GLOBAL PERCEPTION IN TRANSLATING THE CONTENT OF WEBSITES

Mariana Coancă[1]

Abstract

Most of the time the visitors of a website are willing to purchase products if the content of the website is presented in their native language. Therefore, translators become the most import key, because they translate not only the words and sentences on the website, but also the general tone and the key messages, adapting each cultural reference. We focused on the translators' task and we presented some techniques regarding the translation process. In order to exemplify this aspect, we selected texts from three websites and focused on the words, expressions, idioms that pose problems to their translation into Romanian. We drew the conclusion that we need to translate the content of an e-commerce site in a descriptive way, to ensure the customers' understanding because we aimed to reach the lowest level of reader.

Keywords: translation, terminology, conceptual equivalence, key message, accuracy.

1. Terminology And Translation

Terminology plays an important role when a certain language wants to distinguish itself as a technical and scientific language. The technological development of our society, has had a great impact on e-commerce terminology. Being more than a simple linguistic instrument, the terminology of e-commerce websites is an essential vector which transfers technical and scientific knowledge. Teaching various terminologies has been for a long time the privilege of the translation shools. Teaching terminology means "to look for the characteristics and qualities of the technical and scientific communications" (Humbley 2008: 261-265).

Translating e-commerce websites means knowing e-commerce terms that occur in our native language or other languages. Obviously, the position of terminology in learning how to translate the websites, cannot limit to the learning of word lists. Futhermore, translation requires an exquisite interpretation of the text meaning and the terms in context; this interpretation cannot be made without thorough knowledge concerning the e-commerce field. A term gets a real meaning only if it is linked to other terms specific to the field, establishing logical connections with them.

If the term integrates in a field, it becomes part of the discourse. Thus, the specialized translation is subject to certain lexical constraints: collocations, idioms and expressions specific to the respective field. Teaching the translated terminology is achieved both at a conceptual level (by knowing the field) and a functional level (by knowing the specialized discourse). Slodzian outlines the necessity to replace the term into discourse:

---

1 Romanian-American University, Bucharest, coancamaria@yahoo.com

"We take into consideration that terminology, from the translation perspective, leads to the emphasis on the notion of syntagmatic terminology, consisting of terms which are being very active in the discourse. Additionally, the connections between term and text are put in the fore-ground" (Slodzian 2000: 61-85).

Furthermore, "relying on a terminologic background, one can ensure not only the coherence of all the texts, but also the coherence of the text subject to translation" (Humbley 2008: 261-265). The society's technological development has had a great impact on various terminologies. Likewise, it has changed the proportion between the literal translations and the specialized ones; the latter ones have been very demanded lately. This aspect should lead to a thorough analysis, in order to meet the theoretical and practical needs of the technical translations. So, it is highly important for us to get familiar with the websites' terminology, to study the key problems concerning the websites' translation so as to achieve our main goal (conceptual equivalence in the translation process).

2. The Role Of Language

The main goal of an online company is to attract other foreign customers. In order to achieve this goal, its customers have to receive and understand the company's online messages. Additionally, the content of e-commerce websites should be translated in other languages, in order to build trust with local customers.

The Internet World Stats reported that in 2010 the English language was the top language on the Internet with 536.6 million users with Chinese following closely at 444.9, then Spanish 153.3, Japanese 99.1, Portuguese 82.5, German 75.2, Arabic 65.4, French 59.8, Russia 59.7 and Korean 39.4 (see http://www.suite101.com/content/e-commerce-language-conversion-software-vs-hiring-translators-a301443).

 "If I am selling to you, I speak your language. If I am buying from you, dann müssen Sie Deutsch sprechen." is a relevant quote belonging to German Chancellor Willy Brandt. Briefly, he points out the fact that online companies tend to communicate with vendors in their native language. Therefore, we would like to add that translation of e-commerce sites can help customers to better understand the description of the products, their features (see the article at http://www.suite101.com/content/e-commerce-language-conversion-software-vs-hiring-translators-a301443). Also, this aspect can lead to an increase of orders and sales, ensuring that essential information such as order-tracking, contact numbers and transaction details are given in the customer's native language.

3. Language Conversion Software Or Hiring Translators To Translate The E-Commerce Websites?

Let us see whether a language conversion software is more appropriate and reliable to translate the content of e-commerce websites than a translator (his service being expensive and time-consuming).

Firstly, we would like to mention that *translating* a website is different from *localizing* the language. When we translate a website without localizing it, we convert the language and

this language can contain sentences with inappropriate words and terminological units that are not commonly used. Let us take a text from the content of a website and translate it with Google translator. The result is not preposterous, the translation is very confusing and incorrect.

Mancine's body butter is formulated by *whipping* botanical extracts together with shea butter to create a perfect, emollient-rich body butter. It is great to re-hydrate and nourish the skin.

Mancine corpul este formulată de biciuire extracte botanice, împreună cu unt de shea pentru a crea o unt perfect, corp emolienta-bogat. Este mare pentru a re-hidrat şi hrănesc pielea.

Nowadays online businesses can benefit from three types of *language conversion software*: software programs installed onto their server, software to convert the language and then paste the results onto the website and third-party hosted software which automatically translates the website for the user.

Regarding the second one, the one that we brought into discussion is quite inexpensive and has a quick integration. In spite of having a quick integration, there are several drawbacks: language is not localized, expressions and words used incorrectly, confusing translations (see the article at http://www.suite101.com/content/e-commerce-language-conversion-software-vs-hiring translators-a301443).

Secondly, *localization* is the process of converting the content and the design of a *website* in a form that is specific to the foreign market both linguistically and culturally. This way, the e-commerce site makes a good impression and generates revenues.

When we use *language conversion software*, we help customers navigate the site and understand what the online business is trying to tell us. *Translators* can make the e-commerce site appear as if the business was completely focused on the foreign country and more international customers become interested in the online products.

In comparison to *language conversion software*, *translators'* work is easy for customers to understand, builds trust with international customers and locates within a country, being in a permanent contact with local residents. Among the drawbacks regarding the hiring of translators, we mention that this service is more expensive and time-consuming. In order to avoid blunders and awkward translations, we consider that hiring translators to translate e-commerce websites is the best choice. Furthermore, it is recommended that the translations be made by a *native speaker* of the language that the online company wants the e-commerce website converted. To put it in a nutshell, only these *translators* are good at using idioms, expressions and sayings that are common to native speakers.

4. Translating The Content Of E-Commerce Websites

We have previously mentioned that *translators* are the *native speakers* of the target language, but they should also know specific terms of the e-commerce terminology. If

they make use of a database (thus ensuring accuracy), *translators* check the text from the cultural point of view, taking into account the subtleness of each language, so as to keep the message of the text. Sometimes it is extremely hard to translate from English into another language. Armando Roggio mirrors this aspect in his article entitled *Ecommerce Know-How: Translate your Ecommerce Site*. Furthermore, he mentions that if we wanted to translate the idiom "don't judge a book by its cover" into French, it would more convenient to say, *l'habit na fait pas le moine*, (the clothes don't make the monk) than *ne juge pas un livre par sa couverture*, which is the literal translation. The French idiom, *l'habit na fait pas le moine* has the equivalent meaning to the English idiom, even though the actual words are nothing alike. This idiom is used in English to say that things are not always what they seem, or that sometimes what is inside of a thing is greater than what is on its surface (see the article at http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/1241-Ecommerce-Know-How-Translate-Your-Ecommerce-Site).

Taking into consideration this article, we admitted that we are able to find equivalents, as long as we understand the languages involved in the translation process. Sometimes the content of an e-commerce site consists of too long sentences and *translators* are forced to cut the sentences and to rewrite short sentences in order to convey the message of the texts.

We selected some texts from the content of three websites (online companies that sell beauty products, furniture and watches). If we want to translate into Romanian the texts, our activity will be marked by the following aspects:

a. Mancine's body butter is formulated by *whipping* botanical extracts together with shea butter to create a perfect, emollient-rich body butter. It is great to re-hydrate and nourish the skin. It can be used daily all over body concentrating on extra dry areas, particularly on the hands, feet, knees and elbows.

We started to translate the text in *a.*, but we realized that it is better for us to rewrite the text in English, then translate in order to transmit a clear and concise message to the customers, not forgetting two important components: to recommend the product and to urge customers to buy it. Here is the reduced text that could be translated into Romanian:

Mancine's body butter is an emollient-rich body butter which contains botanical extracts together with shea butter. Use it daily to re-hydrate and nourish the skin, especially dry areas: hands, feet, knees and elbows.

b. This coconut and vanilla blend will leave your skin smelling *scent-sational*!

c. OPI latest gift pack is an on-the-go manicure kit. Pampering has never looked so gorgeous with two pretty pink nail lacquers and adorable FREE nail file and tweezers. *Bring the salon touch* to your fingertips!

d. We do offer a *layaway program* with no penalties for cancellation. Please contact us below for more details.

e. Algologie Moisturizing Cooling Cream- Gel. Suits dry skin, with oily areas. Good for hot climates. A cream-gel, with fresh and non oily texture, acts in three ways to moisturize and brighten *thirsty skin*.

Concerning b., c., d., e., the literal translation of the words and phrases in bold would lead to an awkward translation. To convey the intended meaning, we should look for synonyms and should adapt them to the Romanian language. Of course, knowing legal terms is a plus (see d.).

f. Delivery was fast and customer service is *top notch*. We will be shopping with you more. Thank you.

g. Our delivery times vary. A good *rule of thumb* is to allow 4-6 weeks of delivery.

As our goal is to reach the lowest level of reader, we must not translate literally the phrases in italics (f. and g.), because we do not convey the intended meaning. We need to provide an easy-to-read content and not a confusing translation. Last, but not least, we communicate the intended meaning of the phrases, in essence, we do not translate the actual English words. Also, we could make a list of *English business idioms* and find their *Romanian equivalent* so as to make our translation activity much easier. Another example is the product description below:

h. Citizen Exceed Solar Radio Women's Watch # EBD75-2721. Dial: *Shell white butterfly*. Band: Stainless Steel. Case: Stainless steel. Glass: spherical sapphire glass (*non-reflective coating*). Clasp: *fold over clasp* with push button. Caliber: H336. Driving period: Full-charge time about 1.5 years. Accuracy: ± 15 seconds/month (non-receiving).

We need to translate it in a descriptive way, to ensure customers' understanding. But, first of all, we should know the specific language used in this description: *shell white butterfly, non-reflective coating, fold over clasp*. By using specialized dictionaries, we translate the product description in due time and identify interdisciplinary terms.

5. Conclusions

The World Wide Web plays an important role in our daily life. As consumers, we can meet our needs by placing online orders. That it is why, online companies should present their profile and services properly using the language of the country in which they operate, in order to meet the customers' needs and understanding. By translating the site into the customer's native language, the company will have an increase of sales, orders, transactions, mainly because clients understand the description of the products and their features.

The visitors of a website are ready to order and purchase products, especially when the content of the website is presented in their native language. Therefore, translators become the most import key, because they translate not only the words and sentences on the website, but also the general tone and the key messages, adapting each cultural reference. We focused on the translators' task and we presented some techniques regarding the

translation process. Good written English language can be very difficult to translate into Romanian. To exemplify this aspect, we selected texts from three websites and we concentrated on the words, expressions, idioms that pose problems to their translation into Romanian.

We reached the conclusion that translators (native speakers) are more reliable than language conversion software. In comparison with the language conversion software, translators create an accurate text for the potential customers and more precisely, the translated content is consistent with the corporate image of the online company.

References

1. Bidu-Vrănceanu, Angela- *Terminologie şi Terminologii*, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2010.
2. Bidu-Vrănceanu, Angela- *Lexicul specializat în mişcare de la dictionare la texte*, Editura Universitaţii din Bucureşti, 2007.
3. Cabre, Maria T., *Terminology. Methods. Applications*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John. Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999.
4. Humbley, John. "Terminology, Computing and Translation". *Terminology* 2(2008): 261–266.
5. Slodzian, Monique. "L'émergence d'une terminologie textuelle et le retour du sens". In *Le sens en terminologie*, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 61-85. Lyon, 2000.

Web Pages

6. Ecommerce. "E-Commerce: Language Conversion Software vs. Hiring Translators". Accessed April 28, 2011. http://www.suite101.com/content/e-commerce-language-conversion-software-vs-hiring-translators-a301443.
7. Practical ecommerce. "Ecommerce Know-How: Translate Your Ecommerce Site". Accessed April 28, 2011 http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/1241-Ecommerce-Know-How-Translate-Your-Ecommerce-Site.
8. Body Treats. "Product description" Accessed April 28,2011. http://www.onlinebeautyproducts.com.au/product_info.php?cPath=110&products_id=268 .
9. Furniture From Home. "Terms of delivery". Accessed April 28, 2011. http://furniturefromhome.com/category/Home-Library.
10. Bodying.com. "Product description". Accessed April 28, 2011. http://www.bodying.com/citizen-exceed-solar-radio-ebd75-2721/watches/18912.