

Training for localization (replies to a questionnaire)

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What, for you, is meant by “localization” and “the localization industry”?

One way to define localization may be to see how it differs from conventional translation. That difference lies in the nature of the content it deals with. Localization can be seen as an industrial process applied to content that is predominantly in digital form and needs to be adapted to target market requirements. The localization industry can be regarded as a business sector that serves customers seeking globalization of their products across linguistic and cultural barriers. Localization is much more explicitly associated with globalization than conventional translation is.

Is translation a part of localization, or is localization a part of translation?

Continuing on from the above discussion, localization can be seen in the context of globalization. Translation, in turn, can be placed as the core of both localization and globalization (see Figure 1). From the point of view of traditional translation, localization was initially considered an extension of software engineering. Now it is treated as a new form of translation.

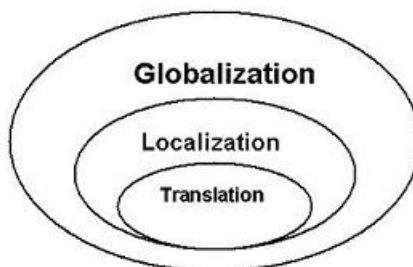


Figure 1. Interrelation between globalization, localization and translation

Is localization just a result of technology, or does it involve deep conceptual changes?

Localization is closely linked to the technology that is enabling new kinds of content such as computer software and web pages. The content imposes the use of new technology, i.e. localization tools, if it is to be localized adequately. This industrial process was developed more or less independently of traditional translation and directly in response to market needs. As such, its practice developed before its theory. This may be part of the reason why localization was not included in Translation Studies until recently. Localization is an ideal case for theorizing the future of language support, embodying conceptual changes to translation in its traditional sense.

In what ways, if any, should localization change traditional conceptions of translation?

Think of the difference between translating a technical document 20 years ago and localizing Microsoft Word. The latter involves changes far beyond the conversion of written text from the source to the target language. It affects the software design itself (e.g. character sets, locale-specific features, etc). The internationalization process is of particular interest to me. In the localization industry, it deals with localizability and translatability of the content at the onset of product design and development. This approach contrasts with the traditional approach to translation as an after-thought, independent of the source text creation.

Another level of change can be seen in the use of technology for translation in the context of localization. While Machine Translation (MT) has not yet made a significant contribution to localization, tools such as translation memories (TM) and content management systems have affected the entire workflow in which the translation process has to fit. The impact of these tools on the translation process is beginning to be observed. For example, TMs are accused of creating a peep-hole effect by “chunking” the text or inducing patchwork translation that is made up of a collection of segments picked up from various memories. Similarly new is the concept of pre-translation, whereby matching segments from TM or known terms are already inserted in the target language when the translator sees the source text.

These changes are quite significant, as they transform the concept of traditional translation.

Should all translator-training programs include localization?

For any students who are hoping to work in a commercial translation environment, at least an awareness of what localization entails is essential. This is not only because students are necessarily going to be involved in

localization projects but also because various dimensions of the localization model (e.g. translation tools, workflow, etc.) are spreading into the translation industry in general. So, a certain basic knowledge of localization is becoming more and more relevant.

Should all localization-training programs include translation?

Referring back to Figure 1, translation is seen as the core of localization. Localization cannot stand alone without translation. For this reason, a basic understanding of what is involved in the human translation process should be included in localization training programs.

What elements of localization should be obligatory in the curriculum for translators? Which electronic tools should be taught?

At least a general overview of the localization industry and what localization entails should be part of the curriculum for translators. Tools such as TMs and terminology management systems are becoming widespread in the translation industry as a whole and therefore should ideally be taught as part of translator programs. On top of being able to manage these tools, basic computing knowledge is important, such as different file formats, file management, tags and character sets that are essential for localization.

What should be the main components in a curriculum for training people for the localization industry?

Localization involves different types of skills. The training of personnel will therefore depend on the particular role to be filled in. For example, skills required for localization project managers would obviously be different from those needed for localization engineers. Assuming that task-specific training will be given subsequently, it is important for all players in localization to understand that it requires a smooth integration of software engineering and translation. Before, localizers came from a software engineering background and knew nothing of what was involved in translation. So the balance between these two areas should be a common denominator for the curriculum for all kinds of localization players.

At what level should students receive training in localization?

In the case of Dublin City University, Software Localization is offered in the second semester as an optional module for Graduate Diploma/MA in Translation Studies course. The backgrounds of the students in this course are varied in terms of professional experience, which is reflected in their computing skills as well as knowledge of translation. However, a Translation Technology module is compulsory and is taught in the first semester. This

formula seems to work well, as the students who take the Software Localization module are those who have particular interest in localization. They may consider they are able to cope with its technical aspects because they have previously done the Translation Technology module, which touches on some generic aspects of localization.

Does the localization industry need interaction with the traditional translator-training institutions?

Given the nature of the rapid changes involved, the localization industry could play an important role in pointing out knowledge gaps to the training institutions, which could ideally use the feedback to improve their curricula. At Dublin City University mutually beneficial industry links have been developed over the years. The industry tells us what training is needed, in some cases donating tools and sponsoring prizes. We respond to the industry needs to the best of our ability. Many of our translation graduates with applied languages and computational linguistics degrees have gone to work in the industry. They in turn provide us with very useful ongoing industry contacts.

Do traditional translator-training institutions need interaction with the localization industry?

Returning to the practice vs. theory discussion, the industry can feed vital information about practice into academia, where the theorization of practice can take place. In the long run, theorization could help practice to advance, as well as help train people in the most effective manner. The industry needs to obtain immediately useful graduates, which are adept at the constant changes that face the industry. My personal objective in education is to incorporate a long-term view to give students the ability to cope with changes effectively. Trying to understand the theory behind the practice and reflecting on it are important dimensions that academia can add in interaction with the localization industry.

Who should fund the training programs?

In addition to the conventional scenario of students funding themselves with a government contribution, partnership between educational institutions and the industry should be considered as another alternative. At Dublin City University, a doctoral student in Translation Studies has recently been signed up. This person is sponsored 2/3 of the way by a company whose specific problem area is the topic of the research. The university provides their library and supervisors, while the industry funding includes equipment, desk space and company-specific technical expertise/supervisor. This is a new and exciting development. The University is also encouraging translation

technology tool vendors to provide it with the problem areas that students could use as their research topics for MA dissertations. This pattern is perhaps common in science disciplines, but may be new in Translation Studies and seems to be a positive development for the future.