

Summary of discussion on
Localization and Translator Training

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At the start of the conference two questions were put forward:

1. “What, for you, is meant by ‘localization’ and ‘the localization industry’?”
2. “Is translation a part of localization, or is localization a part of translation?”

Anthony Pym referred to the second question as being particularly delicate for translation theorists, who “tend to see all this talk about ‘localization’ as simply encroaching on their territory”. He also suggested that localization might not differ much from a dynamic concept of translation.

Regarding question one, Daniel Gouadec described “localization” as “translation PLUS any number of changes to the necessarily composite material to be ‘localized’”.

Vanessa Enriquez, a Ph.D. student in Translation and Intercultural Studies and a freelance translator in Spain, described “localization” as “the concept [which] involves the convergence of language and technology, necessary to adapt any kind of digital content (software, websites, portals, online support systems, etc.) to a given target locale”.

Gemma Alonso, from the Universidad de Alicante, did not find any new features in localization, which she understood as the restriction of meaning to a particular context. She considered it as a relatively new term to name contextualized translation. In this regard, Tytti Suojanen (University of Tampere) and Jean Vienne (University of Turku) also considered that localization appears to refer to the adaptation processes already inherent in translation.

In line with the above reasoning, Beverly Adab believed that the concept of localization could be usefully added to the family of concepts developed by functionalist approaches to translation. However, Adab considered that the concept of “localization” tends to refer essentially to an IT process that requires some degree of cultural awareness.

In answer to question two, many discussants agreed that translation is inevitably a part of the localization process.

Frederik Verbeke, from the Universidad del País Vasco, suggested there was not much difference between Anthony Pym's definition of "localization"¹, depicted as a one-to-many scenario, and the literary models that "were transferred in the 19th century from dominating cultural system(s) to many different cultures". Anthony Pym questioned this interpretation and explained his emphasis on the "one-to-many" aspect of localization models:

The 19th-century transfer of cultural models had nothing corresponding to internationalization (as understood in localization theory). Mallarmé and Zola were writing for Paris. They had no idea that their models would be adapted to other cultures; they did not try to allow for such later adaptations. [...] The real problem is that we call the industry "localization", when internationalization is the key element of it.

Chris Chrystello, a professional translator writing from Portugal, offered a contrasting example where localization involved the translation of *one* text into *one* multicultural locale. He referred to the production of local videos for Portuguese-speaking people in Australia who came from diverse parts of the world, had their own sub-cultures, but shared the same language. Ignacio Garcia, writing from the University of Western Sydney, found this a relevant example and "each time more common in the area of community translation/interpreting, given migration patterns in developed countries".

According to Daniel Gouadec, the issue is not what the relationship of translation to localization is but "rather how translators (and trainers) should conceive of localization". To him, the questions should be:

What skills are required to localize what? Which of those are specific to full-blown translators? Which of those are not currently translators' skills? Which of those could or should be learned by translators or taught by trainers? At what cost? In what way? For what kind and amount of added value?

Candace Seguinot (York University, Toronto, Canada) agreed with Gouadec that "the relationship of translation to localization is not as important as understanding the relationship between the skills each requires and the relationship between training and the market". Louise Brunette (Université Concordia, Québec) mentioned a "paradigm shift" and saw localization as

¹ "We find centralized production of the one 'internationalized' text or product, which is then more efficiently 'localized' (translated and adapted) to a wide range of consumer environments ('locales')". Anthony Pym, "Globalization and the Politics of Translation Studies" (2003).

http://www.fut.es/~apym/on-line/globalization_canada.pdf.

having more at stake than just cultural and linguistic matters. Seguinot, however, considered the real shift to have been brought about by globalization.

Vladimir Pedchenko, from the Translation Office 3000 Development Team, distinguished translation from localization in terms of constraints: “translation has constraints of quality and deadline. Localization has constraints of quality, deadline, plus, at least, important constraints of software [...]”.

In his concluding statement on the opinions expressed about these two questions, Anthony Pym considered that, in general, the term “localization” was seen as representing some kind of change, more superficial for some than for others. Peter Sandrini, from the University of Innsbruck, failed to see the need for discussion of

[...] some broad concept of localization in the sense of adapting a text (or a product) to a local audience because this is what translation theory has been all about in the past 20 years [...]. Localization, however, has brought some new aspects into translation insofar as it deals with new kinds of texts (software user interfaces, online help or multimedia texts published on the WWW) deeply linked with technology.