating the textual content of some marketing websites. It has concluded that a wide range of translation techniques is used along with a tendency to preserve the content of the original text and to adapt some products' characteristics to the norms of the target culture in order to shun any embarrassing situations to the target public.

Keywords: Translation; localization; website translation; website localization; translation techniques.

ملخص:

نتج عن حاجة الشركات والمؤسسات إلى عولمة مواقعها الإلكترونية وتدويلها بهدف زيادة أرباحها إلى زيادة الطلب على خدمات الترجمة والتوطين. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف بعض التقنيات المستخدمة في ترجمة المحتوى النصي لبعض المواقع التسويقية. وخلصت إلى استخدام مختلف تقنيات الترجمة إلى جانب الميل إلى الحفاظ على محتوى النص المترجم منه وتكييف خصائص بعض المنتجات بما يتماشى مع معايير الثقافة المنقول إليها من أجل تجنب أي مواقف محرجة للجمهور المترجم إليه.

كلمات مفتاحية: الترجمة، التوطين، ترجمة المواقع الالكترونية، توطين المواقع الالكترونية، تقنيات الترجمة.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of the internet in the 1990's hasn't merely transformed the world into a "small village" but rather into a small house. It has changed peoples' way of living and communicating upside down and has impacted all walks of life (marketing, education, communication...etc). In the field of marketing, for instance, companies and businesses create websites and use them as a medium to go global and attract foreign customers, therefore, increasing their profits. To do so, they translate their websites not only to English, which is often referred to as a *lingua franca*, but also to many other languages of the target public (country, region, community...etc). This paper aims to shed light on the techniques used in translating the textual content of some marketing websites since this field of research is relatively new in translation studies compared to the practice of translation which dates back to many centuries ago. The companies' need to translate and localize their websites has led to a huge demand for translation and localization services in general and website translation in particular.

2. Translation and localization

Translation and localization are so interrelated that sometimes overlap, but what is the difference between these two concepts?

Translation is a term which, according to (Munday, 2001, pp. 4-5), refers to three aspects; the general field of research, (which is known as translation studies and which tackles issues related to the translation process), the translated text (the product), or the process of translating a text from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL).

On the other hand, localization is a new term which dates back to the 1990's with the advent of the World Wide Web and the internet. Before tackling the definition of localization, it seems necessary to define globalization and internationalization to which they are linked. Esselink states that the term globalization is used to express different things "the geopolitical level that deals with the globalization of business as an economic evolution, the globalization of an enterprise that establishes an international presence with local branch or distribution offices, and the process of creating localized versions of websites". (Esselink, 2000, p. 4). Barker, however, considers globalization as the process of

“increasing multi-directional economic, social, cultural and political global connections across the world and our awareness of them. (Barker, 2008, p. 480). Internationalization, however, is defined by The Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) as “the process of generalizing a product so that it can handle multiple languages and cultural conventions without the need for re-design.” As cited in (Esselink, 2000, p. 2). Anthony Pym, on the other hand, defines internationalization as “the process whereby the culture-specific features are taken out of a text in order to minimize the problems of later distributing that text to a series of locales”.

(Pym, 2004, p. 31). Pym assumes that companies and businesses resort to internationalization in order to avoid the high costs and numerous cultural problems which result from just designing a home product and then translating it into many other languages. (Pym, 2004, p. 31). Hence, internationalization refers to the creation of a “neutral” product which does not contain culture-specific features of a given culture and can be easily used and understood by the target users.

Various studies have dealt with the relatively new concept of localization in different fields and disciplines (Esselink, 2000; Pym, 2004; Hines, 2013). Localization, according to (LISA), “involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale/country/region and language where it will be used and sold” as cited in (Esselink, 2000, p. 3). In contrast, Dunne defines localization as “the process of which digital content and products developed in one locale (defined in terms of geopolitical area, language and culture) are adapted for sale and use in another locale” (Dunne, 2006, p. 4). To sum up the definitions cited above, localization revolves around the cultural and linguistic adaptation of a product or a digital content according to the specificities of the target community so that it can be used and sold easily.

Pym (2004, p. 30) considers that localization and internationalization are part of a wider process which is globalization; in order to make your product global, you must first make it general in some way (internationalize) and then you adapt it to a specific target market (localize). Globalization, internationalization, localization and translation are very linked to each other and are parts of a new field of research known as “GILT”.

2.1 Website translation and website localization

The huge development witnessed in information and communication

technologies (ICT) has led companies and businesses to create websites in order to get in touch with their clients and promote their products. Thus, the need to attract foreign clients and get access to the global market has motivated companies to translate their websites into many languages, since clients would be more comfortable to deal with websites in their own languages. But is website translation the same as website localization?

Website localization is part of the localization process which we have defined above. Yunker refers to it as “the process of modifying a website for a specific locale” (Yunker, 2003, p. 17). Localization, according to (Heimgärtner, 2019, p. 52), includes at least the following aspects: letter set and character sets, formats (e.g date, address, currency), signs, icons and metaphors, documentation, online help and colors. Hence, website localization is adapting a website according to the cultural peculiarities of the target locale.

Many scholars (Pym, 2004; Esselink, 2000) consider translation as part of a wider process which is localization. In this context, Esselink states that “translation is only one of the activities in localization: in addition to translation, a localization project includes many other tasks such as project management, software, engineering, testing and desktop publishing.” (Esselink, 2000, p. 4). On the other hand, (Pym, 2010, p. 1) thinks that the translation task carried out on websites is not different from the other types of translation; texts are extracted, translated and then reinserted on the website according to the required communicative purpose, yet, web localization is a more complex process”.

Sandrini (2005), however, states that in a localization project the localization professional is “in command” and the translator is adduced to a mere contributor to provide foreign language texts. From this standpoint, Sandrini (2006) defines website translation as “the production of a new website which is targeted at another linguistic and cultural community and based on an existing website in accordance with the predefined purpose”. This means that website translation consists only in linguistically and culturally adapting the textual content of a website to the needs of the target audience. Thus, translators work along with localizers and other engineers in order to carry out the localization project. Therefore, website translators are in a pressing need to acquire new competences in order to keep up with the development witnessed in the IT field and impose themselves in the localization industry.

3. Website translation from the standpoint of translation theories

Translation studies field of interest has shifted, since 1980's, from considering translation as the mere linguistic transfer of a text from a language into another, into considering it as a culture-related process and a means of cross-cultural communication. This shift is often referred to as "the cultural turn" in which the peculiarities of the source and target cultures are taken into consideration in the translation act. Albeit translation theories has not clearly dealt with the concept of "website translation" which came a result of the technological development and the advent of the internet, the functionalist approaches of translation can be applicable to this kind of translation.

Reiss and Vermeer in their skopos theory consider that the goal (skopos) of the translation determines the translation methods and strategies to be used in the translation process. Hence, the target text, which they call *translatum*, differs according to the purpose of the translation. According to Vermeer (1989) the skopos includes that "one must translate consciously and consistently in accordance with some principle respecting the target text" The theory does not state what the principle is: this must be decided separately in each specific case" as cited in (Nord, 1997, p. 30). Therefore, the aim of the translation process as well as the techniques to be used should be negotiated with the client who commissions the translation.

These ideas are shared by Christiane Nord who considers translation as "a purposeful activity" and thinks that translation is done by assignment; "the client would give as many details as possible about the purpose, explaining the addressees, time, place, occasion and medium of the intended communication and the function the text is intended to have." (Nord, 1997, p. 30). Therefore, the translator tailors his translation in accordance to the terms provided by the client. This point of view is compatible with the definition of website translation as a process of translating and adapting a website to a specific target group, hence, the purpose of the website translation differs in conformity with the specificities of the intended locale/ website users.

The descriptive theories of translation studies can also be applicable to website translation since they consider that translation should conform to the norms and values prevailing in the target culture. For instance, Gideon Toury (2000) considers translation as a norm-governed activity and "the translator may

subject himself either to the original text, with the norms it has realized, or to the norms active in the culture, or in that section of which would host the end product” as cited in (Venuti, 2000, p. 201). Therefore, if the translator conforms to the target text norms, his translation would be “adequate”, but if he conforms to the norms of the target text, his translation would be “acceptable”. In website translation, translation’s acceptability takes precedence over its adequacy, since the translator adapts the website according to the norms prevailing in the target culture in order to shun any embarrassing situations to the target public especially when it comes to translating culture-specific items.

4. Methodology

This paper investigates some of the translation techniques used in conveying the textual content of some marketing websites into Arabic. The researcher analyzes the Arabic translation of some English marketing websites in order to find out the techniques used as well as the reasons behind using them, and will try to provide some solutions related to the translation-problems observed. The marketing websites which fall under the scope of this study are:

<https://www.nivea.com.ng/>

<https://www.nivea-me.com/ar-me>

<https://headandshoulders.com/en-us>

<https://www.headandshoulders.sa/ar>

<https://www.subway.com/en-US/MenuNutrition/Menu/All>

[https://www.subway.com/ar-](https://www.subway.com/ar-SA/MenuNutrition/Menu/Product?ProductId=5909&MenuCategoryId=548)

[SA/MenuNutrition/Menu/Product?ProductId=5909&MenuCategoryId=548](https://www.subway.com/ar-SA/MenuNutrition/Menu/Product?ProductId=5909&MenuCategoryId=548)

<https://www.apple.com/>

<https://www.apple.com/sa-ar/iphone-12-pro/>

5. Results and discussion

The study of the translation of the above-mentioned marketing websites into Arabic has revealed the dominance of the following techniques:

5.1 Transference

Newmark defines transference as “the process of transferring a SL word into a TL text as a translation procedure” (Newmark, 1988, p. 81). Albeit many translation scholars do not consider this technique as translation but Newmark thinks that there is no appropriate word to describe the use of a SL word in the TL

text. In website translation, this technique is used to translate brand names (e.g., Nivea *نيفيا*, Head and Shoulders *هيد أن شولدرز*, Subway *صباوي*, Apple *أبل*), brand products (e.g., Nivea Crème *كريم نيفيا*, Deodorant Pearl and Beauty *مزبل راحة بيرل أند* *بيوتي*).

Furthermore, transference technique is sometimes used in translating brands' products despite the existence of their arabic equivalents. For instance, "body lotion" is translated into Arabic as "لوشن الجسم" instead of "غسول/ مستحضر", "Nivea Creme" is translated into Arabic as "نيفيا كريم" instead of "مرهم نيفيا", "Aloe Vera lotion" is translated into arabic as "لوشن الألوفيرا" instead of "مستحضر الصبار" which would make much more sense to the arab customer, and "Detox your hair-detox your mind" is translated as "ديتوكس فروة رأسك-ديتوكس فكرك" even if it conveys no meaning in Arabic and should have been translated, for instance, as "نظف فروة رأسك، نظف فكرك".

Brands names and products are sometimes conveyed into Arabic in latin letters without any translation, e.g. Nivea Baby *مع أحلى*, Nivea Men Deep *غسول الوجه واللحية*, iPhone 12 *السرعة تتأهب لك*.

The use of transference technique in translating brands names and products tend to promote these products and make the target group get familiar with them. However, using this technique in translating certain words despite the existence of their equivalents in the Arabic language could hinder the comprehension process among the target group.

5.2 Literal translation

Vinay & Darbelnet define literal translation as "the direct transfer of a SL text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate text in which the translator's task is limited to observing the adherence to the linguistic servitude of the TL" (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, pp. 33-34).

Literal translation is widely used in translating websites' textual content. This could be explained by the need to preserve the original content of the website and share it with foreign customers. (e.g., how Nivea touches the planet *كيف تلمس* *أحصل على نصائح*, get tips from our experts on dealing with scalp problems *نيفيا الكون* *خبرائنا في التعامل مع مشاكل فروة الرأس*). The use of literal translation is not always effective and accurate and may sometimes distort the meaning and prevent the target customer from understanding the intended meaning.

5.3 Omission

The translator sometimes tends to leave out a SL item in the TL text. This technique is called omission or deletion. It is used to deal with items which might be shocking or contradictory to the norms and values prevailing in the target culture. For instance, in the English website of the American fast food chain “Subway” we find the “Black Forest Ham” sandwich. Yet, this product is not available in its Arabic website destined to Saudi Arabia. This is due to the fact that this sandwich is made of “ham” or “pig’s meat” and this latter is forbidden in the Islamic religion, therefore, this type of sandwich is omitted in the Arabic translation because it could be offending to the target Muslim public.

On the other hand, the expression “the Italian B.M.T sandwich is filled with Genoa salami, spicy pepperoni, and black forest ham” is translated into Arabic as follows “يصنع السندويتش من الخبز الطازج الغني بشرائح السلامي، والبيبروني، ولحم الديك الرومي المدخن”. We notice from this Arabic translation that the word “Genoa salami” is omitted and replaced by a more general word which is “salami سلامي”. This could be explained by the fact that the Arab public wouldn’t recognize this type of salami. Moreover, in this same expression, we notice that the word “Black Forest Ham” is omitted and replaced by another type of meat which is “لحم الديك الرومي المدخن” and which literally means “smoked turkey”.

Omission could also be explained by the availability of products from a region to another. For example, in the English version of “Head and Shoulders” website we find 25 types of men’s shampoo, but we find only 21 types in the Arabic version of the website.

5.4 Addition

The translator sometimes tends to add words or expressions in the TL text even if they do not exist in the SL text. For instance, the expression “سندويتش ب.م.ت إيطالية هو أفضل خيار للزبون الجائع” which literally means “Italian B.M.T sandwich is the best choice for a hungry client” does not exist in the English version of the “Subway” website. This expression could have been added for commercial purposes in order to make the product more attractive and appealing.

The addition technique could also be used to provide extra information about a given product. For instance, in the “iphone 12 Pro Max” description we find the expression “Ceramic shield delivers four times better drop performance”. This expression has been translated into Arabic as “حماية ceramic shield توفر واجهة”

”للجهاز أفضل بأربع مرات في حالة سقوطه”. The Arabic translation contains the word “واجهة” which means “screen” even if it does not exist in the original text. The addition of this word is intended to give further information to the potential Arab customer about what “ceramic shield” is.

6. CONCLUSION

Website translation is part of a broader field called “website localization” and consists in adapting the textual content of a website according to the specificities of a target public. The study of the Arabic translations of aforementioned marketing websites has concluded the following:

- Transference is used in translating brands names and products and intends to promote these products and get the target users and customers familiar with them.
- Literal translation is also used and aims at preserving the content of the original text.
- The translator tends sometimes to use the omission technique to deal with items that could be offending or contradictory to the norms and values prevailing in the target culture. Omission could also be explained by the difference of products availability from a region to another.
- The translator tends sometimes to add words or expression in the TL text even if they do not exist in the SL text, in order to provide further information about a certain product or to make this latter more attractive and appealing.

It should be noted that the techniques used in translating websites varies from a translator to another, from a client to another, and from a public to another. However, there is a tendency to preserve the original content to the website in order to promote the brands names and products since companies translate their websites form commercial and marketing purposes.

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