TRANSLATING FOR THE WEB

(The Keyword Oriented Translation Process)

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Abstract

The paper will discuss the processes of translating texts typical to nowadays websites from the source context of the initial language-culture pair to the target contexts of language-culture junction. Examples include multilingual websites in English, German, French, and Romanian.

Globalization and the development of online business, which imply providing products and services in the mother tongue of the potential buyers, has lead in recent years to the need of developing multilingual websites.

We will study the translation theories employed by the translators in the process of transferring the original message of the website into the target language-culture pair. Also this research will reveal the best translation practices considering the limitations and the opportunities that derive from the reality of the current internet means, including but not limited to technical issues such as web search engines, geo-political factors such as globalization, online business development, especially the development of cross border sales and service providing.

The novelty of the approach is that the translation process is a continuous process, in the sense that the translator has to adjust the text to the requirements of the search engines and to the search queries of the user of the search engines in order to accommodate the offer to the request.

In recent years, with the booming of cross border online sales, companies have understood the need to approach potential clients in their own language, the same way as they would do in a multilingual environment in the real world. English as "lingua franca" and the „cultural imperialism" (Schiller, 1976) fade away when „the buyer is always right" and when one of the main commandments in sales is that you should speak the language of the client (Payne, 2005). Although it is the era of globalization and it should be favourable to corporatist

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culture, the global environment is multilingual; hence every company that goes global with their business needs to comply with the necessity of using the clients' language when addressing them with offers.

Conducting an online business has its advantages and disadvantages, yet it seems that it appeals both to online business owners and clients according to studies published on the internet (Lööf, 2008), although it has seen a slight contraction over the last year, in conjunction with the current state of the global economy. Yet, many online businesses fail in getting across their message efficiently, due to deficient translation of the source materials into the target language-culture conjunction.

The research will focus on studying the methods employed by translators in communicating the right message in different languages according to the specifics of the cultural frame, technical limitations (according to major search engines such as Google and Yahoo), and most importantly, in correlation with the queries of the search engine users the most appropriate word to be used in the translating process. This gives translation studies a new dimension, as the translation becomes an interactive and ongoing approach, in which the translator has to focus on what is in demand and enclose the terms that are used by the potential clients themselves, in order to come forward and meet their expectations, and in technical terms to rank high in search engine results pages (SERPs). This approach could be called *keyword equivalence*, as a combination of the *Skopos theory* (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984), the pragmatic approach (Baker, 1992) and Nord's translation-oriented approach (1997). With this approach is very important during the translation process to "guess" how the users think. This involves in the translation process many issues: synonymy, hyponymy, connotation, collocations, pragmatic contexts, implicature, presuppositions, Griece's maxims, text type (Reiss, 1971), and more. For instance, if we consider English (ST) and Romanian (TT) the translator should decide for *free games* between *jocuri gratuite* and *jocuri gratis* as the main keyword collocation. Yet, a good practice is to use both in the translation, and according to the Google keyword suggestion tool(https://adwords.google.com) he/she should also use a quasi-adopted equivalent, *jocuri free,* to cover all the terms used by searchers. Still, the translator in the process of translating becomes a copywriter in the target language-culture pair and he /she has to follow certain rules of copywriting (Strouchliak, 2009).

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Further examples with keyword equivalence for Romanian-German-French:

Free games →

Ro. jocuri gratis 550.000 vs. jocuri gratuite 110.000 vs. jocuri free 110.000

Ger. kostenlose spiele 1.000.000 vs. gratis spiele 450.000 vs.

freegames 673.000 vs. freeware spiele 60.500 vs. freegames spiele 1.600

Fr. jeux gratuit 6.120.000 vs. jeux gratuits 5.000.000 vs. jeux gratiut18.100

Shooter games →

jocuri impuscaturi 90.500 vs. jocuri shooting 590

Fun games →

jocuri distractive 27.100 vs. jocuri haioase 18.100 vs. jocuri amuzante 60.500

vs. jocuri fun 5.400

Online games/on line games →

jocuri online 823.000 vs. jocuri on line 49.500

vs. jocuri pe net 8.100 vs. Jocuri net 18.100

Full games →

jocuri full 60.500 vs. jocuri ful 4.400 vs. jocuri complete 390

But translating for the web specifically involves some extra processes to take into account. Translating for the web is:

- **a continuous process**: the source text is adopted to meet with the searches of the web searchers, and the target text has to be rewritten periodically to reflect both the changes in the source text and in the source language context(especially source language searches in the source language)

- **interactive:** the translator influences through the text the readers, and the readers influence the translator through their searches

- **keyword based:** keywords are important in predetermine the communication process

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- **context based:** context is determined by the keywords used in the search engine

- **spelling:** often words may be misspelled, so the translator could target those commonly misspelled words to target a certain audience

- **negotiated signifiers** and **negotiated contexts:** these are tightly linked with the interactivity on websites, determined by web searches in search engines

The translation process for the web could be represented in the following scheme:

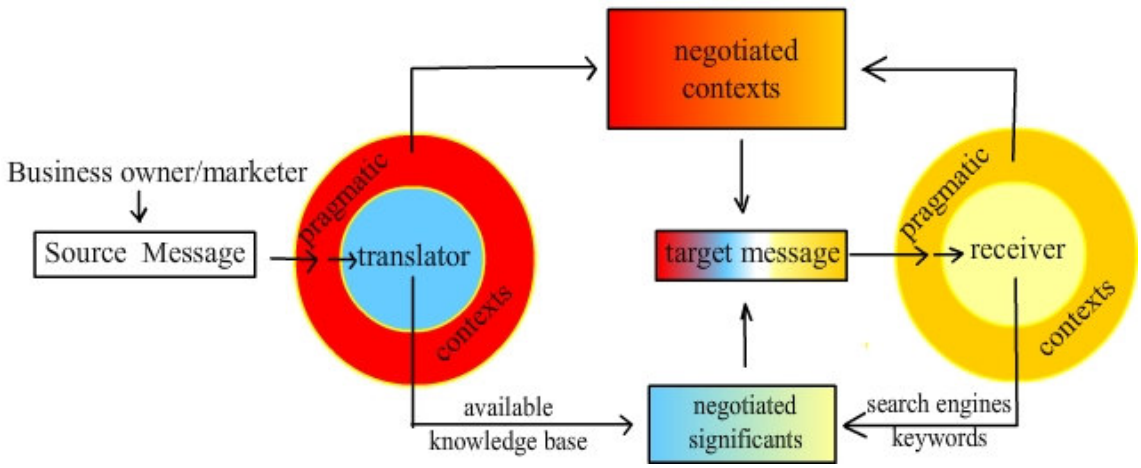


Fig.1 the interactive, keyword oriented translation process

Language, more than ever is subjected to changes, as it shapes to the needs of those who speak it. Source texts, usually in the language of a dominant culture tend to influence more the target "minor" languages. However, the process of translating is no longer dependent on the translator(s) alone but also on the receiver of the translated text. The beneficiary of the translated information "dictates" what significant and what contexts should be used in the process of conveying the message into meaningful bits, even if misspelt or grammatically incorrect. So the translator needs to cover a gap between the source message and the receiver of the message who is dependent on certain pragmatic contexts, contexts which are to some extent known to the translator with the help of search engine tools. The translator should no longer have a prescriptive role in translating, in terms of correctness at word level, but should use terms used by searchers. Still, at all the other levels probably the message should be as close to the source message as possible, especially that the translator turns into a copywriter.

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In the view of the realities of the web today, the web as a business tool and information resource, including educating clients, it is important to find a hybrid method of translation of multilingual websites so that the gap in the business to client and business to business relation is covered as much as possible by observing both sides, the offer of a product or a service on one hand and that of the potential client on the other. And there is a mutual understanding between the two sides as the seller is interested in generating big sales and the buyer is interested in finding fast what he/she is looking for. The research engine aware translator can be a catalyst in the process by adopting an appropriate translation method, and helping in the development of non-invasive message communication. Non-invasive refers to delivering to the user of search engines real information and in the appropriate contexts, contexts dependent on the semantic web system (Adsense).

Translating websites must be a continuous process. The same way as the source website changes to adjust to the requirements of the searchers, the translation of the target website has to comply with the requests of the speakers of the language of the target website. The web is dynamic and so should the translation process be, as the web has turned into what is called *Semantic Web* (term coined by Tim Berners-Lee in 1999) and then into *Pragmatic Web* since around 2005(de Moor, 2005), meaning and communication is context dependent.

It would help to further develop the semantic web especially in the target language. The English language semantic/pragmatic web is relatively well established, but this cannot be stated about Romanian or Hungarian, which are less important in terms of number of speakers, so search engine oriented translation could improve the web in the target languages.

The efficiency of the translated messages can be measured and analyzed with statistics tools such as Google Analytics. All collected data will be saved to a database for later analysis.

A balance should be found between the search engine friendly translation and the recipient friendly translation. This approach can be used effectively on real, dynamic websites. However data validity may depend on the numbers of visitors to a certain version of a site. But assuming that all the versions of a given multilingual site are analysed, findings can show if the translation is accurate or not, and to what extent. Results may be impaired by the fact that for instance the search engines for dominant languages are more refined and more accurate, while those for Romanian or Finish are more or less underdeveloped.

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