

## A Study on Website Translation of China's Small and Medium Enterprises

Lyu Liangqiu\*, Zhang Shixin

*School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, Beijing, China*

*\*Corresponding Author: Lyu Liangqiu, School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, Beijing, 102206, China, Email: alanzhang0713@foxmail.com*

### ABSTRACT

*Based on personal experience and observation, the author discusses the general situation at present how most small and medium Chinese businesses build their English websites. By the virtue of analysis and comparison between the English website of a small Chinese refrigerator maker and that of an Italian company, plus massive reading of other English website of the two kinds, it is found that some common translation and localization errors exist in the English website of Chinese small companies. In the end, viable suggestions respectively from linguistic perspective and cultural perspective are provided to localization translators in small and medium companies.*

**Keywords:** *English website; translation; localization; website localization*

### INTRODUCTION

Businesses at home, not only goliaths in industries but also small companies, are looking at foreign markets in an attempt to secure a share of market in China's push for the Belt and Road Initiative. In the process of entering foreign market, it is definitely the first and vital step for an enterprise to build its website in English. As is known to all, a well-designed and informative website functions as a window to outside world, conveying the company's product information and company's advantage to potential foreign customers. On the contrary, an unprofessional website which runs counter to potential clients' habit usually confuses readers. However, the quality of China's companies' websites varies, and most small businesses are unable to build an ideal website due to the lack of professionals and budget. As is known to all, the need of website and localization professionals is temporary, so it is doubtlessly not a good investment to hire a team to build an English website, especially considering that the core tasks of a company are production and marketing. As language service business is rapidly growing, it has been a common practice that big firms outsource the building of English website to professional language service providers. Nevertheless, due to fairly tight budget, most small and medium companies of the author's acquaintance scarcely spent money on outsourcing these tasks.

During an internship in a small refrigerator manufacturer, the author took part in the task of building the company's English website, in charge of collecting, sorting out and translating materials, and communicating with the website designer with relevant issues. In order to get this job done, the author browsed through many firms' websites, among which few are global leaders in commercial refrigeration industry and most are small ones of the same trade, and also consulted our cooperative companies about their experience. During this process, current situation was uncovered by the author about how most small and medium businesses build their English website.

Take it as an example, the company outsourced the technological work to professional website maker who designed the general framework and style. The foreign trade department of the company was responsible for translation and providing necessary materials about the company. However, none of the staff members of foreign trade department had experience of building website. The staff members just translated Chinese words on webpages into English one by one, and put them back to corresponding position to replace original Chinese language. This is how the company build its English website. Nonstandard operation and workflow often lead to a result which is unsurprisingly not satisfactory. Compared with the websites of foreign corporations, flaws and

deficiencies making it seem not professional are quite transparent on websites of companies alike.

In the light of existing studies and localization methodology of website, deep analyses of these problems are conducted in the hope of providing the website makers of small and medium firms with feasible and useful suggestions, so as to avoid obvious mistakes.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Localization and Website Localization

##### Localization

As Iwona Mazur (2007) put it, “in recent years localization has become a popular concept in both translation practice and theory.” GILT, which generally refers to the localization industry today, is the abbreviation of “Globalization, internationalization, localization and Translation.

According to Cadieux and Esselink (2004: 3), “the globalization of a thing — be it a social program, a marketing strategy, a web site, or a software product — is simply about spreading a thing to several different countries, and making it applicable and usable in those countries. LISA (Localization Industry Standards Association) defines localization as “the process of modifying products or services to account for differences in distinct markets. Translation is an indispensable step in any localization practice. However, what should be clarified is that the translation in localization practices differs to some degree from translation in traditional point of view. As Pym (2004) put it, when translation and localization fall together in a business model, translation is just a part of localization, since localization encompasses a broader range of processes. Translation in localization is much more dynamic than translation of traditional text. It can be elaborated by the Skopos theory. Any translational actions are determined by the “Skopos”, and “the prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose (Skopos) of the overall translational action”. (Nord. 2018) Setting off from this point of view, website translation is not likely to be coped with just in linguistic level, because the source text and purpose are unconventional.

##### Website Localization

Website localization is the process of adapting an existing website to local language and culture in the target market, but it involves much more than the simple translation of text. This

modification process must reflect specific language and cultural preferences in the content, images and overall design and requirements of the site – all while maintaining the integrity of the site. (Wikipedia) Thus, it can be concluded that website translation is a kind of cross-cultural communication based on multimedia webpages.

#### Studies at Home and Abroad

##### Studies Abroad

Ireland is the earliest country that carries out systematical and massive researches of GILT in international community. Localization Research Center (LRC) was set up in 1995, and the magazine *Localization Focus* run by LRC have published abundant research findings. Reinhard is the representative scholar studying GILT in Ireland. Localization Industry Standards Association which is abbreviated as LISA is a non-profit occupation organization established by many localization service providers in 1990s. The organization issued the first localization standard—TMX (Translation Memory exchange), allowing the service providers to establish its own corpus according to the standard and making it feasible for different companies to exchange data. In addition, LISA also released many other standards in an attempt to realize the goal that new localization tools should be qualified by LISA before it comes into service.

Since the establishment of LISA, website translation and localization has been a brand-new hot spot in translation community. The definition of GILT has been elaborated, and further researches focusing on standards, methodology and evaluation system are widely carried out.

##### Studies at Home

As a late starter, Chinese translation scholars lag behind a lot. Compared with existing studies already conducted by foreign scholars, domestic studies still remain in the primary stage. Miao Ju and Zhu Lin (2008) are one of the pioneers in China in this field. The two scholars mainly dealt with the training and teaching of localization and translation talents. Cui Qiliang and Zhang Hang (2015) discussed over text characteristics in localization from the perspectives of text source, text structure, text performance and language features; and based on that, they come up with appropriate translation strategies for localization. Wang Huashu and Liu Ming (2015) pointed out that

domestic studies on localization are far from enough, and then they clarified the basic conception and system of localization, introduced the general procedures and technological application in localization. Among them, some are concerned with the introduction and explanation of GILT conception, some others deal with education of localization talents, and considerable researches are carried out in the name of GILT study, but similar to translation criticism in essence. Nonetheless, few attentions are paid on the object of localization.

### CASE STUDY

In this chapter, the author conducts a comparative analysis between the English website of Zhongrui and that of an Italian company LU-VE Group, a leader in this sector. As is mentioned above, the foundation of website localization is text translation, but to better realize the company's marketing purposes in foreign markets, it requires much more than mere translation. Cultural and structural adjustments must be taken into account. Therefore, the analysis is done from linguistic and cultural perspectives respectively.

#### From Linguistic Perspective

Lee (2009) classified written commercial texts into two kinds: respectively promotional and functional. As their names imply, promotional texts are mostly introductory words to build up a good corporate image, such as company's basic information or advertising slogans; while functional texts often work to introduce the detailing specification and features of products and services. This chapter deals with the promoting texts.

Almost on every homepage of a website, there are several huge horizontal pictures switching automatically all the time under the navigation bar. They are what we call banners or banner pictures of the website, on which there are usually photos of the company's products or something relevant and some advertisement slogans. It is a common sense that advertising slogan should be precise, concise and powerful. For most visitors, ad slogans are likely to be the first information which catches their attention when they first log in a website. In addition, the general sense of value and core competitiveness of the company are carried through these words to visitors. As a result, it evidently doesn't require a lot of talking to convince reader's the significance of ad slogans on website banner.

The Chinese and corresponding versions of ad slogans on Zhongrui's website are as follows:

e.g.

①为了人们的健康考虑, 让人们吃上放心、健康的食物。

Consider human health. Let People eat safe, healthy food.

②专注制冷20年, 中瑞集团与国内外知名供应商建立深度合作关系。

Focus on refrigeration for 20 years.

③以人为本、科技创新, 拥有二十多年制冷行业经验和广大客户源。

People-oriented, technological innovation. More than 20 years of refrigeration industry experience and customer resources.

About ad slogans, LU-VE only offers English version on their website, no matter what the language version visitors choose to access. Those on LU-VE website are as follows:

① A new way of conceiving and making refrigeration and air conditioning.

② Outstanding quality components for high added-value products and energy saving.

③ Experience and tradition with forward thinking and innovation in refrigeration and conditioning.

Compare the slogans on these two websites. It is not difficult to spot distinction between them. Above all, it can be seen that English slogans on Zhongrui's website are literally translated from their corresponding Chinese version. The Slogan① is two imperative sentences. In Chinese language, imperative sentences are widely used in advertisement, but take a look at the words on LU-VE's website. All of them are noun phrases. The author browsed tons of other websites of enterprises in the U.K. and the U.S. and concluded that the majority of their ad slogans on banner pictures are noun phrases or short and concise declarative sentences.

What is interesting is that imperative sentence is mostly used to call for something or motivate people to do something. Nevertheless, the ad words on banner picture is supposed to convey the company's value or show their products and services, rather than persuade visitors. According to Skopos theory, the translation should be flexible. While handling these kinds of slogans, translator should first figure out what company's image should be constructed and

sent to visitors, and then tries to adjust original texts or even put original text aside to rewrite it.

Move forward. Read the slogan②. The sentence initially seems like an imperative sentence, but actually it is not. The translator translated the Chinese word by word, so as to miss the subject in English which should not be absent in any English sentences. That exposes the poor linguistic capacity of localization operators and lack of review mechanism in small enterprises.

### From Cultural and Structure Perspective

In traditional Chinese culture, we are supposed to be modest. Consequently, even up to date, most Chinese people who haven't got rid of the clout of traditional value still scarcely praise themselves directly. By contrast, people in most foreign countries, particularly English-speaking or European countries prefer to express information in a direct way and to receive straightforward signals. This phenomenon is perfectly marked by the promoting words respectively of Zhongrui's and LU-VE's English website. On the first banner picture of Zhongrui is the ad slogan "Consider human health. Let People eat safe, healthy food." The company is a commercial refrigerator maker. Its products can help better preserve food so as to care people's health. It works to Chinese, but may make no sense to foreigners. As a result, the efficiency of conveying correct message goes low when visitor get confused about the company and the sentence. Let's move our eyesight to those of LU-VE and many other western companies. Take one example from another manufacturer, Symphony, "Market, design, and technology. This is what makes us the world leader in air coolers." Almost all of their promoting words focus immediately on the demonstration of their advanced technology and fabulous equipment.

### FINDINGS

#### Suggestion at Linguistic Level

Translation in website localization involves much more than linguistic factors. It is recommended that localization translators in small and medium companies to be aware that translation should never be done literally. In the light of Skopos theory, "a target text is an offer of information formulated by a translator in a target culture and language about an offer of information formulated by someone else in the source culture and language". (Nord, 2001) Unfortunately, the English website translators of Zhongrui company and many other small companies failed to realized that. They should

consider promoting purposes first and then create adequate translation. In doing this, they can do a much better job although they are not professional.

Last but not the least, translation error must not exist on companies' English websites. Although it is so obvious, poor translation and mistakes are indeed found on webpages of many Chinese small companies. Visitors might challenge the company's capacity and the information accuracy of the website.

#### Suggestion at Cultural Level

After analysis the advertising slogans of Zhurui's English website, and visiting a lot of English websites built by other small and medium enterprises, the author finds that cultural factors are not in consideration of most translators. In the meantime, the author also browses numerous foreign business website, finding that foreign is very likely to make their slogan direct and explicit. As a result, localization without cultural adaptation may give rise to information gap while foreign costumers visiting English website of Chinese companies. Therefore, localization translator should first make acquaintance with the culture of their targeted country, figuring out whether there is any taboo in this nation, or how the cultural gap between you and your targeted customers. Then, the translator needs to rearrange information on webpage to cater for their foreign visitors.

### CONCLUSION

To establish an English version of company's website doesn't mean to translate its Chinese website mechanically and blindly. In spite of the lack of sufficient fund and website localization's professionals, small and medium businesses may still construct a qualified and attractive website to draw attentions of customers overseas. The localization translators must be aware of basic localization knowledge and abide by the Skopos Theory. Under this guideline, translators or designers should take into full consideration foreigners' reading habits, edit and delete unnecessary information and media in Chinese website which make no sense for them. Thus, positive information about the company and its products is able to be conveyed with effectiveness, so that users are about to gain further interest to know and make purchase.

Meanwhile, it is also suggested that translators of website browse through examples of the same trade from which authentic expressions and

better experiences of establishing a website targeted at local people can be drawn.

(Supported by the NCEPU "Double First-Class" Graduate Talent Cultivation Program, No. XM1906823)

## REFERENCES

- [1] 崔启亮. 中国本地化行业二十年 (1993-2011), 上海翻译, 2013 (2): 20-24
- [2] 崔启亮. 全球视域下的本地化特征研究, 中国翻译, 2015(4): 66-71
- [3] 崔启亮, 张航. 软件本地化翻译的文本特征与翻译策略. 外语与翻译, 2015(3):5-11
- [4] 范勇. 目的论观照下的翻译失误— 一些大学英文版例析. 解放军外国语学院学报. 2005 (1):70-72
- [5] 苗菊, 朱琳. 本地化与本地化人才的培养. 中国翻译, 2008(5):30-34
- [6] 王华树, 刘明. 本地化技术研究纵览. 上海翻译, 2015(3):78-84
- [7] 张莹, 柴明颀. GILT本地化产业与翻译研究新动向. 中国翻译, 2011 (3): 77-80
- [8] Iwona Mazur. *The Metalanguage of Localization: Theory and Practice*. Target, 2007(2)
- [9] Lee, Y. *The Medium Is Global, the Content Is not: Translating Commercial Websites*. Networking Knowledge: Journal of the Me CCSA Postgraduate Network. 2009, 2(1):1-19.
- [10] Nord, Christiane. *Translating as a purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2001
- [11] Singh, N., D. R. Toy & L. K. Wright. *A diagnostic framework for measuring web-site localization*. Thunderbird International Business Review. 2009, 51(3): 281-295

**Citation:** Lyu Liangqiu, Zhang Shixin, "A Study on Website Translation of China's Small and Medium Enterprises", *Annals of Language and Literature*, 3(3), 2019, pp. 1-5.

**Copyright:** © 2019 Lyu Liangqiu. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.