

WEBSITE LOCALIZATION: CURRENT AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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A large part of global communication is done with the help of the internet. One can hardly share information with the whole world using his/her local language only. Translating and adapting web content to particular languages makes the process of web localization. The translation itself is only a part of localization, which raises the question of the new role of translator in this developing sector.

Everyday millions of internet users deal with localized web content. We are safe to say that localized websites might represent the most-used translated texts in the world. Website localization differs from straight translation in the identification of translatable elements, tools and software needed, the way in which the translation process is prepared and managed and specific skills translator should possess. Web localization involves more complex processes, in addition to the common goals of translation. It can be defined as a complex communicative, cognitive, textual and technological process by which interactive multimedia web texts are modified in order to be used by a target audience whose language and sociocultural context are different from those of original production.

The goal of localization is to let internet users interact with the translated text data as if the content was directly created in their native language. Theoretically localized websites are to be received as “locally developed products” or look like they have been made in the country. In this type of translation, target users should be unaware that they are interacting with a translated text, and the adaptation to the linguistic and cultural expectations of the end user is of highest importance.

Each website page is subdivided into content text and interface text. Content text is all textual data that makes each website page a unique text storage unit. Interface text includes all textual segments whose function is to help users surf through a website structure. These textual segments include navigation menus, footers, search fields, etc. The analysis of multilingual websites localized into Ukrainian language showed that site structures are often fixed and translators involved in localization usually do not make any structural changes, even when some data might be irrelevant for the target users.

They do fully concentrate on the lexical component of translation regardless of target webpage layout. Emphasis is placed on the content text with little attention to website design and usability. As the result we can get unattractive websites with low usability level, no matter how accurate the translation is. Often such pages are not easy to navigate around and first-time users spend much effort to get the information they are searching for.

Therefore translators involved in website localization should meet more specific requirements and possess more specific skills not only in translation and linguistics but in the IT sphere as well. Have a look at the Facebook start page: the top of the page contains email and password input fields. We can see that the brief “*Email or Phone*” English message text was localized into huge “*Електронна скринька або Номер телефону*” in Ukrainian version of the site, considerably increasing the size of the text and breaking the design of input field borders. Such situation is caused by the fact that translators usually receive technical tasks and work with text only without regard to upcoming translated text location on the localized web page.

Website localization is still an underresearched area in Ukrainian translation. The issue of localizing foreign websites has not yet been granted the attention it deserves from both practical and theoretical perspective and should be brought to the forefront of translation studies. The research in this area may contribute to both the theoretical conceptualizing of web localization and practice of this interesting and ever-increasing phenomenon.

References

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