




## Position of the translator as an agent in website localization: The case of Turkey\*

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### APA Citation:

Canım Alkan, S. (2017). Position of the translator as an agent in website localization: the case of Turkey. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(2), 510-525.

Submission Date:31/03/2017

Acceptance Date:17/07/2017

### Abstract

The rapid growth of e-commerce has contributed to the development of website localization activity as a major professional industry. Despite the high volume of website localization practices, there is little research on translators participating in website localization projects. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the position of the translator as an agent in website localization processes in Turkey. In this study data were collected through interviews. Nine interviewees were interviewed face-to-face using interview forms in Istanbul between September 2011 and February 2012. In determining the corpus of interviews, maximum variation sampling was used. All of the interviewees took part in website localization processes as agents but in different positions. The conceptual and theoretical framework of the study comprised functional translation theories by Justa Holz-Mänttari and Hans Vermeer, and Agency Theory. The study showed that translators in production networks experienced the problem of information asymmetry which affected their performance negatively. It is common to associate low levels of quality with the translator's incompetence. This study suggested that when the translation/localization product fails to meet the expectations of the initiator, it is more than reasonable to look at not just the translator but the whole production network to find the source of problem.

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*Keywords:* Agency; asymmetric information; qualitative research; translator's position; website localization

## 1. Introduction

The proliferation of e-commerce has contributed to remarkable changes in the field of translation. One of them is the development of a major professional industry called website localization. The term *localization* has been in use since the early 1980s (Dunne, 2015) and its definition has been made by various scholars of Translation Studies (TS)<sup>‡</sup> (Bengi-Öner, 2006; Canım Alkan, 2013; Cronin, 2003; Dunne, 2006; Jiménez-Crespo, 2013; O'Hagan & Ashworth, 2002; Pym, 2004; Pym, 2010; Yalın, 2005). "The concept of localization has not been stable neither within the evolving localization industry" (Achkasov, 2017, p. 289) nor in the TS literature. For practical reasons it can be seen as the process of modifying a website or software with use of specific localization tools in order to facilitate its use for target users. This article deals with a type of localization called *website localization*. In this

\* This article was extracted from the PhD thesis titled "Web Sitesi Yerelleştirmelerinde Bir Eyleyen Olarak Çevirmenin Konumu: Türkiye Örneği" (=The Position of the Translator as an Agent in Website Localization: The Case of Turkey) by the present author.

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‡ A detailed discussion of the definitions can be found in the abovementioned thesis.

study, the term *website localization* is used to refer to the process of modifying a website in order to facilitate its use for target receivers. Although there are numerous studies that cover the topic of website localization, to our knowledge there is no specific study that focuses on the position of translator in this process. It is well-known that it is difficult to establish a standard model to define localization processes. In this dynamic process, translators also have dynamic roles with tangible task descriptions. Bearing this in mind, this study aimed to discuss the position of translator in website localization processes and the factors affecting his position.

### 1.1. Literature review

The literature review for this study showed that there is no specific study which focuses on the position of translator in website localization process. However, there are significant studies in TS literature that nurture our understanding about it.

Some TS scholars who dealt with the role of translator in localization process focused on the localization industry's perception of translator as a linguistic transferer rather than an intercultural mediator. One of these scholars is Nauert Sandra. She states that since there is no systematic or standard website process definition in the industry and websites are rarely considered an object of translation, translators are made to translate sole written material without context (2007, p. 3). A similar criticism comes from Miguel A. Jiménez-Crespo. He stresses the reductionist approach of the localization industry to the role of the translator in localization processes as such: "Translators handled textual strings, while localization experts handled other cross-cultural aspects" (2013, p. 15). In other words, translators are made to serve as natural-language string transferers (Achkasov, 2016) rather than experts in text formation and intercultural communication. As a result, translators can only take micro-decisions whereas macro-decisions such as those related to the web design, sequence of paragraphs, textual additions and omissions, adding and changing hyperlinks are left to other agents who in some cases may not be well-equipped to do so.

The problem of decontextualization caused by translation technology in localization processes has been addressed many times in TS literature (Biau Gil, 2005; Jiménez-Crespo, 2009; Pym, 2011). One of the most common of these technologies is translation memory systems (TMS). As is well accepted by most TS scholars, translators and clients, TMS are very advantageous tools in website localization. They offer time and cost savings, higher productivity and consistency levels (Canim, 2011)<sup>§</sup>, and easy "exchange of linguistic data" (Sandrini, 2016, p. 56). They can also "extract translatable from code, which is then protected, that is, blocked, and sometimes even hidden from the translator's eyes" (Pym, 2011, p. 2). On one hand, this is an advantage since translators do not have to deal with codes and can focus on translating. On the other hand, this attribute of tool leads to situations in which the translator can only see the text to be translated in a decontextualized setting. He cannot see the formatting or how web pages are seen as a whole, the way that the user see them. In decontextualized translation situations, translators are put to "work without visual context and without a final and whole source text to use as a reference" (Biau Gil, 2005, p. 30). However, they need to see the non-verbal communication elements such as images, sounds and videos and formatting to comprehend and translate verbal elements (Biau Gil, 2005). As Macklovitch and Russell convincingly argues drawing on Bédard (1998), "it is not always possible to translate a sentence in isolation; the same sentence may have to be rendered differently in different documents, or even within the same document" (2000, p. 4). In some cases, it may be possible to see the source web pages as a whole online if the translator is lucky enough. But this is not always the case.

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<sup>§</sup> For a detailed discussion on benefits and limitations of translation memory tools, see Frank Austermuehl, *Training Translators to Localize*, available on [http://isg.urv.es/library/papers/Austermuehl\\_Training.pdf](http://isg.urv.es/library/papers/Austermuehl_Training.pdf), Access date: 21 July 2016.

From one perspective, the ability of TMSs to filter and protect code, and preserve formatting might be an advantage for translators. They do not alter the codes and formatting in the file by mistake. But what if translator needs to alter them on purpose? Translators are not allowed this responsibility any way. However, a text consists of both verbal and non-verbal material, and translating a text means translating both verbal and nonverbal material. Not all translators are well-equipped technically or motivated to deal with non-verbal material. However, localizing a website is a teamwork. In a localization team there will be members who are competent in dealing with non-verbal material. The decisions about it should be consistent and coherent with decisions related to verbal material and vice versa. Therefore, team members should work in a communicative and cooperative setting. However, as also pointed out by Biau Gil (2005) they work in isolation.

Another feature of TMSs is segmentation or chunking. TMSs break down texts or content into smaller units, segments. Chunking is an attribute also shared by content management systems (CMS) and globalization management systems (GMS). CMS is “based on the writing and storage of ‘information chunks’, short texts giving specific information; they are labelled according to topic, client, etc.” (Biau Gil, 2005, p. 30). “These systems separate the text from its formatting and layout, thus enabling the same or similar versions of a document to be automatically published in different formats such as print, web, help and viewer format (cross-media)” (Schubert, 2010, p. 354). GMS is a different version of the former used for the management of multilingual websites (Biau Gil, 2005). They compare source texts with their different language versions and detect untranslated parts of them. These parts are extracted from their context and then sent to the translator. By translation industry, these chunks are seen as context-free independent units which can be recycled in different contexts. The translator is expected to translate these information chunks without context and co-text (Biau Gil, 2005; Jimenez-Crespo, 2009; Macklovitch & Russell, 2000; Pym, 2010).

Due to the economic concerns of the industry and the limitations of translation technology, translation is seen as a puzzle building activity. In this activity, the translator is let to move only at a micro-level. Even if the translator has the ability and knowledge to go beyond the micro-level of sentence, he does not have the “motivation or freedom to go beyond simplistic source text structures and the preexisting translations imposed upon the translator by the TMS” (Austermühl, 2006, p. 77). Macro-decisions are let to agents with more power.

In addition to limitations of translation technology, TS literature indicates that another factor affecting the position of the translator in website localization is the client’s perception of translator. In his study on the role of translator in translation of Slovenian company websites, David Limon (2008) argues that the translator should be considered as a genuine mediator between languages and cultures rather than a more mechanistic language transferer. However, he admits that in Slovenia clients do not want translators to make interventions in text because “translators in Slovenia are not seen as experts in this way, but as language specialists who are brought in to produce a target language text that closely replicates the original” (p. 67).

It can be deduced from the literature review that although functional translation theories see translator as an expert in intercultural communication, localization practices of the industry do not let translator to demonstrate his expertise. Because certain preconditions asserted by the theories are not met. Holz-Mänttari (as cited in Munday, 2001) indicated that translation is a complex communicative action that is carried out by a team of people in division of labour. These people are the initiator (the agent who orders the translation), commissioner (who commissions the translator), translator (intercultural communication expert), user of message and receiver of message. Team members should communicate and co-operate with each other in order to realize the communicative intention of the initiator. Similar to the theory of translatorial action, Scopus theory by Hans Vermeer considers translator as an expert of intercultural communication (Vermeer, 2004). He takes decisions by using

his expertise and according to the purpose of translation. Therefore, the purpose of translation should be specified precisely in the commission of client (Vermeer, 2004). The translator can make negotiation about the commission with the client and lead the client. Vermeer confidently asserts that “a commission can (and should) only be binding and conclusive, and accepted as such by the translator, if the conditions are clear enough” (2004, p. 235). For Vermeer, client is also responsible in the realization of his goal. He does not consider client as someone who just assigns a task to translator but as an agent who explains and negotiates his expectations from the output with translator (Canım Alkan, 2013). So it is evident that communication and cooperation are preconditions for the translator to transform his translation competence into performance.

In this study, *agency theory* was used as a complementary theory to explain why translators behave in certain ways in website localization networks. The theory is relatively new for TS literature. Kristiina Abdallah (2010) used it as theoretical framework in her study questioning the translator’s position in production networks and his perception of his own agency. Esmail Haddadian Moghaddam (2012) used the concepts of *outcome uncertainty* and *risk-averse* in his PhD thesis “Agency in the Translation and Production of Novels from English in Modern Iran”. Andy Lung Jan Chan (2008) used the concepts of *asymmetric information* and *adverse selection* in his PhD thesis on translation profession and translator certification. Also, the theoretical framework of Juliette Scott’s (2015) article on the agency of freelance legal translators contained agency theory.

Kathleen Eisenhardt (1989) makes a comprehensive assessment of the theory. She defines it as a theory “directed at the ubiquitous agency relationship, in which one party (the principal) delegates work to another (the agent), who performs that work” (1989, p. 58). In this relationship principal and agent make a contract which might be verbal or written and their relationship is governed by this contract. However, the contract does not solve all problems that occur between principal and agent. Agency theory is concerned with resolving two problems that occur in agency relationship:

The first is the agency problem that arises when (a) the desires or goals of the principal and agent conflict and (b) it is difficult or expensive for the principal to verify what the agent is actually doing. The problem here is that the principal cannot verify that the agent has behaved appropriately. The second is the problem of risk sharing that arises when the principal and agent have different attitudes toward risk. The problem here is that the principal and the agent may prefer different actions because of the different risk preferences. (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 58)

In this study, two main concepts of the Agency Theory are found helpful to use in explaining the translator’s position and behaviour in website localization processes. These are information asymmetry and moral hazard. Information asymmetry could be defined as a situation where one party has more information than the other party. “Moral hazard refers to lack of effort on the part of the agent” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 61). It “may arise in situations where the principal cannot monitor, post-contractually, the agent’s actions and where the self-interested agent pursues his private goals at the expense of the principal’s goals” (Abdallah, 2010, p. 15). Eisenhardt (1989) calls this behaviour of the agent shirking.

## 1.2. Research questions

This study addressed the following questions:

- 1- What position do translators have in website localization processes in Turkey?

- 2- What are the factors that affect their position and behaviour?

## 2. Method

The research approach of this study was qualitative since the aim was to demonstrate differences and diversities without making generalizations, and make detailed and through analysis of the data. Data were collected through form-based interviews since it “allows the researcher to collect systematic and comparable data from different interviewees and it is easier to organize and analyse data compared to dialogue-based interview” (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 39).

### 2.1. Participants

The interviewees were chosen from Turkey since interviews were conducted face-to-face. The interviewee number was limited to nine since this was a qualitative study and an in-depth analysis of data was aimed. Purposeful, maximum variation sampling was used in order to ensure diversity in terms of agency. The interviewees consisted of two employees of a multinational company operating in Turkey who were responsible for the localization of company website, two translation company managers, two localization company managers, an advertising company manager and two freelance translators. Their common feature was that they exercised agency in website localization processes. On the other hand, their experiences and their perceptions of the concept of localization were different from each other's due to the different roles they play during the process, and the complex and dynamic nature of localization processes. For privacy and confidentiality purposes, the names of interviewees and their organizations were not stated. Instead they were coded as below (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Interviewee codes

Interviewee Code	Interviewee Description
LoCo1	Localization company manager
LoCo2	Localization company manager
TrCo1	Translation company manager
TrCo2	Translation company manager
MulCo	Two employees of a multinational company operating in Turkey who are responsible for the localization of company website
FrTr1	Freelance translator
FrTr2	Freelance translator
AdCo	Advertising company manager

MulCo code was used for two employees of a multinational company operating in Turkey who were responsible for the localization of company website since they spoke for the same company as one voice. Of these two employees, one was the web editor and the other was Intranet-Internet coordinator of the company.

## 2.2. Instrument(s)

Interview forms were used to conduct interviews. Interviewees were grouped according to their agency in website localization processes. As a result, four groups were formed: localization and translation company owners, advertising company owner, multinational company employees and freelance translators. An interview form was developed for each group. A total of four separate interview forms were developed. Some questions of these forms were same and some different due to the changing agency of each group in website localization process and its relation with the process. The number of questions in the forms ranged from 14 to 20.

## 2.3. Data collection procedures

Face-to-face interviews were conducted in Turkish by the author in Istanbul from September 2011 to February 2012. Before starting the interview, an introductory text which included the aim and scope of the interview, the statement of confidentiality and the possible duration of interview was read to the interviewee and he was asked for permission to voice-record the session. Of eight interview sessions, six were voice-recorded. The interviewees of two sessions did not give permission for voice-recording due to their company's privacy policy. Instead, note-taking was used in these sessions. In order not to lose any data, the notes taken during these two sessions were read and recorded by the author as soon as a relatively quiet place was found after the sessions ended. The duration of sessions ranged from 35 to 120 minutes mostly depending on the number of questions asked and the motivation of interviewee to share information. The interviewees were very willing and co-operative, and most interviews lasted longer than the author had planned. Only one interview lasted 35 minutes due to the time constraint of interviewees (MulCo). Some questions had to be skipped.

## 2.4. Data analysis

In this study data were analysed through descriptive analysis, a type of qualitative data analysis which involves the summarization and interpretation of the data in accordance with predetermined themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Before analysis, all recordings and notes taken by the author during the interviews were transcribed. They were read many times. A thematic framework was generated based on the research questions, theoretical framework and interview questions. These themes were about the factors affecting the agency of the translator in website localization processes. These themes were: 1) the nature of the task (whether it is a website translation project or a website localization project), 2) the business model of the initiator, 3) the initiator's perception of localization and translation, and 4) the intermediary's perception of localization and translation. The transcribed data were re-read using the thematic framework. Extracts related to the themes were taken from the interview transcriptions and were categorized under the themes. The themes were presented and commented using the extracts, in other words direct quotations from the interviewees.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Localization processes have a complex and dynamic nature. Every localization project is unique. In this dynamic structure the agency of translator is not standard and unchanging, and affected by four main factors: 1) the nature of the task (whether it is a website translation project or a website localization project), 2) the business model of the initiator, 3) the initiator's perception of localization and translation, and 4) the intermediary's perception of localization and translation.

### 3.1. The Nature of Task: Website Translation or Website Localization?

It was noted in this study that the term *website localization* was used as a synonym for *website translation* by some agents. When asked about their process of website localization, some interviewees described a process which might be called *translation process* in the light of functional translation theories. For example, TrCo1 defined their localization process as follows:

We think that localization should be done thinking globally. For example; if an airline company assigns a website translation task to us, we review the websites of the world's leading airline companies. We do this even if the client does not ask for it and we inform them that the airline company which has the most similar profile as yours is, let's say X Airlines or Y Airlines or the sub-branch of Y. So, we should also use such a similar tone, sentence structure, etc. We make such suggestions. Of course, this is an added value service. Translation companies do not have such a view. ... What we do is trade as well, but what is behind is such an added value. We see it as a whole communication history. We prepare 3-4 page briefs. Where will these texts be used, who will use them, who will have what role in this translation project? All is explained in the briefs. And we select translators accordingly and give orientation to them. We even involve them in the whole process. (TrCo1)\*\*

According to TrCo1, localization is a process in which source texts are recreated in the target language according to product specifications. Detailed project plans, briefs and a number of control layers are important components of the project. Translation technology is also involved in this process. TrCo1 calls this value-added service *website localization* with an effort to separate their service from word-for-word translation service provided by many translation companies in the industry. However, according to the theoretical framework of this study, the task carried out by the team of TrCo1 could still be named translation. It is purposeful and all those value-adding tasks carried out by the company are for producing functional translations. Therefore, a translator who takes part in such a process should not necessarily be called *localizer* or *localization expert*.

For TrCo2, there was a distinction between website localization and website translation. He stated that most of their clients were advertising companies and they requested website translation service. He explained that advertising companies wanted to buy translation and consultancy services from their company and redesign different language version of websites by themselves making use of translations. Therefore, there was no need to use a localization tool. He added that only small-scaled enterprises who directly contacted their company asked for website localization service.

To sum up, when websites are concerned it is common in the translation industry to call the process of producing target market versions of web pages *website localization*. However, not every website adaptation process is a process of website localization. In some cases, what is done is website translation as exemplified above. It is the observation of the author that website localization is carried out in cases where the expertise of an advertising company is not needed and the cultural adaptation could be easily handled by the translation company. Therefore, the position of the translator changes depending on the nature of the task. In some website projects, he might serve as a translator and in others as a localizer.

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\*\* The quotations from the interviewees were translated from Turkish by the author.

### 3.2. The Business Model of Initiator

In this study, the concept of *initiator*, as defined by Holz-Mänttari, was used to indicate the agent who orders/needs the translation (as cited in Munday, 2001). The business models employed by initiators can be distinguished as insourcing, outsourcing and hybrid model according to resource use. In insourcing, website localization is done within the initiator's company and with its resources while in outsourcing it is done by another company or team outside, and hybrid model is a blend of both. These models affect the position and performance of the translator considerably.

In insourcing model, localization is carried out in-house. The translator shares the same physical environment with the initiator. Therefore, the translator can make his expertise more visible to the initiator and the other employees of company. He can work in close contact with authors and domain experts. The authors and experts "can explain meaning in detail and provide the translator with necessary information such as the target reader and scopos of translations, reference materials, term lists, etc. and explanations about the subject matter, the product, or the domain concerned" (Gouadec, 2007, p. 231). Information flow will be easier and faster compared to outsourcing model. In other words, information will less likely get lost on the way which means that the risk of asymmetric information between the initiator and the translator will be lower. Since the initiator will be relatively closer to the translator, he may have more opportunity to observe and understand how a translator translates and the requirements, limitations and challenges of a translation task, which is good news for the translator. The possibility of over-expectation from him will be lower. A second consideration in in-house working model is when the translator works within the company, it is easier to monitor him. The psychological pressure felt by the translator due to the proximity to the monitoring agent may cause the translator to put more effort into doing his job. As a result, the possibility of moral hazard on the side of the translator will be lower compared to outsourcing model.

In the use of outsourcing model and, in most cases, hybrid model freelance translators or localizers are assigned to website localization projects. The freelancers mostly work for the initiator through an *intermediary* or a number of intermediaries. *Intermediary* is an umbrella term that could be used to indicate the agents between an initiator and a translator. An intermediary is both a commissioner and a commissioned. From the perspective of translator, he is a *commissioner* as Holz-Mänttari defines (as cited in Munday, 2001). Also he is a *commissioneer*, a person to whom a commission is given (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017), from the perspective of an initiator. Therefore, in order to take both perspectives into consideration, this study suggests this new term to the TS literature. An intermediary might be a corporation such as a single or multi-language vendor (SLV or MLV), advertising agency, a web service company or a private person. In this research, five out of eight interviewees (LoCo1, LoCo2, TrCo1, TrCo2 and AdCo) were intermediaries.

The relationship between intermediary and translator is of considerable importance. The attitude and behaviours of intermediary impact the performance of translator. Each intermediary between initiator and translator might be helpful in producing translations that meet the expectations of initiator. On the other hand, in some cases the existence of a number of intermediaries might cause the translator to lose contact with the context of translation, and the flow of information between initiator and translator might be problematic. Therefore, it is very important how intermediary sees his role as an agent in the production network and perceives the concepts of translation and localization. For example, TrCo2 stated that they received several website projects from advertising agencies and were content with the way they do business with them. TrCo2 also added that the function of these agents in the production network and their contribution to the final product were of significant value. He remarked that the existence of advertising agencies as intermediaries in local website production networks was preferable. On the other hand, FrTr1 reported that sometimes intermediaries did not exercise their responsibilities and as a result negatively affect the performance of translator:



... since I receive translation jobs from translation companies, I do not have any information about the expectations of clients. Translation companies do not send me any instructions. Using research methods for translation, I make research on the subject and content of the text, and what function might such a subject and content have. And I make assumptions. I take translation decisions based on my assumptions. (FrTr1)

In this example, it is clear that the intermediary considers his function as a *receive and transfer agent*. However, it should be remembered that the role of an intermediary is more than enabling two-way file transfer. Intermediaries should help translators to access the information that they need in producing a translation that could meet the expectations of client. In other words, they should help eliminate information asymmetry. In an insourcing-based setting, the translator himself is able to do so. He might ask questions directly to the initiator, author or field experts. However, in an outsourcing-based setting such as the one in above example, he needs the collaboration of the intermediary. He can access the information on the side of the client only through the intermediary. Otherwise, all he can do is making research to collect information. Sometimes, the information sources accessed by the translator might be misleading or outdated. As FrTr1 pointed out, translator might make assumptions based on his previous experiences, knowledge and new information he found through research. However, first this is time-consuming. Secondly, assumptions introduce risks. Sometimes assumption-based translation decisions might lead to translation solutions that do not meet the expectations of client.

### 3.3. The Initiator's Perception of Localization and Translation

Whether the initiator calls the task localization or translation, the perception that reduces the translator's activity to *linguistic transfer* affects the performance of the translator considerably. In the presence of such a perception, translators basically tend to show two modes of behaviour. In the first mode, the translator tries to produce a functional translation product whether it is expected or not. He goes beyond linguistic transfer because he thinks that he is morally responsible to do so as an expert of communication. For example, FrTr1 shows this mode of behaviour:

Thanks to my translatorial awareness I do things that the translation company does not expect from me. For example, in some source texts there are informational mistakes. I correct those mistakes. So I correct the source text. I acknowledge the translation company that there was such an information mistake in the source text and I corrected it. Other than that, I take functional decisions. To be honest, I do not know how my decisions are received. I do not know if my functional decisions make me a good translator or not in the eye of the translation company. I have no idea. (FrTr1)

The second mode of translator behaviour is merely linguistic transfer if the initiator expects so. The time and budget of the project is an indicator for the translator. If he is expected to work under severe time pressure and/or for a very low amount of money, he will not be able or eager to go beyond linguistic transfer. When initiators are not aware of or do not attach importance to the communicational function and power of translation, they tend to focus on cost and time and fail to notice the importance of quality. Cost and time constraints make it almost impossible for initiators to receive service from localization/translation companies that offer high quality service. However, when website localization/translation is concerned, a low quality work would end up with a non-functional product. In this study, LoCo2 stated that uneducated clients prioritize cost and time savings over

quality. In that case, they receive service from a low quality service provider who reflects cost and time pressure on the translator. The translator might possess sufficient translation competence to produce a functional target website. However, under severe cost and time pressure the translator might not achieve much beyond linguistic transfer. He might even not be willing to achieve more if he thinks that the initiator or the intermediary is not willing to invest money and time for it. An empirical example for this hypothesis comes from the study of Abdallah:

It doesn't feel that bad anymore, it has become commonplace, routine... Maybe that's why I am actually quite satisfied, I don't feel like I have to give it my all... I don't feel that I am acting ethically incorrectly, although it would be better to act differently. I am not committing a crime here. I would like to do searches and the like, but there is nothing I can do... There is not enough time or energy; it is someone else's fault, not mine. (Kaija, freelancer) (2010, p. 36)

Abdallah's interpretation of Kaija's discourse is that "professional growth means idealism giving way to practicality" (2010, p. 36). Although Kaija has the capacity to do more, she prefers to do less and thinks that it is logical to behave this way. She does not want to work half-heartedly. However, she believes that she is obliged to.

An initiator who perceives the concept of translation as linguistic transfer and does not have sufficient knowledge about the communicational function of translation will tend not to have an active role in the process. He sees his responsibility as ordering a task and setting the deadline, which will most probably pose a challenge for the translator in converting his translation competence into performance. Such initiators tend not to contact the provider until deadline. They do not want the provider to take their time by asking questions. TrCo1 stated that some initiators are almost closed to communication. They even do not get back to intermediaries who request information. The reason might be the initiator's assumption that providing information or doing any type of task for the sake of the project is not their responsibility. In a personal conversation with a project manager of a translation company, he talked about a problem he experienced with an uneducated client:

A roof company owner called my company to have a number of PDF files on his company website translated. He stated that he expected high-quality translations. Considering the expectation, before starting to translate we did terminology work and e-mailed the terminology list to the client for confirmation. We did not get any response and translated the files using the list. We completed the task and sent the files to the client. We received the payment. However, we still do not know if the client liked our term choices or not.

Similar stories are told every day by various translators and projects managers. Initiators (clients) tend to isolate themselves from the translation process due to various reasons, which leads to the problem of information asymmetry and gives harm to the quality of output. As pointed out by Holz-Mänttari, translation is a complex task that is carried out by a team of people which also involves initiator in division of labour (as cited in Munday, 2001). Initiators should be open to communication and co-operation with the other members of team. In the absence of such, the achievement of true quality is more of an ideal to strive toward than a goal that can be effectively achieved in practice (Dunne, 2006, p. 114).

### 3.4. *The Intermediary's Perception of Localization and Translation*

With the addition of each intermediary to the production network, translator is moved one step away from initiator. The negative impacts of distance could be overcome with measures taken by an intermediary who has awareness about the communicational function of translation/localization. When intermediaries balance the interests of translators, initiators and themselves and lead both sides consciously. By this way, they add value to the performance of translator.

In translation/localization production networks, intermediaries exercise a two-way agency. They act both on behalf of the translator against the initiator and on behalf of the initiator against the translator, and have responsibilities against both sides. When these responsibilities are not fulfilled, the initiator most possibly fails to communicate with their customers through their website in the intended way.

One responsibility of intermediaries is receiving comprehensive client specifications from the agent who commissions the task (this agent might be an initiator or another intermediary) and transferring them to the translator. However, this duty is shirked sometimes. As a result, the translator faces the problem of information asymmetry. For example, FrTr1 stated that his intermediary who is a translation company only informs him of the deadline and does not provide any additional information which may positively contribute to his performance.

There might be cases that the intermediary is reluctant to receive client specifications or reference material although the initiator or another intermediary commissioning the project is willing to do so. AdCo complained that the translation company that provides service to his company is not demanding about information on project. The below quotation from AdCo might be an indication that the said company perceives translation as linguistic transfer:

They do linguistic mistakes and send the translation with those mistakes. And I ask them: 'Why didn't you ask me if you didn't understand the expression? ... We don't translate this sentence the way you did. If you want, I can send you a reference text. You can refer it as you translate.' But they never ask for it. Never. They do translations and send them as a completed package. Then I check the translations and say: 'These are not OK.' Once again files go back and forth. (AdCo)

AdCo complained that the translation company does not contact his team during the project cycle despite their open communication policy. In addition, the translation company deliver only translations and no report about their translation decisions. AdCo reported the company's reluctance to receive reference material as follows:

Frankly, I am resentful towards translation companies. Because they want everything readymade. Namely, we need to send the files as Word document and they will send translations back as Word document. However, what I want is that we build the website, publish it on the Internet, and send them the link. They look at the website and see what they are translating. How can you translate without any photo, any image and without having a feel about the project? ... I tell them "Look, we are working on shoes." One should see the shoe photos while reading the texts in order to know what he is translating. (AdCo)

As the above quotations indicate, the translation company considered translation as linguistic transfer. This might lead to one of the two conclusions. In the first one, the intermediary might

intentionally or unwittingly work with those translators who see translation as linguistic transfer. And in the second, the translator might confine himself to meeting the expectation of intermediary, which is no more than linguistic transfer, even if he sees translation as a functional tool of communication. It is highly probable that such an intermediary will place cost and time pressure on the translator. In such case, even a conscious translator might not be willing to produce a translation which goes beyond the expectations of the intermediary (See the quote from Kaija above).

There definitely are translators who feel responsible towards the initiator due to their ethical concerns and go beyond the expectations of the intermediary. FrTr1 complained about information asymmetry in the projects he was assigned by a translation company. He stated that the translation company does not give information about where his translations would be used. He also complained that the translation company does not try to eliminate the problem of information asymmetry:

I do not remember the details but they asked me to translate a text from English to Italian. The text was written by a non-native and there was a double entendre in the last sentence... I called the customer representative who assigned me. I said 'Can you ask the client what exactly is meant here?' I expected a reply for half an hour and but no reply. Then I called again and the representative told me 'Oh sorry! I did not have the chance to contact the client.' And I said, 'OK, then the responsibility is yours. I will translate it the way I feel it.' And he said 'OK.' (FrTr1)

Although some intermediaries are not very concerned about the communicational function of translation/localization, there still are translators who endeavour to eliminate the problem of information asymmetry by doing Internet searches. Many times they try to reach the information which could easily be provided by the initiator. Because they believe that they "contribute to the company image through texts and language use" (FrTr2). FrTr2 stated that translation companies mostly focus on their commercial concerns and care less about the representative power of translations. He also added that he could take his time to do search because he is a freelance translator who has additional sources of income. He is a part-time translator and translating is his secondary job. According to him, doing extra work is his choice and not all translators can choose to do so due to the competitive nature of the industry.

The positive case is that there are also conscious intermediaries in the industry. They care about information asymmetry and try to be communicative and co-operative. TrCo2 is one of them. He sees text as a whole of verbal and non-verbal elements (See Biau Gil, 2005). He said "We definitely ask for images if the task involves the translation of a website or advertisement. I mean we never work only on the text" (TrCo2). The provided reference material is then made available to the translator.

A conscious intermediary would ensure the needed information flow in both directions, from the initiator or other intermediary to the translator and vice versa. As the agent of the translator, the intermediary should lead initiator/other intermediary as an expert and do as much as he can to eliminate or minimize the problem of asymmetric information experienced by the translator. However, eliminating this problem is not always very easy. The initiator/other intermediary may not understand why he should provide information. He might interpret the information demand as the incompetence or inexperience of intermediary or translator (See Fraser, 2000 for translator) or might have concerns about the confidentiality of information he will provide. At this point a significant role falls to the intermediary. He should be transparent to the initiator/other intermediary, provide him with sufficient information about project and be responsive in order to build a sense of trust. If the initiator/other intermediary knows why the intermediary does what he does, he could trust him and rely on his

expertise. TrCo2 stated that they provided initiators/intermediaries with various reports at various stages of the project even if not requested. By this way they could help initiators/intermediaries to monitor the workflow execution and, if not totally eliminate the problem of information asymmetry on the side of initiators/intermediaries. As a result, initiators/intermediaries would be co-operative and open to communication, which would in return help the elimination of information asymmetry on the side of translator.

#### 4. Conclusions

As in many fields of translation industry, there is no terminology standardization when websites are concerned. One industry agent might call a website project *website translation* while another calls it *website localization*. Therefore, *translators/localizers* should receive task definition before deciding on whether to take part in a website project. Another terminological contribution of this study to Translation Studies literature is a new term named *intermediary* which could be used to indicate the agents between an initiator and a translator.

TS literature is very much concerned with the problem of *decontextualization* caused by technology use. It is evident that decontextualization is not an inevitable consequence of *technologization*. It is much more dependent on how industry uses technology. In a technological translation world, translators could still be let to go beyond *linguistic transfer*, take macro-decisions and produce functional texts. Therefore, the *problem of information asymmetry* can still be overcome if the industry cares about it and its quality-related outcomes, and takes measures in order to minimize it.

This study tried to shed light on the *position of translator* in website localization processes through empirical data. It was found that translators are not let to realize their potential in situations where there is the problem of information asymmetry. One factor found to contribute to this problem is the *business model of the initiator*. In an outsourced scenario, translators could be deprived of information that they need to produce a functional product. However, this should not be viewed as an inherent problem. In an outsourcing-based setting, translators could still be let to have access to context through task definitions (brief), style guides, parallel texts, other kinds of reference material and term lists.

The other factor found in this study is the intermediary's and initiator's *perception* of translation and localization. The translator will most probably experience the problem of information asymmetry if the task or capability of translator is still seen no more than linguistic transfer despite all the endeavour of TS to prove that translation is a *cross-cultural communicational activity*.

This study is not without limitations. First, the study was conducted on a small sized population. Secondly, interviews were conducted with translators, initiators and intermediaries. Other agents with differing roles in website localization networks such as web editors, IT specialists and content developers could also be interviewed. These two limitations did not let making generalizations about all agents in website localization networks. Also a limited number of factors affecting the position of translator in website localization processes could be determined.

The overall conclusion of this study is that translation and localization is a *team-work activity* as pointed out by functional translation theories. Therefore, when the translation/localization product fails to meet the expectations of the initiator, it is more than reasonable to look at not just the translator-who is the weakest chain in the network-but the whole production network to find the source of problem. What a translator does is not the *sole indicator of what he can*.

## Acknowledgements

This study was supported by Istanbul University Scientific Research Projects Unit (Project Number: 17807). The author is grateful to Associate Professor Betül Parlak for supervising the PhD work and to the interviewees whose names could not be cited here due to confidentiality considerations.

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## Web sitesi yerelleştirmelerinde bir eyleyen olarak çevirmenin konumu: Türkiye örneği

### Öz

E-ticaretin hızlı gelişimi web sitesi yerelleştirme adında büyük bir iş kolunun ortaya çıkmasına katkıda bulunmuştur. Web sitesi yerelleştirme uygulamalarının yüksek hacmine karşın web sitesi yerelleştirme projelerinde görev alan çevirmenlerle ilgili araştırmalar oldukça kısıtlıdır. Bu nitel çalışmanın amacı Türkiye'deki web sitesi yerelleştirme süreçlerinde bir eyleyen olarak çevirmenin konumunu araştırmaktır. Veri toplama aracı olarak görüşme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Görüşme formları kullanılarak dokuz görüşmeci ile Eylül 2011-Şubat 2012 tarihleri arasında İstanbul'da yüz yüze görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bütüncenin belirlenmesinde maksimum çeşitlilik örneklemesine başvurulmuştur. Görüşmecilerin ortak özelliği web sitesi yerelleştirme süreçlerinde farklı şekillerde eyleyen olarak bulunmuş olmalarıdır. Araştırma yaklaşımı nitel olduğundan ve elde edilen verilerin derinlemesine incelenmesi amaçlandığından bütüncedeki görüşmeci sayısı dokuz ile sınırlandırılmıştır. Görüşmecilerin ortak özelliği web sitesi yerelleştirme süreçlerinde görev almış olmalarıdır, ancak eyleyen rolleri farklıdır. Çalışmanın kavramsal ve kuramsal çerçevesi için Justa Holz-Mänttari ve Hans Vermeer'in işlevsel çeviri kuramlarına ve bunların tamamlayıcısı olarak vekâlet kuramına başvurulmuştur. Çalışmada çevirmenlerin üretim ağlarında bilgi asimetrisi sorunu yaşadıkları ve bunun da çeviri edimlerini olumsuz yönde etkilediği ortaya konmuştur. Çevirilerin kalitesi düşük olduğunda genellikle ilk sorgulanan çevirmenin edincidir. Bu çalışma çeviri/yerelleştirme ürünlerinin başlatıcının beklentisini karşılayamaması durumunda sorunun kaynağını bulmak için sadece çevirmen yerine üretim ağının bütününe bakmanın etkili bir çözüm yolu olacağını önermektedir.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* asimetric bilgi; çevirmenin konumu; nitel araştırma; vekâlet; web sitesi yerelleştirme

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