Linguistic and Cultural Adaptation of English Websites into Lithuanian

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Abstract. The research problem is the transposition of a Web site from one cultural environment into another, adaptation of new terms and names which come to the Lithuanian language through the Web sites of foreign countries. Research aim is to analyze the linguistic and cultural content of selected Web sites and the differences that occur in them when adapting into different languages and socio-cultural environments. The research involves comparative analysis of thirty six Web sites. The Web sites for the analysis were selected randomly from the Lithuanian Business Directory. Research objectives are as follows: to analyze the theory of the Web site localization and adaptation; to analyze and compare selected Web sites; to indicate linguistic and non-linguistic differences; to point out the most successful translation procedures for the Web site translation. The research has revealed that three of the localization strategies outlined by Aoki, (2000) have been used when adapting English Web sites to Lithuanian. Namely, the portions of a given Web site have been translated into a target language, the sites have been culturally localized for a target audience, and a new content, independent of the original site, in some cases, has been developed in a target country. Thus, it could be concluded that there are three most important aspects to be taken into account during the process of the Web site localization, namely: linguistic adaptation, visual design and cultural adaptation.

Key words: cultural adaptation, web site localization, translation procedures, linguistic adaptation.

Introduction

With the invention of the Internet a completely new approach to language studies has evolved. A new type of language and writing style was brought by the World Wide Web. The Internet became a new measure of cultural interactions and a Web site translation, localization and adaptation assumes a very important role in them. The problem discussed in the paper is the transposition of a Web site from one cultural environment into another, adaptation of new terms and names which come to the Lithuanian language through the Web sites of foreign countries. The process of translation in this case involves finding linguistic equivalents, adjusting and recreating cultural and social reference in the target environment, as well as adapting non-linguistic elements and changing them according to distinct cultural preferences. The aim of this research is to analyze the linguistic and cultural content of selected Web sites and the differences that occur in them when adapting into different languages and socio-cultural environments. The research involves comparative analysis of thirty six Web sites. These are the Web sites of international companies or joint ventures of Lithuanian and foreign enterprises that develop their businesses in many countries and therefore have their Web sites translated into several different languages. The Web sites for the analysis were selected randomly from the Lithuanian Business Directory – http://www.telenormedia.lt/. The main selection criteria were thematic: the web site had to be related to the field of telecommunications, banks or hotels. The objectives of the work are as follows: to analyze the theory of the Web site localization and adaptation; to analyze and compare selected Web sites; to indicate linguistic and non-linguistic differences; to point out the most successful translation procedures for the Web site translation.

Translation, adaptation and localization theories

There are two very basic approaches to translation. The first one aims to express as exactly as possible the full force and meaning of every word and turn of phrase in the original. The second one (Adams and Thelen 1999) aims to produce a result that does not read like a translation at all, but rather expresses itself with the same ease as in its native rendering. In the hands of a good translator neither of these two approaches can ever be entirely ignored. Globalization has affected the world of translation. With the media revolution and its string of intangible exchanges, translators suddenly find themselves involved in every aspect of intercultural communication. Different people sometimes interpret language in different ways. Wherever the local language is an influential measure, the translator is called in as a decoder and mediator, sometimes even as a negotiator. The cultural perspective set a task of developing such definitions of translation, which would take the aspects of culture into account (Ambrasas-Sasnava 1984; Hariyanto 2000; Karamanian 2000). The contemporary approach shows language as an integral part of culture helping introduce the differences of varying cultures into each of them (Hariyanto 2000). Karamanian claims that translation entails a process of cultural de-coding, re-coding and en-coding. As cultures are increasingly brought into greater contact with one another, multicultural considerations appear to an ever-increasing degree. We are not just dealing with words written in a certain time, space and sociopolitical situation; most importantly it is the cultural aspect of the text that we should take into account. The process of transfer, i.e., re-coding across cultures, should consequently allocate corresponding attributes vis-à-vis the target culture to ensure credibility in the eyes of the target reader (Karamanian 2000). Translation bridges cultures, differing view points and frames.
of reference by introducing new ideas and/ or ideology to the target receiver. The translator has to decide to what extent cultural transfer will take place or not (Bezuidenhaut 1998).

In recent years Web site translation has been attributed to the tasks of localization. When localizing a Web site, not only linguistic translation, but also consideration of conventional social, cultural or other regional features (Zeller 2006) should be considered. A new approach for reading visual images has been suggested by Kress and Leeuwen (1996). They put the emphasis on reading the visual design. They believe that visual design, like language and all semiotic modes, is socially constructed. It is a set of socially constructed resources for the construction of meaning.

Localization can be defined as translation applied to electronic documents: websites programs, etc. It requires not only language translation but also the adaptation of non-linguistic elements. Adaptation is the key to keeping the meaning of the original message from becoming lost in the sea of translation. Adaptation is the key to keeping not only language translation but also the adaptation of electronic documents: websites programs, etc. It requires construction of meaning.

According to Adam Jones, director of customer programs at SimulTrans, a translation company based in Silicon Valley (Business Wire 1998), there are five basic localization strategies:

- use only U.S. English;
- translate portions of a given Web site into a target language;
- translate the entire Web site into a target language;
- culturally localize the site for a target audience; and
- develop content in a target country, independent of the U.S. site.

The first three strategies involve linguistic translation of Web sites whereas the last two strategies involve cultural translation. Cultural translation goes beyond mere linguistic translation since it involves designing a Web site that is sensitive to the cultural differences between the originated country and the target country. Each country in the world has a distinct social system and culture. Nothing can be generalized in discussing specific localization strategies for a particular country (Aoki 2000). Zeller (2006) adds that successful localization is a collaborative result of project managers, translators, terminologists, editors, programmers, paste-up artists, and specialists of technological systems. It is important economically, culturally and also in regard to national self-awareness.

Internet language is considered as a new and specific discourse with its own particular style. It is different from other types of languages which we read in books, newspapers; hear spoken on television or in the street. Crystal (2001) points out that besides the two familiar modes of communication, written and spoken language, a “third medium” of Internet language, or Netspeak, is emerging. He calls the Internet language written speech, which however differs from face-to-face conversation in terms of feedback and turn-taking. Crystal acknowledges that Netspeak is a “written language which has been pulled some way in the direction of speech”. Netspeak is “identical to neither speech nor writing, but selectively and adaptively displays properties of both” (Crystal 2001). It is the combination of spoken written and electronic properties that makes Netspeak a third medium (Wang 2003). Translation of such language is also a particular task, as it is necessary to adapt certain terms coming with creation of Web sites, to assess what information has to be carried over into the new site. The translator must also evaluate the target culture and society.

Software translators give much attention to terminology. In many cases new terms have to be created. According to Zeller (2006), this is an indication that localization tasks are very responsible. Selection of proper terms is one of the most important guarantees in successful software localization.

Particular terms, names or words come into language not only with software localization, but also with translation of various texts containing culturally-bound words. Sugeng Hariyanto (2000) defines thirteen translation procedures to translate culturally-bound words or expressions:

1. Transference. The source language word is brought into the target language text.
2. Naturalization. The source language (SL) word is brought into the target language text (TLT) and the writing is adjusted to the TLT writing system.
3. Using cultural equivalent. The SL word is replaced with the TL cultural word.
4. Using synonym. The SL word is translated into neutral TL word.
5. Using descriptive equivalent. The translator explains the description and/ or function of the idea embodied in the SL word. Usually it results in long wording.
6. Using recognized translation. The SL word is replaced with previously recognized translation of the SL word in the TL.
7. Using componential analysis. SL word is replaced with a more general TL word plus one or more TL sense components to complete the meaning which is not embodied within the first TL word. At a glance it is like a descriptive equivalent, but much shorter and does not involve the function of the idea of the SL word.
8. Reduction. SL word or phrase, as a translation unit, is replaced with a TL word or phrase which does not embrace part of the SL word meaning.
9. Expansion. SL word or phrase as a translation unit, is replaced with a TL word or phrase which covers the SL word meaning plus something else.
10. Addition and note. An addition or note is added after the translation of the TL word or phrase. This addition is clearly not a part of the translation.
11. Deletion. SL word or phrase, as a translation unit, is dropped in the TLT.
12. Modulation. The SL word or phrase, as a translation unit, is translated into a TL word or phrase; and this
involves change in the point of view. The translator sees the phrase from different point of view, perspective or very often category of thought in translating it.

13. **Literal translation.** If a SL word or phrase, as a translation unit is translated into a TL word or phrase, without breaking the TL syntactic rules.

When more than one procedure is used in translation of a word or expression, the procedure is called combination procedure (Hariyanto 2000).

**Adaptation of Terms and Names**

Translation and adaptation of new terms may often be a long and difficult process. In a process of a Web site translation it is essential to find the proper terms that convey the semantic information. The analysis has revealed that in many cases a descriptive equivalent procedure is used, e.g: WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) – *specialus duomenų perdavimo protokolas bevieliamis įrenginiams*; MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service) – *daugiaformačių pranešimų paslauga*. As is seen from the examples, it is very often that an English term is transposed and several translation procedures are employed to convey the semantic meaning. The procedure of addition and note is used to explain the English abbreviation and the procedure of descriptive equivalent is used to explain the meaning in Lithuanian.

The research has shown that the prevailing types of translation procedures are naturalization and transference. Transference is a procedure used to introduce certain names of services or goods into the Lithuanian Web sites: e.g.: OmniID; *Omni SurfPort*; *Omni Connect*; *Maestro kortelė*; *MasterCard Standard kortelė*; *Priority Pass kortelė*; *Visa Classic kortelė*; *Visa Virtuo kortelė*. GSM tinklas; SMS žinutės, MMS žinutės, WAP portalas, FTP serveris, *Naudotojo ID*, *WAP technologija*, *Vaizdo forma tai*: JPEG, GIF; *Garso formatai*: MIDI, WAV, AMR, MP3; 3G ryšys; *SWIFT kodas*; *Multimedia projektorius*. The examples displayed above show that transference can often result in a lack of information about certain technologies, goods or services, if it is presented to a person who is not familiar with these technologies, services or goods and perceive all the English words as completely unknown and new. Such words, abbreviations, acronyms or expressions should be complemented by notes or descriptions which could clarify the meaning of new terms or names and thus help the customer to understand them. But not all of the transferred words are left without explanations. There are Web sites where the procedure of adaptation and note or combination was used in a process of translation. In case of *trumpų tekinių žinučių paslauga* (SMS Short Message Service) an English note provides information which serves as an explanation for the Lithuanian translation, as the acronym SMS for some people may be a better known term than its Lithuanian equivalent. Terms or names of mobile technologies or services are usually adopted in the Lithuanian language using the procedure of transference. Those terms, acronyms or expressions are already used as international names in probably all countries and cultures. This example shows that English has a big impact on many cultures, including Lithuanian, and even if there are equivalents created for the names of new technologies in other languages, English words are considered important enough to be provided as additional or complementary information. Another example pūtai ukinio kapitalo (subordinuotų arba antraeliaţių paskolų) teikimas shows the case when additional information is provided in brackets for the translation of banking term to be more precise. The impact of the English language is seen in the examples *vartotojo identifikavimo kodas* → *IP* and *jacuzzi* sūkriūnė vonia, in which the Lithuanian equivalents *sūkriūnė vonia* and *vartotojo identifika įvimo kodas* completely convey the meanings of English words, but still additional words *jacuzzi* and *IP* are appended to the translations. These words do not provide essential information in the Lithuanian translation.

Other cases of transference are found in the following examples: *e-bankas* (*e-bank*); *e-sąskaita* (*e-account*); *SMS bankas* (*SMS* bank); *e-parduotuvė* (*e-shop*); *e-dokumentai* (*e-documents*); *e-verslo paslaugos* (*e-Commerce Transaction Service*). These terms have only one part transferred from English structure and added to well known Lithuanian words. Such neologisms do not correspond to the Lithuanian structure. However, they are used in majority of the Lithuanian Web sites. This illustrates Crystal’s ideas about the internet language as a new and specific discourse form with its own particular style. But not all of the Web sites adapt this procedure and English words with preceding *e-* are translated into a full word, i.e. *electronic*. The Lithuanian equivalent for this word is *elektroninis*. Such adaptation can be found on the Web site of Parex bank, where e-banking is translated as *elektroninė bankininkystė*, or Nordea, where *e-commerce* is translated as *elektroninis verslas*.

There are lots of examples when reduction is being used while adapting certain names. E.g: multimedia messages (MMS) → *vaizdo žinutės* (MMS). The meaning of the word *multimedia* in Lithuanian is *daugialypis*. The translation *vaizdas* ("image") means only the part of provided service. One more example of reduction: a continuously changing communication code is translated as *kintamas ryšio kodas*. The English word continuously which in Lithuanian means *nepertraukiamai* *visą laiką, be perstojo*, is omitted from the translation of the term. However, these cases of reduction show that in spite of the fact that translated terms do not embrace part of the meaning of original expressions, translated units do not lose their meaning, and show no signs of mistranslation or lack of information.

The following set of examples WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) – *specialus duomenų perdavimo protokolas bevieliamis įrenginiams*; MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service) – *daugiaformačių pranešimų paslauga*; GPRS (General Packet Radio Service) – *duomenų perdavimo GSM tinklu technologija*; UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunication System) – *trečiosios kartos* (*3G*) *mobiliojo ryšio technologija* illustrate the usage of combination procedures including transference and addition/ note. In these cases an English name is transferred into Lithuanian, and then these services are described in Lithuanian without giving a Lithuanian equivalent of the name. Not always such translation procedure is successful as the description may not provide necessary information about the technology.
Such lack of information may not bring expected results in marketing for the company which is offering these services, because customers might simply not understand what the offer is about.

The analysis of the Web sites of telecommunication companies showed that in the process of adaptation of such Web sites, naturalization is one of the most common translation procedures. E.g: debetas → debit; faktoringas → factoring; generatorius → generator; protokolas → protocol; markeris → marker; kondicionavimas → conditioning; modemas → modem; rezervaciją → reservation; roamingas → roaming; emisija → emission; serveris → server; limitas → limit. The examples show that the majority of words transferred with the procedure of naturalization have already been accepted as international terms in Lithuanian. In some cases, however, Lithuanian equivalent words could be found, as instead of markeris, žymiklis could be used.

When translating certain banking or mobile technology terms, some cases of componential analysis can be found: E.g: deposit in escrow → sąlyginis lęšų deponavimas; FX Operations → prekyba valiutomis; FX Swap → valiutų apsikeitimo sandoris; 3G → trečiosios kartos ryšys. The procedure of componential analysis involves the semantic translation of the term. The procedure is similar to the descriptive equivalent, but by using componential analysis the translator is able to obtain shorter terms. As a result, we get terms that are easier for the users to understand.

Analysis of Web sites related to telecommunications has revealed that the foreign company might develop a separate content for a target country, creating new names of services specific to it. For example, in the Web site of Omnitel such concepts as didmeniniai SMS, judrijo numerio paslauga have been invented. When translating the Web site of the target country, the process already involves translation and adaptation of Lithuanian words into English. Lithuanian names are not translated into English, the translator uses transference and brings Lithuanian words into the English version of the Web site: didmeniniai SMS, judrusis numeris service.

Hence, the analysis has revealed that while translating and adapting the Web sites of foreign companies to the Lithuanian market, seven of the previously described translation procedures have been used, namely, transference, naturalization, cultural equivalence, descriptive equivalent, componential analysis, reduction, addition and note. Also combination procedures have been found in localized Web sites. Other procedures, outlined by Hariyanto (2000) have not been used while translating the analyzed Web sites.

It is also evident that most of the English loan words appear in the field of telecommunication and commerce. New terms are not always properly adapted in Lithuanian; new terms often do not convey the exact semantic meaning or some of them have no translation at all. When this happens, the Web site does not perform its informative function.

Cultural adaptation of the web sites

As stated by Aoki (2000), cultural translation comprises not only cultural localization of the Web site for the target environment, but also development of content in a target country, independent of the original site. The analysis has revealed that cultural localization is the strategy common to all of the Web sites which have content developed independently for the target environment. Cultural localization has been observed in all of the selected Web sites. Cultural impact on localization is found by the new concepts and names of services introduced to the Lithuanian market, new pictures and icons, which differ from the original sites. The Web sites for other countries, in turn, represent certain level of cultural adaptation or, in some cases, regional adaptation. Such kind of adaptation is recognized when a company develops services particular to the country or region.

The analysis of the Web sites describing the services of the hotels has revealed that in some cases not all the content of information is presented in Lithuanian, some parts still have English texts. Almost all of the translated Web sites have English pages for room reservations, and only two provide the Lithuanian translation for this part of the Web site. Such a fact indicates a lack of attention given to the cultural aspects while localizing the Web sites of hotels. However, in this case, the fact that the majority of expected customers in the hotel market are foreigners coming to Lithuania should be considered. A lesser amount of Lithuanian guests using hotel services receive only partially localized and culturally adapted Web sites. Hence, in the case of the hotel Web site localization, the extent of Web site localization depends on the users at whom the Web sites are targeted.

Whereas Lithuanian versions of the localized Web sites from the field of telecommunication and banking show little changes determined by cultural differences, the content in localized hotel Web sites differ. This might be because of the cultural differences in preferences, needs and understanding about what is important while choosing a hotel. Thus, the content provided in the description of the same hotel might be different in different languages, as in the case of the Web site of Ramada Vilnius hotel. Information provided for the Lithuanian clients puts the emphasis on the services provided and equipment available, such as: air conditioning, a mini bar, a safe-deposit box, conference halls, etc. While in the English version the information of a more general nature is added: e.g.:

“We are in the most beautiful place of Vilnius, in the very centre of the Old Town, just in front of the famous Lithuanian National Philharmonics and two theatres round the corner, 200 meters away from Vilnius Town Hall and in the surrounding of plenty of cozy restaurants, souvenir and fashion shops, museums and exhibition halls” (http://www.ramadavilnius.lt/eng).

The information about the hotel commodities is also presented in the English version, but the emphasis here is put on the comfort of beds, and room design “created by one of the best designers in Vilnius”, etc.

This example demonstrates the differences in the preferences of the Lithuanian and foreign clients while choosing the hotel. For Lithuanians it is important to know what kind of services and amenities they are getting with the hotel room, while the foreigners coming to Lithuania are interested in the conditions provided by the hotel to ensure a good rest or
comfortable location of a hotel. Foreign clients are attracted by comfortable beds and coziness of a room enabling to get an ultimate relaxation during the trip, while for Lithuanian clients the safety of their personal belongings and the amount of services is being emphasized.

The description of a restaurant in the hotel could also be provided as an illustration of cultural differences. “We have one of the best European cuisines in Lithuania and the best chef in the country. He creates real culinary masterpieces” announces the English version of the Web site of Ramada Vilnius, while the Lithuanian version of the Web site provides the information about Italian restaurant San Marco (“Viešbučio patalpose šūkusiai restoran San Marco sąžiningi italų virtuves patiekalai”). Thus the English version of the Web site attracts foreigners with delicious food, not mentioning that it is Italian, since such a fact might be not so much important for a foreigner, as it is for a Lithuanian client, who might find an Italian restaurant and its food as a fairly important and attractive suggestion to consider while choosing the hotel.

The comparison of English and Lithuanian versions of the Web sites have revealed that foreign visitors are attracted by the emphasis put on the convenience of the hotel, whereas the Lithuanians are tempted by security and the amount of services offered.

Conclusions

The research has revealed that three of the localization strategies outlined by Aoki, (2000) have been used when adapting English Web sites to Lithuanian. Namely, the portions of a given Web site have been translated into a target language, the sites have been culturally localized for a target audience, and a new content, independent of the original site, in some cases, has been developed in a target country.

Web site localization is an elaborate process, requiring skills and considerations of a multitude of aspects. Despite the great variety of Web sites, certain common features could be outlined as common to all of the localized Web sites. Thus, it could be concluded that there are three most important aspects to be taken into account during the process of the Web site localization, namely: linguistic adaptation, visual design and cultural adaptation. Cultural adaptation occupies a very important role in this process, as it interrelates with the rest of the aspects and functions as the basis for the changes performed in the localized Web site.

The research results show that in the process of localization the most important tasks are: to deal with cultural differences and to find appropriate terms and names for new technologies, goods and services spreading in the Lithuanian market. The majority of the new words coming to Lithuania are from the fields of telecommunications or banking. The terminology used in the Web sites of hotels is less loaded with loanwords or neologisms.

Although almost every article about Web site localization and translation stresses the importance of appropriate e-language translation in localized Web sites, the analysis has revealed that when adapting foreign e-business to the Lithuanian environment many linguistic problems appear in translation. The Web site adaptation has a big impact on the target language. As through the foreign businesses a lot of new goods and services are being introduced to Lithuania, new terms and concepts naming them should be created. These words and expressions have to be translated or adapted into Lithuanian, and this is a particularly important task, as mistranslation or lack of information coming with translated words may result not only in situations when customers misunderstand what is intended to be presented in a Web site, but also in failures for the companies to develop the business successfully.

The research has revealed that the prevailing types of translation procedures used in translating the terms of telecommunications, banking and commerce are naturalization and transference. Transference is a procedure dominating in translation of the name, although in many cases this procedure results in deficient information. This is when addition and note procedure is most helpful.

The other frequently employed translation procedure is naturalization. The majority of words transferred with the procedure of naturalization have already been established as international terms in Lithuanian. Although in some cases the translated terms remain problematic. The use of naturalization procedure for translating English terms or names makes an impact on the Lithuanian terminology. This procedure in some cases helps avoiding creation of Lithuanian terms for certain words. However, not always adapted words provide the necessary information about their meaning and the lack of information is inconvenient for the users of the Web sites.

The other procedures used in the Web site adaptation include componential analysis, reduction, and combination procedures.

English influences the linguistic environment of Lithuania through the Web sites of foreign countries, even when those Web sites are being localized and culturally adapted. This may be the result of a lack of competence of people working in the field of the Web site localization. However, in some cases maintaining English word structure in Lithuanian terms or names is a part of marketing strategy and consideration of customers’ needs or habits. Very often English terms of telecommunications or mobile technologies are more familiar to people than their Lithuanian equivalents, as transferred English words settle in the language of everyday life before they are adapted according to the Lithuanian rules. Considering the fact that people prefer English words for naming certain technologies, companies choose customer preferences instead of trying to introduce new Lithuanian words. This is how Lithuanian netspeak is created. The analysis of localization may be an indication that cultural aspects do not always embrace proper translation and complete adaptation of language. A great amount of transferred and naturalized words in the Web sites show that in certain cases ignorance of the search for Lithuanian equivalents is a part of cultural adaptation process in Lithuania.

References

Šio darbo tyrimo objektas – lietuviškos bei angliškos užsienio kompanijų interneto svetainių adaptacija.

Santrauka

Vykdyta atsitiktinai parinktų skirtumų atsirandantų interneto svetainių adaptacija svarbi ne tik kultūriniam perteikimui, bet ir kultūriniam pavadinimui, kurie turi būti tinkamai pritaikomi ir adaptuojami tam tikroje kalboje. Be to, tinkama terminų kalbos vertimuose įvairios kultūros s. Darbuotojų vizualinę informaciją išdėstymo kryptis, vizualinę interpretaciją bei kultūrinę interpretaciją.