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Localisation as a new type of translation: A case study

ABSTRACT

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Localisation is a concept used mostly in marketing to denote a process of adapting a new product to a specific country or region. The practice of localisation is very closely related to the phenomenon of internationalisation, globalisation and economies of scale. Analogically to the idea of achieving equivalence in translation, a product that has been localised properly is claimed to have the look and feel of a product originally designed and created for that target market. The present study is based on a contrastive analysis of linguistically and regionally localised Kaspersky's Lab websites with particular attention paid to the descriptions of its products. Its aim is to trace major differences between localisation and translation techniques.

Keywords: localisation, translation, transcreation, cultural differences.

Introduction

Translation is a very complex and multi-faceted phenomenon which can be approached from a number of angles. In a nutshell, translation (or the practice of translation) is a set of actions performed by the translator while rendering the source (or original) text (ST) into another language. In the process, the translator enables an exchange of information between the users of different languages by producing in the target language (TL or the translating language) a text which has an approximately identical communicative value with the source (or original) text (ST) (Puchała-Ladzińska 2014: 153).

In a broader sense, translation can be understood as a means of not only interlingual, but also intercultural and intermarket communication. The last of these adjectives implies that translation can also refer to transfers of meaning

between culture-specific marketplaces where a new product is being introduced and whose consumers must be acquainted and familiarised with it. This leads to the ever-increasing need for localisation which has become one of the main areas of interest within the field of translation studies (Baker & Malmkjaer 2005, Baker 2009).

Localisation is a concept used mainly in marketing to denote a process of adapting a product, whose description has been previously translated into different languages, to a specific country or region (Esselink 2000, Esselink 2006, Crespo 2013, Bąk 2015). Localisation has been developing as a response to the demands of global marketing and economic phenomena such as internationalisation, standardisation or economies of scale (Ning & Yifeng 2008). It is especially used with reference to new technologies for which global market, such as the Internet (World Wide Web), has become a natural environment.

On the other hand, nowadays more and more companies which previously focused on protected domestic markets are venturing into foreign territories, creating new sources of competition, often targeted to price-sensitive market segments. Consequently, this generates a demand for a new type of translation – localisation – which becomes imperative for large global companies, whose international revenues often exceed fifty percent of their total turnover. They often need to launch marketing campaigns of their products that are specifically tailored to the needs and requirements of local customers. This process not only involves an elaboration of new versions of existing products, but also generates a need for new translations based on cultural readjustments and local market preferences. The resulting innovative terms can be treated as linguistic adaptations and word-for-word translation is replaced by product translation where particularities of specific markets are of primary importance.

To sum up, localisation involves a comprehensive study of the target culture in order to correctly adapt the product to local needs.[1] According to Chandler (2008: 48), the localisation process is most generally related to the cultural adaptation and transcreation of software, video games and websites, as well as audio/voiceover, video or other multimedia content, and less frequently to any written translation (which may also involve cultural adaptation processes).[2] Localisation

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1| Pym (2004: 1) claims that localisation processes seemingly offer little that is radically different from a dynamic view of translation practices. In reality, however, localisation processes are based on a substantially new view of cross-cultural communication. Pym argues that localisation has the power to influence the development of languages and cultures.

2| Transcreation is a term describing a process of creative translation used chiefly by advertising and marketing professionals to refer to adapting a message from one language to another, while maintaining its original intent, style, tone and context (Baker & Malmkjaer 2005: 248). On the issue of localisation of video games see Bernal-Merino (2015).

can be done for regions or countries where people speak different languages or where the same language is spoken. For instance, different varieties of Spanish with differences in all levels of linguistic structure – including lexis, grammar, style and pragmatics – are spoken in Spain and in South America (Lipski 1994: 212). Likewise, word choices and idioms may vary even among countries which share a common language. In the following sections, examples of localisation based on the multilingual data extracted from the Kapersky Lab's international websites will be analysed.

Kaspersky Lab and software localisation

As stated on its website, Kaspersky Lab (Лаборатория Касперского) is a global company with local offices registered in 30 countries. The company is a good example of internationalisation processes in business. Its products are sold on more than 200 national and territorial markets worldwide. The international group is headquartered in Moscow, Russia and it ranks fourth in the global ranking of antivirus vendors. It is especially focused on large enterprises, and small and medium-sized businesses. Increased globalisation has presented Kaspersky Lab with huge opportunities to expand into new markets and the Internet has drastically lowered the barriers to entry, leaving the language barrier as the main obstacle. These characteristics make Kasperky Lab a good example of a company heavily dependent on language localisation. It also seems fairly justified to believe that this technique of communicating with clients has become one of the most treasured assets of the multinational corporation.

Kaspersky Lab's main website is in English.[3] The fact shows that this primarily Russian company treats English as its main language and this confirms the global supremacy of English in business. Another conclusion which can be drawn in these circumstances is that English should be treated as the source language in which the majority of products are described and by means of which communication with the potential customer takes place. The source language becomes a matrix for the numerous national target versions. The system is flexible enough, however, to allow for occasional inputs from languages other than English, for example Russian, but these will immediately be converted into English, still remaining its core component, and subsequently transferred into national languages.

It must be stressed that the whole process of language transfer used by Kaspersky Lab in communicating with its clients cannot be described as *reproductive translation*, but it should be referred to as *creative localisation* instead. Notice that although Kaspersky Lab's main website is in English, the national versions

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3| The website www.kaspersky.com functions as a default address for the whole group. Kaspersky Lab refers to it as 'our global website'.

are not its identical copies, but they constitute independent sites with distinctive features and dynamics of their own. Another trait typical of localisation, as opposed to parallel translation, is that the national sites are accessed not by clicking on a flag representing a particular language or a country, but by choosing one of five regions and finding a desired country within the group. In this way, the customer is redirected to the market s/he makes part of. The national and territorial websites seem to be quite independent as far as format and content they display are concerned.

Adhering to the localisation principle which says that communicating in your target market's everyday language is the key to achieving commercial success, the company allows its customers to choose not only a country, but also a language of their preference. That is why some countries are listed twice in two different language categories or sometimes two or more countries are grouped together. Where a user lives does not necessarily determine their native language. For example, 'Nederland & België' represent one target market and 'Belgique & Luxembourg' another one, while Switzerland belongs simultaneously to three different markets with three differently customised websites. This is also the reason why there are as many as fifteen websites in English. These are marked as: Canada, United States, Caribbean, UK & Ireland, Finland, Middle East, Africa, Australia, India, New Zealand, Oceania, South-East Asia, Indonesia, Philippines, Asia Pacific.

All of the national or territorial versions are advertised independently and can be accessed directly by means of address typical of a given country, e.g. www.kaspersky.pl or www.kaspersky.ru. As a result of this market-specific strategy enhanced by search-friendly URLs, most customers can be either unaware of other language versions or do not feel any need to use them. This shows that localisation, represented here as the process of adapting the identity of the brand and message for different cultures and audiences, is extremely important as different groups react differently to various symbols and create conceptualisations of their own. It goes without saying that each of the groups of clients must be catered for in a different way. The ideal situation is when clients feel that the product has been intended specifically for them and it suits their individual requirements.

Displaying dates, times and prices in the preferred local formats is also recommended as it avoids confusion and allows for an improved user experience and his/her higher engagement. This is why all Kaspersky Lab's websites display prices in the local currency. Moreover, users in different countries also have different payment options at their disposal. For instance, the Polish version relies on the PayU system, iDeal is the preferred payment method of online buyers in the Netherlands, PayPal and Wire Transfer in Serbia, users in China prefer Alipay, Tenpay, users in Russia opt for payments by text message and many prefer to pay in cash on delivery.

Localisation of names of basic categories and products

The process of localisation is labour-intensive and often requires a significant amount of time from the development teams. The language material in Table 1 shows that even very basic classes of products can be categorised in very different ways when the preferences of the local market are taken into account.

Table 1. Classes of Kaspersky Lab's products and services with their target market localisations.

Global, Australia, Middle East, India, New Zealand	security for home	security for business	security for small business
Finland	security for home	security for small business	security for business
Africa	security for home	security for small office	security for business
Portugal	segurança para casa	segurança para empresas	segurança para escritórios
México, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Caribe, América Latina	seguridad para el hogar	para pequeños negocios	para empresas
Polska	ochrona dla domu	ochrona dla biznesu	ochrona dla małego biznesu
Česká republika	produkty pro domácnosti	produkty pro firmy	produkty pro kancelář
Россия	для дома	для малового бизнеса	для бизнеса
Srbija	za kućnu upotrebu	za male kancelarije	za preduzeća
United States, Oceania, South-East Asia, Philippines, Indonesia	security for home		security for business

Global, Australia, Middle East, India, New Zealand	security for home		security for business	security for small business	
UK & Ireland	for home	for business	onlineshop	trials & updates	support
Brasil	para casa	para empresas	loja online	suporte	downloads
France & Suisse	particuliers	enterprises	boutique	assistance	téléchar-gements
Italia & Svizzera	utenti privati	aziende	compra online	assistenza	prova gratuita
España	particulares	empresas	tienda online	soporte	descargas

As can be seen in Table 1, there are substantial differences in the categorisation and sequencing of the main groups of products. Table 1 contains only the most important types and its aim is to present them in such a way that the most frequently recurring classes and patterns could be visible. First of all, the most obvious division is made into 'products for individual users' and 'products for businesses'. This fundamental distinction is used for United States and regions influenced by it. Notice, however, that the most common division is based on three classes and US market seems to be an exception in regard to lack of distinction between 'business' and 'small business'. A possible explanation for this situation is that the adjective 'small', especially when referring to business, may not evoke too many positive associations in American culture. It is a well-known fact that Americans are obsessed with grandiosity and always prefer big cars, big houses, and big sizes. Therefore, the category of 'small business' could be discouraging or even offensive to some customers.

Even from a very cursory analysis of Table 1, it becomes obvious that the names of categories are not word-for-word translations, but rather in each of the classes meaning is shaped and modelled in various ways to suit local expectations and to adapt to local preferences. This can be sometimes accounted for by linguistic limitations, stylistic tastes, cultural incompatibility, but the ultimate motivation is always customer's satisfaction and successful communication. These factors determine localiser's freedom of choice and guide them in the search for the best local equivalents.[4]

4| The term 'localiser' refers here to a team of experts working on a complex localisation project rather than a single person working on his/her own. Notice that, in most circumstances, successful localisation can be achieved jointly and not single-handedly.

Table 1 demonstrates that localisation in a way resembles very free and loose translation. At the same time, the localiser has a much greater freedom than a translator. On the other hand, s/he has to be more creative, more market-oriented and more responsible. Unlike a translator, a localiser is not invisible, but s/he is directly involved in a business situation where more freedom and bigger risks can mean either bigger profits or losses. A localiser must bear in mind that the most important characteristic of exchanges in the business context is a sense of purpose. Language is used to achieve an end, and its successful use is seen in terms of a successful outcome of the business transaction or event (Sobkowiak 2008: 136).

Names of products and brands are mostly directly transferred from the source language version while being localised. This procedure allows for precision and acts as a quality guarantee for the customer. Thus, names of products such as e.g. *Kaspersky Internet Security – Multi-Device* or *Kaspersky Office Security* are preserved in the same form in, for instance, English, Polish, Serbian, Hungarian, Spanish, French, German and even Thai, Korean and Arabic. The only exceptions here are Chinese and Japanese which use characters instead of letters and where native equivalents are preferred. A few websites use partly nativised versions of the names of standard products and this preference is regionally rather than linguistically dependent. For example, while the Spanish website opts for exclusively English names of products, in South America they are slightly modified and some words are translated. Thus, *Kaspersky Internet Security – multidispositivos* is used as a semantic calque of *multi-device*. The same technique is chosen for Russian, e.g.: *Kaspersky Internet Security – для всех устройств*. Notice that the translated elements are only extensions of the names which include some additional information about the product. By deciding to render them in the native language, the localiser must make sure that this key message is understood by the customer. At the same time the integrity of the product and a sense of continuity are preserved because the new product is still associated with the original English name. In other cases, however, localisers must resort to brand evaluation to determine the appropriateness of a brand name, logo or imagery.

Comparison of localised descriptions of the same product

Software localisation is the translation and adaptation of a software or web product, including the software itself and all related product documentation. Traditional translation is typically an activity performed after the source document has been finalised. Software localisation projects, on the other hand, often run in parallel with the development of the source product to enable simultaneous shipment of all language versions. For example, the translation of software strings may often start while the software product is still in the beta phase (Esselink 2000: 139). This is the reason why localised versions may be very different from one another and

difficult to compare. What is more, it is very often hard to find parallel stretches of text that would refer to exactly the same information and that would share identical semantic content. Selected descriptions of one product – Kaspersky Internet Security-Multi-Device – are quoted below. All of them include the first paragraph describing the same software extracted from the localised websites.

> (Global) **Platform solution for PCs, Macs & Android…** *Kaspersky Internet Security – Multi-Device is the easy-to-use, one-licence, multi-platform security solution that protects virtually any combination of PCs, Macs, Android smartphones and Android tablets to give you:*

> (USA) *Kaspersky Internet Security – Multi-Device provides award-winning security that's customized to your everyday devices. Whether you connect with a PC, Mac, Android tablet or smartphone, our advanced real-time technology gives you an easy, worry-free experience that moves as fast as the web can take you.*

> (UK) **Platform solution for PCs, Macs & Android…** *The Internet has the same dangers whether you're using a computer or a mobile device. Kaspersky Internet Security – Multi-Device is the one-license solution that protects your digital identity, finances & children – on your PC, Mac or Android phone or tablet.*

> (NZ) *One-licence security solution to protect your digital assets on PC, Mac, Android smartphones and tablets. With full flexibility across desktop and mobile devices Kaspersky Internet Security – Multi-Device delivers award-winning real-time protection of your valuable information against all the Internet threats. Whatever device you use, feel safe to bank, shop or browse the web, as Kaspersky security technologies ensure your sensitive data and identity are protected.*

> (PL) **Ochrona dla komputerów PC, Mac oraz urządzeń z systemem Android…** *Kaspersky Internet Security – multi-device to łatwe w użyciu, wieloplatformowe rozwiązanie zapewniające ochronę dowolnej kombinacji komputerów PC i Mac oraz smartfonów i tabletów z Androidem – wszystko przy użyciu jednej licencji.*

> (RU) *Kaspersky Internet Security для всех устройств — единое комплексное решение для защиты любых устройств на платформах Windows®, Android™ и Mac OS.*

The general impression is that these texts have not been produced as a result of traditional ST-TT translation, but rather that they have been created from scratch on the basis of common facts and data. An obvious advantage of this technique is that the resulting target text has an air of naturalness and is optimally adjusted to the expectations of the target audience. A software product that has been localised properly has the look and feel of a product originally written and designed for the target market. This shows that localisation is not just about translating the source text into the target language, but it is about conveying the correct marketing message in the target market.

There can also be a need of cultural mismatches, issues of tone and writing style to be taken into account. Sometimes it can be a matter of individual

sensitivity or attention to detail. All of these demands require a certain specialised mindset on the part of the localiser. For example, some of the Kaspersky Lab's websites include testimonials where satisfied customers express their options about the products and services offered. In other cases, sections with questions about the functioning of a product, technicalities or problems pertaining to on-line shopping receive more prominence.

Quoting exact words in localisation

Another example of how cultural adaptation and transcreation rather than literal translation is achieved in localisation is the comparison of the same quotation of a motto describing the company's mission uttered by Eugene Kaspersky, Chair-man and CEO of Kaspersky Lab, extracted from different websites:

(RU) *Мы здесь, чтобы спасти мир. Мы считаем, что каждый должен иметь возможность получать от технологий максимум, не опасаясь при этом вторжения в личное цифровое пространство. Благодаря команде наших специалистов вы можете обитать в цифровом мире, не тревожась за лич-ную информацию и финансовые средства. Мы разрабатываем, производим и продаем решения, обеспечивающие защиту наших клиентов от информа-ционных угроз и позволяющие компаниям управлять IT-рисками.*

(USA) *We believe that everyone – from home computer users and small companies to large corporations and governments – has the right to be free from cyber-security fears. We have therefore made it our mission to provide the world's most effective, responsive and efficient protection against cyber-threats: those from malware, spam, hackers, DDoS attacks, sophisticated cyber-espionage tools, and cyber-weapons that target countries' critical infrastructure with potentially catastrophic consequences. We're here to protect our users from them all.*

(PL) *Jesteśmy przekonani, że każdy ma prawo do korzystania z pełnego potencjału internetu bez konieczności martwienia się o bezpieczeństwo. Z tego powodu naszą misją stało się stworzenie najefektywniejszej i najwydajniejszej ochrony przed cy-berzagrożeniami na świecie. Chronimy przed szkodliwym oprogramowaniem, spa-mem, hakerami, narzędziami cyberszpiegowskimi i wieloma innymi zagrożeniami. Jesteśmy tu po to, by ochronić użytkowników przed tym wszystkim.*

(UK) *We are here to save the world.*

(Mexico) *Creemos que todos deberían poder obtener el máximo provecho de la tec-nología, sin intrusiones ni otras preocupaciones de seguridad. Nuestro equipo de especialistas de primera le da la libertar de vivir su vida digital sin tener que preo-cuparse por sus activos e información personal. Desde hace más de diecisiete años, nuestro equipo de expertos trabaja para exponer, analizar y neutralizar amenazas a la tecnología de la información. A lo largo del camino, hemos acumulado una enorme experiencia y conocimiento sobre malware y cómo lidiar con él.*

The most striking observation based on the example given above is that all of the above quoted texts are meant to refer to the exact words spoken by Eugene Kaspersky, but in reality they differ both in semantic quality and formal quantity. In each case, the localised version is substantially different and the discrepancies go far beyond what we are used to consider translator's freedom of choice or translator's standards of faithfulness (Piotrowska 2011: 32). Notice that the first sentence from the Russian version is omitted in all the remaining quotations except for the British one, in which it constitutes the whole message and where the rest of the utterance is deleted. This shows that the localiser works on the principle of selecting only those elements which s/he thinks are the most appealing and suitable for her/his audience. Another tool visible here is paraphrasing and modification rather than faithful translation. To put it in other words, one can observe in this example a shift away from the source-oriented treatment of translation towards autonomous and independently functioning target language texts.[5]

The localiser takes into consideration not only local culture, political and social situation, but also stylistic preferences of the customer and his/her expertise in a given field. For example, in the American version, there is a long list of possible Internet threats, full of technical words, containing six specific entities: *malware*, *spam*, *hackers*, *DDoS attacks*, *sophisticated cyber-espionage tools*, *and cyber-weapons*. The same list, however, is shortened in all the other versions. Thus, in the Polish version there are only four elements, whereas in the Russian and Mexican version there are merely very general Internet threats mentioned with no list of specific types.

Conclusions

The presented study was based on a contrastive analysis of linguistically and regionally localised Kaspersky Lab's websites with a particular attention paid to the descriptions of its products. The choice of this multilingual material has allowed me to make some observations about differences between traditionally understood translation and language localisation which will be summarised here.

As has been argued, localisation is becoming a more and more important area in need of specialists. Localisation can be understood as a type of translation process whereby the source-culture-specific market content is adapted in order to evoke a similar meaning or connotation in the target-culture-specific market. A successfully localised product or service is one that appears to have been developed within the local culture. In this sense, localisation is similar to translation because both try to establish equivalence.[6] There are, however, substantial differences between the two processes.

5| The phenomenon of target-oriented approaches to translation is discussed in Szal (2014).

6| On the issue of equivalence in the translation of economic texts see Pikor-Niedziałek (2014).

First of all, localisation is much broader, more complex, more dynamic and multi-dimensional in comparison to translation. Conversely, translation can be treated as only one component in the many level structure of localisation. Linguistic equivalence is not the sole objective that a localiser must achieve. His/her main task is to locate a given product on a foreign market and this involves marketing strategies, cultural adaptation as well as linguistic issues. As a result, localisation has more to do with transcreation than traditional translation. Localisation is more creative, requires more knowledge and a lot more practice. This is the reason why localisation is usually carried out as a team project by experts from different fields and not by freelancers.

On the other hand, localisation has a much more limited scope of application and is performed within a restricted context of use. Its only concern is successful communication with clients. Localisation is intrinsically market-oriented and the message being transmitted is always related to the products or services offered. In contrast to specialist languages, where communication takes place in a narrow S2S (specialist to specialist) channel, here interaction involves communicating the value of a product to customers for the purpose of selling it. As a result, the code used in localisation must not only be very clear and understandable, but also must be perceived as being transparent. In other words, it must be the kind of message the customer is used to and is likely to treat as his/her own.

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