THE DOUBLE FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE: AN ANALYSIS OF PRODUCT NAMING AND INDUSTRY TERMINOLOGY IN ARABIC LOCALIZED WEBSITES

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Abstract. With the calls for a target-culture-oriented approach in the localization definitions, to the encouraged foreignization tendencies for the sake of intercultural interaction, it is necessary to look at the approaches followed in reality and to what extent they achieve the intended purpose of localization effectively. This paper aims to find out common approaches used in localizing industry terms and product names. It looks at the conventions in use, the emerging hybrid strategies and how they correspond to the existing localization and translation theories. This corpus-based paper consists of blurbs localized from English into Arabic and taken from 15 international corporate websites. It should pave the way for further research that investigates the internet user's favorable conventions in product naming and translation of terms in the advertising context. The presented results show how language can play different roles, whether to preserve the targeted culture or spread the original culture of the product, all in the framework of localization and marketing online.

Key words: adaptation, comprehensibility, conventions, foreignization, localization, translation of product names

LOCALIZATION, A TARGET-ORIENTED APPROACH

A quick look at any international brand website shows how marketing is increasingly following a multilingual approach through providing information in several *locales* based on the targeted market. As Globish is not enough anymore to persuade consumers to buy a product, localization is being used as the key to address them in their native language (Collombat, 2014: 20). This corresponds to the increasing use of digital environments that absorb 20–30 per cent of the advertising expenses (Stenger and Bourliataux-Lajoinie, 2014: 132). This approach is associated with a growth in the number of online buyers who prefer purchasing at websites that present information in their own languages (DePalma, Sargent and Beninatto, 2006). While web localization – also referred to as 'content localization' (Esselink, 2003: 28) – hits the highest growth rates in

the localization industry, it has the same rationale of software localization which started in the mid-1980s, i.e. increasing the Return on Investment (Schäler, 2007/2008). Meanwhile, several definitions of localization have been given. For example, Localization Industry Standards Association defined it as 'taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold' (Esselink, 2000: 3). The notion of appropriateness and the goal of using and selling the product was also raised by Jiménez-Crespo who defines localization as:

> [a] target-oriented translation type and, in line with the functionalist notion of adequacy, emphasizes users' expectations and achieving the communicative purpose for which the localization was commissioned, rather than equivalence relationships to source texts (STs). (Jiménez-Crespo, 2013: 18)

The above definitions prioritize the target users and the promotion of the product in different countries. The same client-orientation concept is adopted in digital marketing research (Chaffey et al., 2014). Others underline the expected outcome in that the country of origin of a localized product can no longer be traced (Schäler, 2007/2008: 40), making the product received as if it had been originally developed in the target culture (Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA), 2007, cited by Jiménez-Crespo, 2007: 6). This desired outcome should help in selling the product, but it also emphasizes the role of localization in protecting the target culture and preserving the audience's identity (see Cronin, 2006). Interestingly, other approaches and conventions emerge to achieve the same outcome, while promoting the source culture of the product as well.

This paper aims to investigate how language is being utilized in localization and whether this use can help in selling the product, protecting the target language and culture, or spreading the source language and culture.

WHOSE EXPECTATIONS?

Having briefly discussed the target language and culture orientation in localization, adaptation is widely considered as a key strategy to meet its goal. Adaptation has been an important approach in translation in general (Nord, 2005), in the translation of advertisements in particular (Guidère, 2009) and as 'a prerequisite and an additional component provided by localization' (Jiménez-Crespo, 2013: 15). However, adaptation is not a specified strategy, as it can keep or eliminate the surface elements of the source text, and can also take other forms:

> The limits of translation are represented by transcription or transliteration, in which 100 per cent of the ST surface elements are preserved, and free text production (in the target culture), in which none of the ST surface elements are preserved. Between these two poles we find several forms of translation, which are characterized

by different percentages of adaptation, depending on the translation
skopos. (Nord, 2005: 33)

What seems to be agreed on is the purpose of the translation work in
meeting 'the audience's expectations according to their own beliefs, biases and
preconceptions' (Ranzato, 2016: 29) through adopting their 'frame of reference'
(Hofstede et al., 2010: 389). Otherwise, this purpose underlines the reader's need
to have all the necessary background information to get the intended message
(Baker, 2011: 259). See also Nord (2005: 96). However, the targeted audience
is sometimes generalized, particularly in marketing contexts. This diversity in
the targeted audience makes it difficult to determine the convention that should
be used, which is usually 'based on common knowledge and the expectation
of what others expect you to expect them (etc.) to do in a certain situation'
(Nord, 1997: 53). Moreover, it has not been fully explored in the localization
industry 'which structural, textual, and linguistic conventions have been
established in each locale to which the localized versions are supposed to comply
to' (Jiménez-Crespo, 2007: 6). The wide range of audience can even lead to an
under-detailed 'brief' (Nord, 2005: 10) and might be the reason of the shortage
of information and requirements given by the client regarding the target text
(Jiménez-Crespo, 2009).

COMPREHENSIBILITY AND 'REVERSE LOCALIZATION'

Having briefly discussed adaptation, whether the adapted version is com-
prehensible or not would not be measured properly without taking into account
the background knowledge of the receiver (Wolfer, 2015: 33). Research studies
have looked at the text complexity based on several linguistic elements, such
as the use of specialized terminology (Nisbeth Jensen, 2015). Others have
looked at the comprehensibility dimensions, including the 'simplicity' of terms
(Göpferich, 2009) or the use of easily understood words that appear frequently in
the language and pronounceable words (Spyridakis, 2000). All of these elements
should facilitate the reader's understanding particularly on websites, where
the user scans the pages seeking specific information. It is common to borrow
English words in texts written in other languages (cf. Friedrich, 2002; Diniz de
Figueiredo, 2010; Al Abed, 2016; Moussaoui, 2018). However, the inclusion of
non-English words in a translated text does not seem to draw much attention.

As localization and globalization are indispensable in the Globalization,
Internationalization, Localization and Translation (GILT) process (Munday,
2008: 191), such foreign terms are a natural result thereof. This argument can
smoothly lead to the idea that cultures are supposed to be more open to each
other rather than being in their comfortable *locales*. This notion is referred
to as 'reverse localization', where linguistic or cultural strangeness is kept or
intentionally introduced into digital content to differentiate a product or service
from the dominating culture in a locale (Schäler, 2007/2008: 46). This strategy is
used in marketing with justifications such as the distinction of the product from

its potential competitors (ibid.). English, for example, enjoys a unique position because it is believed that it symbolizes modernity, is accessible enough to be intelligible, its linguistic properties make it attractive, has the connotation of Westernization (Friedrich, 2002: 22). It is also considered as a language that has power and economic growth (Moussaoui, 2018: 298).

Such tendencies are increasingly noticed in advertisements, but they take several forms. Thus, it is important to explore the strategies used in localizing foreign names and terms. The study should show whether these strategies follow or establish a certain convention.

METHODOLOGY

The corpus consists of (2624) blurbs, localized from English into Arabic, checked between August 2018 and April 2019. Four hundred blurbs, consisting of a tagline and a short description of a product, were selected as representative examples. The blurbs were taken from 15 international corporate websites. For this study, the Saudi Arabia locale was used because it is a common targeted market by all the selected corporates, knowing that other Arabic versions have the same translations. The selected pages present cosmetics, furniture and technology products.

This study focuses mainly on the strategies used in localizing the product names and certain industry terms. It aims to explore the ways these names and terms are adapted to the target locale and/or foreignized. It is important to clarify that the study does not aim to discover favorable conventions but to illustrate the common approaches which might have been established or emerging and to attempt to discuss their ability of achieving the purpose. Product names have been selected mainly because they represent the 'phatic intention' (Nord, 2005) of the text through drawing the user's attention.

In his article *Reverse Localization*, Schäler places product names in the shallow level of cultural adaptation in localization, along with colors, pictures, symbols and sounds. He also underlines the fact that there are no strategies or guidelines helping localizers stuggling with the deep level of cultural adaptation (Schäler, 2007/2008: 42). While this is obvious due to the complexity of cultures, does this suggest that adapting the shallow level elements is less complicated?

RESULTS

The analysis of the blurbs attempted to find out which strategies are used in localizing product names and industry terms and which conventions are used in dealing with these elements. Figure 1 shows these strategies which will be discussed in detail. The analysis did not take other linguistic issues that can occur in the examples, but they will be discussed in future research. The Arabic translations below are provided in a transliterated form.
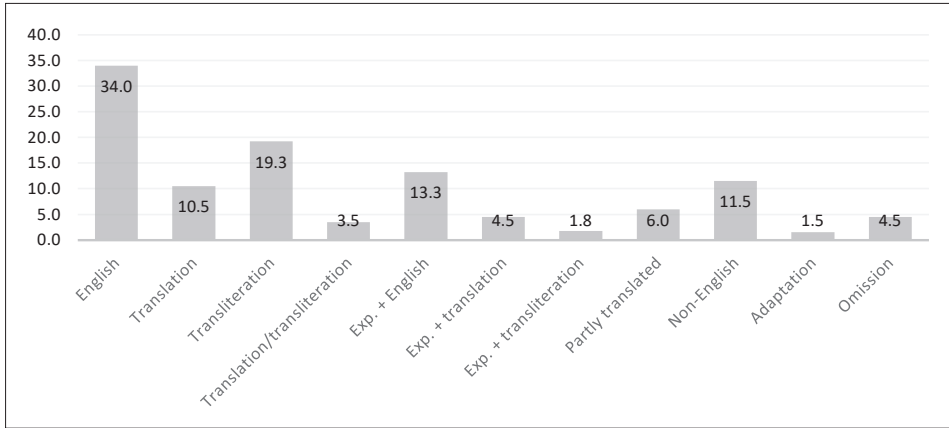
Figure 1 **Localization strategies in product naming and industry terminology**

1- ENGLISH NAMING

The first and frequently present strategy (used in 34% of the blurbs) is keeping the names as they are in English, even if these are not always proper names and can be translated, as in the first example where 'BRUSH BAG KIT' was kept in English. The translation here would make it easier for the consumer to remember the product name.

BRUSH BAG KIT/ EL SEED

A kit of four limited-edition brush tools for the face in a special-edition pink bag that doubles as an attention-stealing clutch.

BRUSH BAG KIT/ EL SEED

majmou'a mukawana min arba' farāšy lilwajh maḥdoudat aliṣdār dāḫil ḥaqyba wardiya maḥdoudat aliṣdār mimmā yutyḥ istiḫdāmahā ayḍan kaḥaqybat yad ṣaġyra lāfita lilanẓār. [T1]

The same applies to the next example where the English words take more space and attention than the Arabic ones:

Live Photos.

Capture more than a moment.

Live Photos.

ta'yš allaḥẓa. [T2]

2- NAMING BY TRANSLITERATION

Of course, transliteration is widely used for names or words that do not have appropriate equivalents in the target language. This strategy represents 19.3%.

However, 'lotion' has an equivalent in Arabic, and it is used by people and in the industry (on other websites), but there is a tendency to transliterate it.

Body Lotion

Indulgent body lotions, with spa-like textures and fragrances, transform your skin care routine into a moment of 'me-time' while giving your body the care it needs.

lošin aljism

hāḏā allošin almutraf yanquluqi liajwaa almuntaja'āt assāḥira bi'abyriha alaḫāḏ wa tadlyliha alfa'eq litatamatta'y bilaḥaẓātiki alḫāṣa wa anti tamnaḥyna bašrataki ma tastaḥiqahu min ri'āya [T3]

3- NAMING BY TRANSLATION

Equivalent-based translation is also used in 10.5% as in the product name 'Pink Beauty Bar' in the example below:

Pink Beauty Bar

¼ moisturizing cream and a delicate blush of color – try Dove Pink Beauty Bar.

qālib ajjamāl azzahry

¼ krym muraṭṭib wa lawn anyq wa ḫajul – jarriby dov qālib ajjamāl azzahry [T4]

Such strategies are common. However, the analysis showed that other hybrid tendencies exist.

4- NAMING BY TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

In this example, only 'Olay Regenerist' was transliterated, and the rest was translated and explained.

Olay Regenerist Micro-Sculpting Super Anti-Ageing Cream

krym olāy rejenerest litaškyl albašara addaqyq walfa'eq limukafaḥati 'alamāti taqaddumi sinni lbašara [T5]

5- NAMING BY PARTIAL TRANSLATION, AND ENGLISH WITH EXPLICITATION

Some names were partly translated like the one in the header even if it can be translated. The back translation of 'Natural White Day Lotion' is 'Natural White the day liquid for lightening the skin'. Other terms in the body of the description were kept in English besides a short explanation of such terms as UVA and UVB. In this and other examples, the name was localized following a certain strategy in the tagline, while following a different one within the description. The product name in the tagline was partly translated with an explicitation but the same name was transliterated word for word at the beginning of the description.

Natural White Day Lotion

Olay Natural White Day Lotion is the ideal day-time protection for oily or combination skin. It effectively blocks out UVA and UVB radiations that may darken and damage your skin. This lotion nourishes skin from deep inside to reveal its inner health and radiance.

sāel taftyḥ albašara linnahār Natural White

sāel olāy natširal wayt yuqaddimu lḥimāya almitalyya ḫilāla nnahar lilbašara adduhnyya walmuḫtalaṭa. yamna'u hāḏā alkrym alaši'ata fawq albanafsajiya UVA wa UVB allati tusabbibu allawn addākin min alwuṣwli ila bašratiki. yuġaḏḏy hāḏā assa'elu bašrataki min addāḫil wa yakšifu išrāqaha wa ṣiḥataha. [T6]

6- NAMING BY TRANSLATION WITH EXPLICITATION, AND OMISSION

The name in the example below was translated with an addition/explanation, where the translation included the idea of 'daily care', which does not exist in the source. Although an explanation was added, the name of the collection 'Nutritive Solutions' was omitted in the tagline and the description.

Nutritive Solutions Spilt Ends Rescue Conditioner

Say goodbye to split ends, and hello to hair that's strong, smooth and beautiful with Dove Nutritive Solutions Spilt Ends Rescue Conditioner.

dov 'enāya yawmya balsam inqāḏ ašša'r almutaqassif

wadā'an littqaṣuf ma' dov 'enāya yawmya balsam inqāḏ ašša'r almutaqassif, allaḏy yamnaḥuki š'ran qawyan,wa amlasa, wa jamylan. [T7]

7- ADAPTATION

The less frequently-used strategy is adaptation. The example below shows that 'energetic wave' was introduced in the Arabic version to express the intended message. Otherwise, the name is not translatable and would be kept in English.

Go Fresh Revive Body Wash

Start your day with the refreshing scent of pomegranate and lemon verbena and enjoy the feeling of softer, smoother skin.

dov sāel istiḥmām mawjat ḥayawya

ibda'y yawmaki birrā'iḥa almun'eša allati tafuḥu min arrummān wa zahrat allaymoon, wastamti'y bi iḥsās albašara anna'emat almalmas. [T8]

So far, we have seen examples localized from English product names. It can be assumed that most people are familiar with English as a universal language. This assumption can explain the fact that the majority of the tendencies of English naming, transliteration or the other combinations include any of these forgeinizing strategies.

8- NON-ENGLISH NAMING

The last strategy is less frequent among the selected websites. It is used on the IKEA website only, and represents 11.5% of the sample. It is the use of the product name in the language (not English) of the manufacturing country. It shows that language and localization have more than marketing the product or adapting it for the target language and culture, as the Nordic Language Award was given to the IKEA founder and his business for promoting the Nordic languages and culture around the world (Löfgren, 2017). This is obvious in their localized webpages where the product names are kept in the Swedish language, as in these examples:

<div align="center">

STUVA / FRITIDS

Cot with drawers, white

STUVA / FRITIDS

Saryr aṭfāl maʿ adraj, abyaḍ [T9]

KRAMA

Washcloth, white

KRAMA

Minšafa, abyaḍ [T10]

</div>

DISCUSSION

Although promoting one's culture is being widely practiced in the globalization age, this approach does not seem to be aligned with the localization definitions. This approach can help distinguishing the product from its competetors' product but does not focus mainly on the target culture. It is also known that Latin letters and words are not always easy to be read by less educated Arab people, considering the differences in the alphabetical systems of Arabic, English, and Swedish.

   Therefore, if the localized texts should show no original language or culture traces, why to use foreign names in a localized blurb? If they are used for marketing purposes, given the sense of modernity of English, they are expected to be used in a more consistent way that would not confuse the reader. The analysis shows frequent inconsistencies in the conventions used even for the same unit/blurb. Moreover, the sample includes several occurences where the transliterated name is long and its pronunciation can be difficult for the Arab reader. While it is possible for machine translation to lead to such issues, the final version's quality is what concerns us in this paper.

   This research cannot assume any preferred strategy(ies) by the users (but to be researched in the future). However, comprehensibility does not seem to be garanteed with the intensive use of foreign words, particularly where they are not proper brand names but words that should deliver a certain meaning and

a certain message. Thus, *reverse localization* seems to be taking place, even without consistent conventions. Whether a blurb with incomprehensible elements can sell the product for a wide-base audience does not sound logical.

As mentioned earlier, the diversity of the targeted audience might be the reason of the lack of information in the *brief*, which is an essential requirement in the localization process. More specific instructions in the *brief* and/or the provision of glossaries (if it is not the case) could also help the translators-localisers in using more consistent choices rather than struggling with the translation and even creating new formulas. The resulting inconsistency of the conventions can be also attributed to the lack of convention in the first place (Jiménez-Crespo, 2007: 6) or to the fact that 'Genre conventions are not universal, but linked to a certain culture at a certain time' (Nord, 2005: 21). This can be the case due to globalization and the introduction of new products, which are fabricated in certain countries and promoted in others, using non-traditional channels.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to contribute to a small part of research in website localization. The sample was selected due to its importance in drawing the user's attention and, consequently, in marketing the product in an effective way. Based on the literature review and the extracted results of the sample, the discussion concentrated on the approaches that are used in localizing terms and product names, and the way languages are utilized for the interest of the target or the source cultures. The analysis found that hybrid approaches are emerging as a result of the marketing strategies, and/or the gaps found in localization with this regard. These gaps include the lack of audience specification, the possible lack of project instructions and consistency in the conventions used. The results and the calls for adaptation and reverse localization necessitate building terminology bases by the clients and finding *foreignization rules* that can help marketing a product and meeting the audience's diversity and expectations.

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TEXTS ANALYZED

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