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Translating Websites

Content

1   Introduction

Translation is becoming increasingly important in our globalized world as a means of securing communication across languages and cultures. Technological advances and internationalization have contributed to the development of new fast, often short-lived and multilingual forms of internet communication. One of these new forms of international communication is website localization, which has been defined as adapting a product to a particular locale (Esselink 2001). Within the localization process, translation is regarded as only part of the process of, "modifying a website for a specific locale" (Yunker 2002:17) along with project management, image adaptation or setting up a language gateway and involving the cultural adaptation of texts and other documents like multimedia, graphics and other programs. Translating websites has been little discussed in the translation studies literature although it has been recognized as involving problems and decisions on a number of different translation levels (e.g. cultural adaptation, information sequencing of hypertext segments and language use). While considerable literature has been published on the topic from a computer linguistic perspective (e.g. Somers 2003), little has been written about the translation dimension. In particular, methodological proposals concerning the interdependence of the categories language material, non-linear text and cultural systems has been given little attention. This article suggests a strategy for translating websites on several dimensions, the integration of which will show the interdependence of a text and systems level, making the website process more systematic and transparent, less time-consuming and thus more economical. Proceeding from different text perspectives, three interrelated levels are identified on which translation decisions are made, i.e. (1) the holistic level on which decisions involving the entire website are made, e.g. cultural adaptations, (2) the hol-atomistic level, on which decisions involving the coherence and information sequencing decisions are made, e.g. adapting navigation paths in hypertext segments and (3) the atomistic level, on which decisions involving individual linguistic units, e.g. 'Netspeak' idiosyncracies are made. The translation methods (Aspectra, Relatra, Holontra) reflect these text perspectives and allow for an integrated methodological sequence of translating, which is adapted for localization

purposes. All three levels are interrelated and need to be considered in their interrelationship when translating websites. This is shown with a sample website localization which will illustrate the suggested methodology.

2   Problem Statement

Major problems when translating websites seem to be the following questions: How can the interplay of continuous text, multimedia elements as well as interactive items be made transparent for translation purposes? Where do we start when translating a website? How do we make text segments 'fit together' as a whole text. How to we handle the non-linearity of the highly complex hypertext? In his article 'Jigsaw Translation', Schubert talks about the problem of coherence in dynamic websites. When translating a website, therefore, in addition to the usual complex of translation problems, these elements account for additional problems and make the question of which elements need to be translated in which order particularly relevant. These questions have remained unanswered today and have made translating websites a field that stresses its technological aspects and is not integrated into the field of translation, its research paradigms and has thus not profited from its advances and progresses.

The lack of a systematized transparent translation procedure can lead to ineffective advertising strategies. On the Chinese Swarovsky website wedding jewelry is advertised for with white wedding outfits. Unless defined by a specific marketing strategy, the localizer was not aware of the fact that in the Chinese culture white is not associated with weddings.

Thus, the problem when translating websites is the rendering of highly cultural specific content, which so far has been dealt with predominantly in an intuitive way, This often can lead to cultural specific blunders, failing to evoke the intended effect within the target culture.

The objective is to develop a method for translating websites by systematizing the whole process and thereby eliminating potential culture specific blunders from the very beginning, making the localizing process more systematic and transparent, less time-consuming and thus more economical. It is assumed that by clarifying the relation between localization and translation potential cultural gaps can be bridged systematically, the localizing process can be made more systematic and transparent (repeatable) and therefore less time-consuming and thus more economical.

Within this framework of rendering a website for a target culture (holistic perspective), other translation problems arise, i.e. the challenge to create coherence within a website (hol-atomistic perspective), which is obviously closely linked to the overall holistic concept of a website as well as to atomistic textual problems.
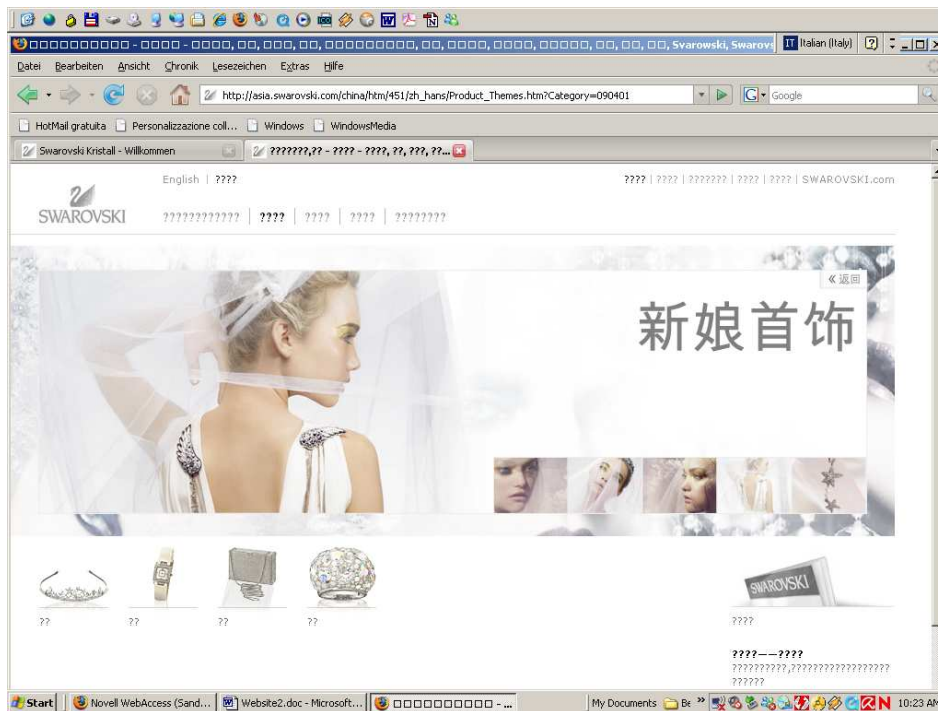
Fig. 1:   *Chinese website of the Swarovski Crystal Online AG (wedding jewelry)*[1]

3   Data & Literature

It is interesting that some of the answers to these questions come from practice. Mario De Bortoli and Fabio Minazzi pointed out that "(…) the localization process of commercial communication has to start at campaign concept level" (De Bortoli & Minazzi 2007, 16), thus underlining the importance that website localization needs to start from a holistic cultural point of view.

Moreover, they suggest that multimedia and media-rich contents on websites do not constitute a simple assembly of elements, but are a "combination of contents with complex cross-references and functional relationship" (De Bortoli & Minazzi 2007: 7). This emphasizes the significance of a strategy, a step-by-step schedule which stipulates the interdependencies and the resulting order in which the individual website elements should be localized.

Experts in website localization (Esselink 2000, Oldenburg 2000, Yunker 2002, Sandrini 2005 and forthcoming) have described the multifaceted aspects of localization. So far, however, no systematic procedure exists for translating websites which has led to the situation today that websites are rarely considered an object of translation. The translator is rarely involved in the overall process, thus translating sole text material without the context. Web design decisions, implying cultural background knowledge, are often left to advertising companies.

This leads to the question of how the concepts of translation and localization are related to each other.

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[1] http://asia.swarovski.com/china/htm/451/zh_hans/Product_Themes.htm?Category=090401

4 Projecting a Strategy for Translating Websites

4.1 Theoretical Foundations

Before embarking on this project, the notions of translation and localization need to be defined against each other. In literature, localization is dominantly defined as including translation as a part of the whole localization process. Bert Esselink's defines localization as follows: "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 (…)" (Esselink 2000: 4). This leads to a superordinated relationship with Translation being subordinated to Localization (Fig. 2).
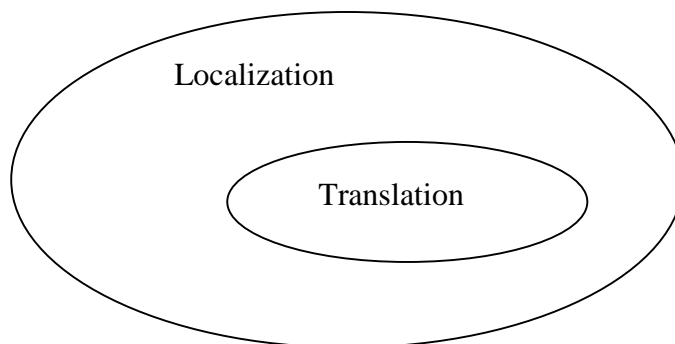

Fig. 2: superordinated relationship between Localization and Translation

Anthony Pym contradicts this development critisizing that the translator's role within the localization process is often reduced to that of replacing natural-language strings. He cites Nida's concept of "dynamic equivalence" which covers also cultural adaptations to prove that translation theory, contrarily to what the localization industry wants us make believe, has been moving in the opposite direction and that cross-cultural communication requires more than the lexical and grammatical replacement of natural-language strings

   According to Lyons (1977) sense relations, and referring to a narrow definition of translation, translation and localization are interrelated concepts which share the features of transfer, but with each field having at least one feature of its own. For instance, translation includes the translation of literature, which is not relevant to localization. Localization includes the technical components and the internationalization process which are not necessarily included in translation. As a result, translation and localization are not superordinated (as stated in literature so far), but constitute an intersection of concepts (Fig. 3).
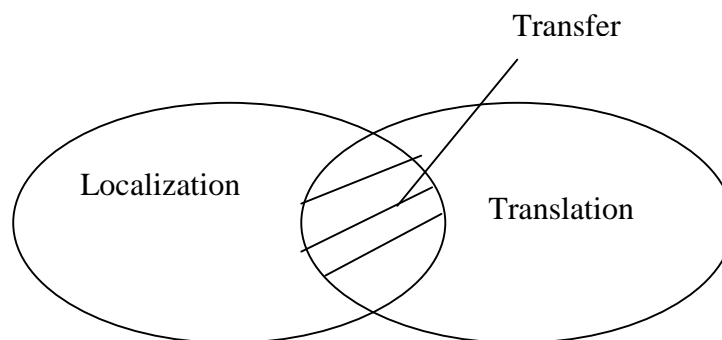
Transfer

Localization

Translation

Fig. 3:   intersection of the concepts Localization - Translation

If we take a wider definition of translation, which includes multimedia integration and hypertext, localization can be included in Translation, meaning that translation is as "source material, e.g. knowledge or text (in its widest sense) to be transferred to another material, e.g. another knowledge (system) or text (in its widest sense), irrespective of whether the translated product is in the same (national) language or not, written, spoken or signed, in linear or non-linear form, technology-driven and multimedia-supported or not (Gerzymisch-Arbogast 2007b: 3), then localization can be seen as a type of Multidimensional Translation (Fig. 4).

Considering localization a type of Multidimensional Translation makes it possible to apply translation theories and methodologies to localization. Applying translation methodologies to localization would mean that it is possible to develop a step-by-step procedure to localize websites.
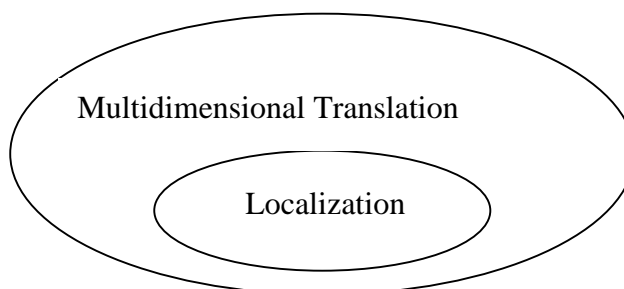
Multidimensional Translation

Localization

Fig. 4:   Localization as a type of Multidimensional Translation

4.2   Website Translation by Text Perspectives

Against the background of translation methodologies, the localization of websites can be seen from three perspectives (atomistic, holistic and hol-atomistic) and the interrelated translation methods of Aspectra, Holontra and Relatra (Gerzymisch-Arbogast & Mudersbach 1998). The translation methods allow for an integrated methodological sequence of translating, which is adapted for localization purposes. The three methods share the same conditions and include each a series of five steps (Tab. 1).

	atomistic perspective ASPECTRA	**holistic perspective HOLONTRA**	**hol-atomistic perspective RELATRA**
conditions	source (text) material and additional information (purpose of translation etc.)		
concern	identification and translation of individual characteristics of a text	identification and translation of holistic structures in a text	identification and translation of relations in a text
series of steps	1) reading of ST and registration of text specific features 2) abstraction of text specific features into aspects 3) correlation of text specific features – aspects 4) hierarchical order of aspects and values	1) reading of text for text coherence and holistic ideas 2) formulation of holistic conceptual structure as holons 3) correlation of textual occurrence-holemes 4) hierarchical order of holon	1) reading of text and reformulation of utterances into relations 2) description of text inherit linear structure of relations 3) formation of synchron-optical network 4) hierarchical order of relations
result	5) apective matrix	5) holistic structure	5) relational network

Tab. 1: 3 textual perspectives & 3 translation methods[2]

With the help of Eco's coffee example in *Experiences in translation* (2001: 18) the three text perspectives shall be demonstrated. It shall be premised that coffee is a highly cultural specific product and therefore needs to be rendered accordingly within the different locales. Eco approaches the question as follows:

> "Consider these two sentences, one from an Italian novel, the other from an American one: 'Ordinai un caffé, lo buttai giù in un secondo ed uscii dal bar' (literally, 'I ordered a coffee, swilled it down in a second and went out of the bar'); and 'He spent half an hour with the cup in his hands, sipping his coffee and thinking of Mary'".

Eco argues that culture cannot be translated because

> "The first sentence can only refer to an Italian coffee and to an Italian bar, since an American coffee cannot be swallowed in a second both because of its quantity and of its temperature. The second sentence cannot refer to an Italian subject (…) because it presupposes a large cup containing what seems like gallons of coffee" (Eco 2001: 18).

Applying the three text perspectives, the given example can be translated[3]:

(1) from the holistic dimension, i.e. the implied cultural knowledge dimension of how coffee is consumed in different settings and societies reflecting cultural values (the holistic perspective looks at holistic 'Gestalt' phenomena, implied background knowledge, cultural attitudes and values in a text),

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[2] cf Gerzymisch-Arbogast & Mudersbach 1998
[3] cf Geryzmisch-Arbogast 2007a

(2) from a componential perspective: we can look at coffee in its substance, as instant coffee and/or espresso (the atomistic perspective views only individual components of a text put together to form the structure of a text),

(3) from a pattern perspective we can look at the collocation of 'coffee', i.e. 'swilled it down' versus 'sipping his coffee and thinking of Mary, which would tell us whether to render 'instant' or 'espresso' (the hol-atomistic perspective mediates between the atomistic and holistic perspectives).

This holistic perspective is implied, but is interrelated with the other perspectives. The translation therefore, could possibly reflect only one or all three perspectives depending on which perspective is chosen for the individual translator within the framework of a set translation purpose.

Fig. 5:   international Nescafé homepage (www.nescafe.com)

5   Application: Example of Nescafé

The application of the three text perspectives shall be shown with the example of the Nescafé website, part of the Trademark of Société des Produits Nestlé S.A.

5.1   Holistic perspective

The red color chosen for presenting the Nescafé website constitutes one holistic dimension. It can be assumed that this correlates with the coffee's function of being stimulating[4]. This holds true for the international dot com website (www.nescafe.com, Fig. 5) as well as for many local websites, i.e. in Western countries as USA, Italy, Germany, France and Switzerland, but also countries like China, Ecuador and Chile.

The holistic dimension of the choice of color in relation to the product Nescafé (red = stimulating) varies on some local websites because of the different functions that coffee fulfills in different cultures. It is interesting to notice that the Bulgarian website (Fig. 6) is designed in brown instead of red, which might be explained by its communist historical background. Quite different from all the other websites results that of the United Kingdom

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[4] http://www.barrierefrei-portal.de/sub/de/barrierefrei_planen/ausbau/farbe_material/farbe_eindruck/

(Fig. 7). The color red remains as a frame, but the core of the website is designed with relaxing pastel colors, conveying a dream world of coffee. It may be assumed that coffee has a different function in the UK.

The choice of color in order to attribute the function of stimulation to the product constitutes the holistic perspective, since it looks at holistic 'Gestalt' phenomena, implying background knowledge and cultural attitudes in a text. In fact, in Bulgaria the red color will not be rendered, but substituted by the color brown. This lies in the fact that color evokes different connotations in different cultures. In the case of the Bulgarian website, the holistic view of color has two dimensions: firstly, interpreting red as stimulation, and secondly, red
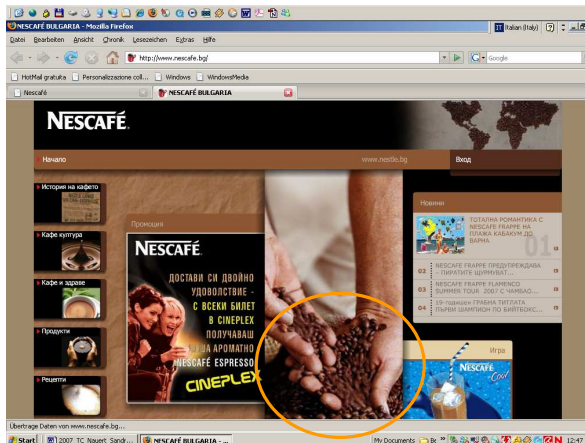

Fig. 6: Bulgarian Nescafé homepage
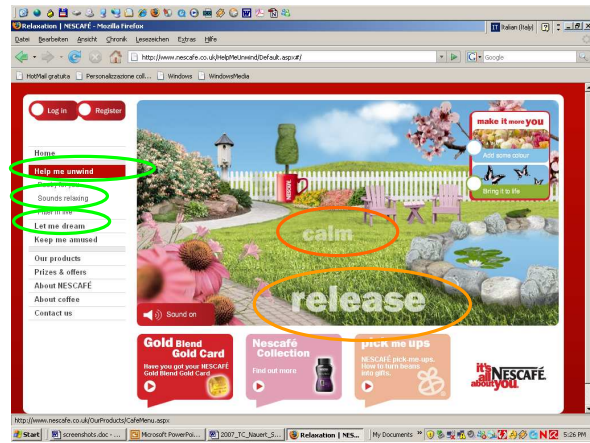*(www.nescafe.bg)*

Fig. 7: Nescafé website for United Kingdom
(www.nescafe.co.uk/HelpMeUnwind)

evoking the connotation of communism. These considerations on a holistic level are vital when translating a website and will effect on other levels of the website.

5.2 Atomistic perspective

The effects of the holistic choice of color on an atomistic level can be shown by the choice of expression on a word level. In tune with the red design of the Swiss Nescafé website, evoking stimulation, appears the choice of words and expressions to advertise the product. One of the slogans on the homepage is "1 kräftiges Aroma – 1 lebhaftes Gespräch" ("strong flavor – lively talk") (Fig. 8). Another example appears under the menu item "Produkte" ("Products"): "1 morgendlicher Kick – 1 hellwacher Tag" ("morning kick – dynamic day") (Fig. 9). These expressions reflect the idea of stimulation. The atomistic examples are circled in orange/yellow.

In contrast to the Swiss website stands that of the United Kingdom with its pastel color design. According to the idea of coffee helping to relax and dream expressed by the choice of color, appears the choice of word expressions. Within the menu item "Help me unwind", which talks for itself already, we find expressions like "calm" and "release" (Fig. 7).

Not only text, but also the choice of images is affected by the holistic choice of color. In tune with the idea of stimulation (red color), the Swiss website shows an image of a young and dynamic woman, doing exercise (Fig. 9). In contrast to that again stands the UK website, which shows a flower garden which invites to relax, thus reflecting the function of the choice of pastel colors (relax, dream) (Fig. 7). The different choice of color (brown = the color of coffee beans and of the beverage itself) implies different choices on the overall design, thus on the images: on most web pages, we find coffee cups or coffee beans (Fig. 6).
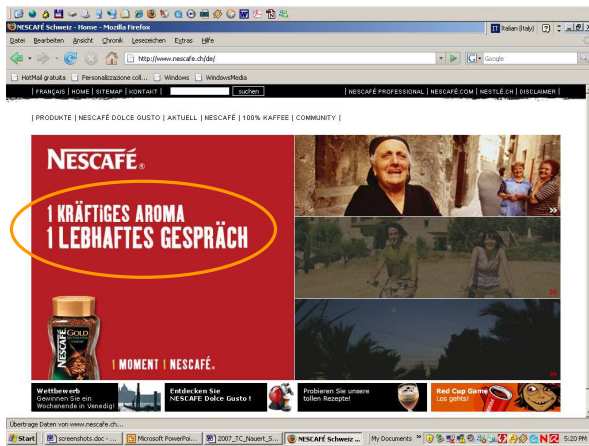
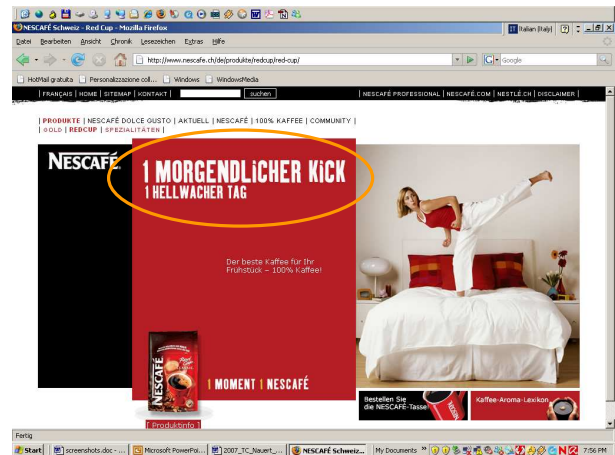*Fig. 8: Swiss Nescafé homepage (www.nescafe.ch)*

*Fig. 9: Swiss Nescafé website
(www.nescafe.ch/de/produkte/redcup/red-cup)*

5.3   Hol-atomistic perspective

The hol-atomistic perspective mediates between the holistic and the atomistic perspectives and is therefore affected as well. The choices on a holistic as well as on an atomistic level are obviously reflected on the menu bar, which is a hol-atomistic level since it gives us the pattern of the information. Comparing the menu bar of the dot com website (Fig. 5) and that of the United Kingdom (Fig. 7), great differences can be noticed: the menu bar of the United Kingdom reflects the holistic idea of coffee being a product helping to relax and dream on the one hand, and on the other hand it reflects word choices from the atomistic perspective: "Help me unwind", "Sounds relaxing", "Let me dream" are menu items in tune with the atomistic and holistic dimension. The examples are evidenced with green circles in the respective figures.

6   Concluding Remarks

The integration of localization into the complex of translation allows for the application of translation theories and methodologies to localization and thus for developing a step-by-step procedure to localize websites. It has been shown that different text perspectives help to address the problems of translation systematically, since they are all interrelated. The added value for the localization of websites with these three perspectives is that a systematic order might be set up in which these website dimensions can be analyzed and translated. Premising the central significance of the cultural component when translating a website, the aim is to develop a holon (holistic cultural system in this case) for each culture. With the help of these cultural systems, translational problems on the hol-atomistic and atomistic level may be solved as well, since they are all interdependent.

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