# THE ELEMENTS OF THE WEBSITE LOCALIZATION PROCESS

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*Abstrac*t

This paper deals with the components of websites in general, with regard to the localization process. Steps to be taken in the localization process are also considered. One important component of the localization process in the case of the commercial websites from the perspective of the would-be localizer translators is the instrumental translation. The localizer must often be aware of the social and economic conditions of the target locale.

**Keywords: localization, website localization**

The components of a website are interconnected and all of them contribute to the success of the website. For this paper I will look at the typical parts of a commercial website.

First of all, a web site is composed of **front end elements** and **back end elements**. Front end is what the website visitor sees or the website interface, while the back end is what goes behind the scenes.

**Front end** includes:

- **The domain name** represents the very first contact of the visitor with the website. The domain name should be easy to remember and it can be turned into the brand of the site. Domain names should be short and easy to spell, contain keywords or popular search terms.
- **The logo.** I have already shown the importance of the logo for branding. The logo bears a multitude of meanings and it is the most important non-textual element. The logo is placed on all pages in the same place, usually in the top-left corner.
- **The navigation structure** is like the contents of a book. It helps the user to quickly go from one page to another. It determines the hierarchy of the pages (main pages, subpages, sub-subpages). The navigation structure is represented on a site one or several navigation menus.
- **Page layout** refers to how text and non-text elements appear on the webpage**.** For instance the navigation menu can be placed at the top, at the side or both at the top and side. When there is content under the fold as well, it is common to use a third navigation menu at the bottom of the page as well. Other layout features include delimitation of titles and subtitles, taking into account the reading patterns of visitors, determining the percentage of non-text elements versus text, consistency of layout design all over the website, etc. Usually, there is a layout design for the main page design and a layout template for all of the other pages.
- **Content** is made up by text and non-text.

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- The quality of the **text** into achieving a certain language function is imperative in getting and keeping returning visitors. The text should contain keywords or popular search terms and equivalent expressions such as synonyms, elaborate sentences explaining those keywords, antonyms and antonymic constructions ("… *avoid* buying cheap cell phones")
- **Graphic elements.** Backgrounds, images, delimiting lines, navigation bars, buttons, animations, videos, etc. are all very common on modern websites.

All these front end components are important for the localizer as each of them (except for the logo) may need to be changed for a successful localization.

**Back end elements** are a way of making websites dynamic and interesting for the visitors by providing more interactivity, quicker access to information (by adding a search box for instance), allowing retrieval of personalized information based on user input, allowing user to contribute content, etc. Next I look at the most important back end components:

- **Content Management System (CMS)** allows updating content without changing programming code. A good CMS allows the administrator of the site to preview the updated content prior to pushing it live, update any pages of the website from "contact us" and "about us" pages to informational pages, creation and adding of new pages in various areas of the website, or removing pages (in the case of products on sale, new pages must be created while for old products pages must be deleted.) The CMS, as already mentioned previously, is an important tool for the localizer due to its features that allow control over the localized content.
- **Newsletters** are an important way of communicating novel information about the website or products on sale, discounts etc. The job of the localizer is to localize the content of the original newsletter. It may often be the case that newsletters are conceived directly in the target language by local marketers.
- **Website analytics software**. I have previously mentioned its importance to the economics of efficient website localization

Other website components with little impact on the localizing process:

- **E-commerce functionality.** Although there are items that are prone to localization, if the CMS is done correctly the localizer needs not worry about changing currency symbols or using dot or comma for delimiting digits of prices (1,23 vs. 1.23). The system will automatically display the correct currency symbol based on the location of the potential buyer and, as shown previously pricing policy is separate from the information about a product. All of the features specific to a certain locale will be already set up in the database (DB) and specific information retrieved accordingly (information on VAT, customs taxes, delivery etc.)
- **Site Search.** Results will be displayed according to the locale of the user. A product that is on sale only in the US will not be displayed in Romania as well. And



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searches will be processed only based on the language of the visitor, content already localized through the CMS.

- **Blog feature** or testimonials page or feedback pages are very common but the role of a localizer would be that of a censor only, that is, to eliminate bad language, because everything would be in the language/culture of the targeted buyers. Modern systems can automatically disallow bad language.
- **Client support** in the form of live chat room or through email. Information from these interactions can further help in localizing. For instance, if the description about a feature of a product is not clear the localizer can operate changes in the CMS.
- **Referral forms and social networks** are used for viral marketing. These are a form of measuring success of the site in general and of the localization process in particular.
- **Online databases** allow storing large amounts of information. They store information such as product information, comments, testimonials, feedback, specifics of a certain locale, stocks, pricing policies etc.
- **Downloadable files** are useful in the case of user manuals, quick tips, new feature highlights, etc. Often these are replaced or accompanied by **multimedia files**. These may be either localized or created from scratch for the target locale.
- **Security** is very important as there is a large amount of data that is confidential: client credit card numbers, trade secrets, proprietary programming, etc.

Because content is the primary part of a website to be localized, next I will look at the instrumental translation as the most appropriate way of translating websites.

**Instrumental translation**

Nord differentiates between two main types of translation: **documentary** and **instrumental** translation. Nord defines documentary translation as a "type of translation process which aims at producing in the TL a kind of document of (certain aspects of) a communicative interaction in which a source-culture sender communicates with a source-culture audience via the ST under source-culture conditions. (Nord, 1997: 138)

In web localization documentary translation is used for product features and specifications, "about us" and "contact us" and other pages alike. If the branch in the target economic area is separate from the headquarters the instrumental approach would be more appropriate as the information contained will be specific. (different address, different contact details, etc.)

**Instrumental translation** is defined as a "type of translation process which aims at producing in the TL an instrument for a new communicative interaction between the source-culture sender and a target-culture audience, using (certain aspects of) the ST as a model." (Nord, 1997: 139)



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Nord further differentiates between equifunctional translation (e.g. instructions for use), heterofunctional translation (e.g. Gulliver's Travels for children) and homologous translation (e.g. poetry translated by a poet) as forms of instrumental translation (see Nord, 1997: 47-52).

The equifunctional translation is used on websites in cases such as product manuals. The heterofunctional translation in commercial website localization may primarily be used if the target market based on age is changed from one market to the other. This is not the case as a website will already have adapted its source content to various age groups; hence the localizer will localize that content. Physical products may be built modularly and have simpler modules for children for example and more advanced modules and features for adults. An even better example is of a modular product, aimed at various age groups, and may be that of an image editing software. For children, there may be fewer buttons and controls.

Most webpages, however, will require a homologuos translation approach as the content must be localized entirely to the targeted locale and include popular search terms, all to convince buyers the target market to buy. Many of the webpages will be composed as advertisement pages, and advertisements are like translating poetry by a poet, that is, translating ads by an advertiser.

The role of instrumental translation is to work as a communication act in its own right, functioning independently of the source text, and the outcome, the translation as a product, is assessed based on how the communicated message performs.

In my opinion instrumental translation is to a great extent the equivalent of copywriting. **Copywriting** is ("the art and science of writing words to promote a product, a business, a person or an idea; and carefully selecting, editing, weaving and constructing those words in a way that they'll persuade the reader into taking a specific and measurable action"[2]). Copywriting for commercial websites is similar to Nord's homologuos instrumental translation localization. Both processes are based on the same directions from the website owner (same subject matter- see above, which may come under the form of a text or popular search terms to be included - which define the subject matter), and the stress is on the receiver of the message, whose response can be assessed. Also, the difference between a copywriter and a translator is that while the translator has to be proficient in both the SL and the TL the copywriter needs excellent language and cultural skills only in the TL (usually his/her mother tongue)

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