

# 1

## The Emergence of Localization

This chapter charts the origins of localization and the different perspectives and views of the last two decades. It provides a critical comprehensive summary of the conceptualizations, metaphorizations and metalanguage of localization from both Translation Studies (TS) and industry sides, and of how both have struggled to define localization either as a distinct process or as a technological extension of translation-related phenomena. We will explore issues related to the evolution of localization, definitions from industry and academic perspectives and also industry-based attempts to differentiate from 'standard' translation. We will also review how TS have incorporated web localization within the discipline, and we will discuss whether localization represents a new paradigm within TS (Pym 2010).

### Technology and the Emergence of Localization

During the last two decades we have witnessed a continued growth of the Internet that now permeates all aspects of our modern lives. The Internet gave rise to the World Wide Web, and both have been revolutionizing human communication and helping interconnect the world in ways never seen before (Folaron 2010). The possibilities afforded by the Internet have opened new forms of digital communication and, consequently, different types of new translation-mediated practices. Among these we find 'localization', a global cycle of processes that makes digital texts available to different sociolinguistic communities around the world. Localization as we know it started in the late 1970s when US computer companies brought their products to major markets such as France, Germany and Japan. These initial attempts resulted in the emergence of the now consolidated 'localization industry', the fastest-growing sector in translation. By the 1980s and 1990s, this industry had expanded to cover all sorts of digital texts that billions around the world use daily, from websites and videogames to smartphones and MP3 players. Web localization brought the largest expansion to this industry, a market that currently amounts to over \$3 billion worldwide. The growth in this sector is hardly surprising considering the over 2000 billion Internet users (Internet World Stats 2012) and the almost 700 billion active websites in June 2012.<sup>1</sup> Over the years, localization has been

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consolidated as (1) a separate and attractive market niche, (2) a specific specialization within the translation industry and (3) an exciting new field of inquiry that is evolving into the emerging so-called 'Localization Studies' (Ramael 2010; Munday 2012). Localization has also opened up a fascinating field of inquiry for many interrelated disciplines, such as Computational Linguistics, Communication Studies, International Business Management, Software and Web Development, Web Usability, Digital Genre Theory and Translation Studies.

Digital technologies play a key role in localization. Since the early days, the rapid pace at which these technologies develop forced the industry to continually adapt to new innovations and the challenges they posed. Since the first stumbling blocks faced were technological problems related to the integration of translation in software products, conceptualizations of localization often bypassed mainstream translation types to stress the technological component as the main distinguishing feature. These issues still dominate discussions about localization, even though it has become the object of study in a number of disciplines. This first chapter is devoted to an analysis of the evolution of localization and a review of the different conceptualizations and discourses that have arisen over the years, attempting to build bridges between practical and academic approaches.

### The Origins of Localization

The origins of localization can be traced back to the emergence of personal computing and software in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Such technologies started to become popular among users who did not possess programming skills, and as a result many US computing companies set out to address their needs in a comprehensive manner (Esselink 2006). Once companies such as Sun Microsystems, Oracle or Microsoft had succeeded in popularizing their products in the US, they turned their eyes towards international markets; the initial targets were Japan and the so-called FIGS countries (France, Italy, Germany and Spain). Economic reasons are therefore easily identifiable as the main driver for the emergence and evolution of localization. Emerging originally in the United States, localization processes initially flowed from English into other languages (Uren *et al.* 1993). However, with the emergence of the WWW localizations started to flow in the opposite direction, with a constant stream of websites being localized into English around the world. Nowadays, it is commonplace across the planet to find websites localized into that international *lingua franca* in order to address global audiences.

Developers initially attempted to introduce established translation practices, hiring experienced 'linguists' to help with the translation of textual strings. The first attempts at localization entailed developers finishing the programming of a software product and handing down the extracted textual strings in resource files with the supporting documentation to linguists. Once the translations were completed, developers would try to reintegrate them later. All interested parties soon discovered that separating the development from the translation stages was impractical for a variety of reasons. For example, translated segments were normally longer than source texts and could not be fitted in the space allotted for them; frequently, textual strings would include code (the so called 'hard-coded strings') that could not be translated when target locales required specific number, gender or declension agreements; dealing with these types of textual strings required a basic understanding of programming, etc. With time, the realization that localization had to be collaboratively conceived from the start of the development cycle resulted in what is now known as the GILT process or Globalization, Internationalization, Localization and Translation (see [Chapter 2](#)), in which developers, managers, localization engineers, localizers and/or translators actively collaborate to ensure the global localization process, normally working side by side (Dunne 2006a; Gouadec 2007).

From the business point of view, companies initially relied both on in-house translation teams (Microsoft or Oracle) or outsourced their translation-related tasks to translation vendors, mostly rebranded translation companies. The 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of world localization hubs, such as Ireland, where companies established their localization headquarters thanks to government tax incentives and a very positive and competitive labour market environment (Esselink 2006). Although by the 1990s the localization service industry was clearly consolidated, companies soon found it unprofitable to maintain ever-growing localization departments within each organization (Mazur 2007), and Multi-Language Vendors (MLV) that normally worked with large multi-language projects thus emerged. Often, new target languages were offered and requested, and these constant expansions meant that MLV often had to depend on Single Language Vendors (SLV) to meet the need for an ever-expanding range of locales or languages. The 1990s and 2000s also saw a wave of mergers and acquisitions reshape the localization industry. Currently, new companies are emerging online in a push to offer quicker and more economic services by combining professional translators, post-editing machine translation and volunteer communities on the web (see [Chapter 8](#)).

Web localization emerged after years of successful efforts in software products. Initially, processes developed for software localization were modelled to the specifics of digital hypertexts (Yunker 2003, 2010; Dunne 2006a). Web localization surpassed the market share of software localization in the early 2000s (LISA

2004; Schäler 2005),<sup>2</sup> resulting in a 'lucrative, dynamic and interprofessional field, often involving marketing, design, software engineering, as well as linguistic processes' (Pym and Windle 2011a: 410). It also started to become a specific translation modality that required specific skills from translators and a lower degree of technological competence than software localization (Esselink 2006). Thus web localization has been open from the beginning to a wider range of translation professionals. The complexity of maintaining multilingual dynamic websites led to the creation of new technologies to author, manage, store and publish web content, such as the Content Management Systems (CMS) or Global Management Systems (GMS) (Yunker 2003: 355; LISA 2006). These technologies emerged from translation memory systems and are used to handle the dynamism of multilingual web projects in which content is continually updated and published. These technologies have helped tremendously to simplify these types of multilingual projects and keep costs down for the industry (Lynch 2006).

New technological developments, such as adding software functionalities, the move to the 'cloud'<sup>3</sup> with Software as service (Saas)<sup>4</sup> models, apps or widgets, are now blurring the boundaries between the more technical expertise required for software localization and the more content-oriented nature of web localization.<sup>5</sup> The present and future of web localization therefore seems more and more complex, with the Internet merging platform and content, and therefore, one could argue that software and web localization may quite possibly merge in the future.

## The Internet, the WWW and Web Localization

Web localization needs to be conceptualized in relation to the Internet, the most important development in communication since Gutenberg invented the printing press in the fifteenth century (Lockwood and Scott 2000). This global communicative platform has promoted the emergence of new business practices and models (LISA 2007: 5), revolutionizing translation practices globally and leading to the emergence of the subject of this volume. The Internet represents an essential medium of communication in a globalized world, with ever-increasing user counts and penetration rates. According to Internet World Stats,<sup>6</sup> the number of users world-wide was around two billion in 2012, reaching 30.2% of the total population. In North America or Europe the percentage of the population using the Internet is 78.2% and 58.2% respectively. In this context, the presence of businesses on the web is currently a prerequisite for competing in a globalized market. It has also

meant that most organizations, collectives and individuals also have a web presence through websites or profiles in different social or directory websites.

In the 1980s, Tim Berners-Lee created what we call today the World Wide Web (WWW), defined by him as 'the universe of network-accessible information, an embodiment of human knowledge' (Berners-Lee *et al.* 1992: 52). This definition stresses the most important characteristics of the WWW, its hypertextual and networked nature. The terms 'Internet' and 'WWW' are often confused and interchanged, even when the WWW is merely one of the many communicative situations enabled by the Internet (O'Hagan and Ashworth 2003), such as chats, videoconferencing and new online SMS apps in smartphones. The WWW was possible thanks to the emergence in 1991 of the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), as well as to later technical innovations, such as the Extensive Hypertext Markup Language in 2005. The Web 2.0 and beyond continues to expand the meteoric rise of web localization processes (Fernández Costales 2011), mostly due to the collaboration of users who are creating and translating massive amounts of content. Berners-Lee highlighted from the start the social nature of the WWW: 'The web is more a social creation than a technical one' (Berners-Lee 2000: 113), thus forecasting the boom of the social network era. The ReadWriteWeb, as Berners-Lee refers to the Web 2.0, has brought new collaboration capabilities, resulting in alternative localization practices for existing business models: localization of open-source software, subtitling of online videos or volunteer localization of websites (see [Chapter 8](#)).

## Defining Localization

Localization has been with us for almost three decades, but the set of phenomena grouped under this term still represents a somewhat fuzzy area. As with any object of study, its definition and delimitation represents an initial step towards the foundation of theoretical or empirical studies (Chesterman 2004). No matter whether the perspective is academic or professional, definitions contain models that frame discourses and discussions on the nature of what is being investigated or analysed. These models not only guide how we talk or justify our decisions, arguments or actions, but they also lay the groundwork for framing related issues, such as the different ways of organizing the localization process or setting parameters for quality evaluation. In this section we will review different conceptualizations and definitions of localization from its origins, in order to understand current gaps and synergies among the different parties with an interest in its definition: developers, management and business agents, industry experts, professional translators and

localizers, translation scholars, computational linguistics researchers, researchers from a myriad of disciplines (international marketing, technical writing, usability, etc.). This multiplicity of approaches currently means that so far 'definitions of localization tend to be contextually bound, reflecting the perspectives of those who formulate them' (Folaron 2006: 197). In general, the term 'localization' stems from the notion of 'locale', the combination of a sociocultural region and a language in industrial setting. It refers both to the processes by which digital texts are modified to be used by audiences in different sociolinguistic regions and to the products of these processes themselves. An array of publications, for example, discuss how to make 'localization' more efficient, while users interact with an Italian 'localization' of a website or a Canadian French version for Quebec. When the process refers to interactive digital texts on the Web, the term most often used is 'website localization' (Yunker 2003; Jiménez-Crespo 2009a; Pym and Windle 2011a), even though other scholars and industry experts have coined other terms, such as 'e-localization' (Schäler 2001: 22–26; Cronin 2003: 14), 'web-content localization' (Esselink 2006), 'website translation' (Williams and Chesterman 2002: 14) or 'translation of web products' (Hurtado 2001).

Before attempting to define localization, we should mention that even the definition of translation is a highly contentious issue today, a reflection of the multiplicity of perspectives that make up current Translation Studies (i.e. Halverson 2010). Obviously, any attempt to define localization will first encounter a stumbling block in defining what model of translation it includes. Often, simplistic and dated translation models that revert to natural equivalence relationships are mentioned. We will review this issue later in this chapter. The two groups with the greatest interest in finding a definition for the localization phenomenon are industry experts and TS scholars. The following sections review their perspectives.

### Industry definitions of localization

Definitions of localization in industry publications date back to the late 1980s and early 1990s (Uren *et al.* 1993; Microsoft Press 1994).<sup>2</sup> By then, software localization was commonplace in the industry and the foundations of the GILT process were established. As already mentioned, the term localization itself derives from the industrial notion of 'locale', defined as 'coinciding linguistic and cultural options: not just a language, but usually a particular variety of a language, plus local conventions regarding currency, date, [etc.]' (Pym 2004a: 2). The term emerged to distinguish between countries/regions within mono- or multilingual countries and the notion of language itself. It also arises out of the business notion of markets rather than

monolithic countries. Early definitions of locale stressed the adaptations necessary in software products, such as date, time or currency formats, and keyboard layouts, etc.<sup>8</sup> They also included cultural conventions as the most important aspect to consider beyond language, 'locales usually provide more information about cultural conventions than about languages' (Microsoft Corporation 2003: 7).<sup>9</sup> More recent definitions of 'locale', such as the one in the European Quality Standard EN 15038, include linguistic, cultural, technical and geographical conventions. A locale is expressed by the combination of the language code included in the international standard ISO 639,<sup>10</sup> followed by the country code as stated in the standard ISO 3166.<sup>11</sup> As an example, the locale code for French used in Quebec, Canada, would be Fr-Ca, and the Spanish from Chile would be Es-Cl.<sup>12</sup>

As for localization, the most popular definition was released by the now defunct Localization Industry Standard Association (LISA):<sup>13</sup>

Localization involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold.

(LISA 2003: 13)

This definition incorporated the basic common denominators found in most previous definitions:

1. The objects that are processed in localization are 'products' and not 'texts'.
2. The process incorporates both a linguistic and a cultural component, even when languages are culturally situated and both cannot be separated (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990). The industry has consistently insisted on the separation of culture and language, even to the point of maintaining that translation does not deal with culture (Microsoft Corporation 2003).
3. The localized product moves from a source to a target 'locale', the most common term found in industry definitions, even when in some cases the target is substituted by 'markets' (Sprung 2000; Schäler 2001; Lingo 2004; Gouadec 2007; Schmitz 2007), or 'languages' (Chandler 2005).
4. The term 'translation' is avoided in order to imply its distinct nature (i.e. LISA 2003, 2007; O'Hagan and Ashworth 2003). Very few cases do include the term translation as such (i.e. Chandler 2005: 1).

Despite the widespread popularity of this definition, LISA was aware of its limitations and offered different ones in subsequent primers (LISA 2004, 2007). These modifications were intended to expand the scope of the definition from software to websites and to a large range of services:

Localization is the process of modifying products or services to account for differences in distinct markets [...].

(LISA 2007: 11)

To complement this definition, the goals of the process were disaggregated into four essential components: linguistic, content-cultural, physical<sup>14</sup> and technical. The new definition stressed the importance of globalization and internationalization, as it included both products and services, and it adopted the notion of market instead of locale. After all, the notion of locale is part of the industry-centred discourse, and it is clearly influenced by the size or economic significance of market forces in each region (Pym 2004a: 40).

Another common denominator in the many definitions found in industry publications is the fact that localized texts need to have the 'look and feel' of locally made products. In other words, the objective should be to produce products that are received by target users as locally made. According to Globalization and Localization Association (GALA 2011), '[t]he goal is to provide a product with the look and feel of having been created for the target market to eliminate or minimize local sensitivities'. From a translation perspective, this goal characterizes industry practices in terms of an extreme 'domestication' strategy (Venuti 1995), according to which the users are not supposed to perceive any of the potential 'foreignness' of the text they interact with.

If seen in the light of TS, the most interesting trend is the attempt to define translation as a simple linguistic process within a more complex global cycle. This explains, for example, the initial emphasis on technological and cultural adaptations to separate localization from 'general translation', a more generic and 'lower-cost' process. Translation was understood in terms of the archaic natural equivalence paradigm that prevailed before the emergence of the modern-day discipline in the 1970s. Translation was also regarded as a less complex stage (Quirion 2003; Gouadec 2007; Austerlühl 2007), pointing to the fact that the industry consolidated without relying on the body of knowledge of TS. However, all these definitions saw the need to define localization precisely by reference to translation, mostly trying to highlight additional components that translation supposedly did not cover. A range of metaphorizations of translation thus emerged: a key aspect that sheds light on industrial discourses on localization.

### ***Metaphors of translation within localization: from 'texts' to 'adaptations'***

The seminal work on metaphor by linguists Lakoff and Johnson indicated that, 'the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). The early days of localization, like those of any novel phenomenon, saw the emergence of metaphorical constructs seeking to explain the challenging nature of a process 'that goes beyond translation' (GALA 2011). A trend then appeared that defined localization through underlying metaphors of translation. For our purposes these conceptualizations provide an interesting insight into its development. These metaphors mostly targeted what 'translation' was or did, rather than defining localization, and they were normally reductionist in scope. In a sense they were simply attempting both to stress the added-value component of the services offered by localization vendors, and to distinguish localization as a process 'more sophisticated than translation' (Pym 2004a: 25). This resulted in definitions of localization that essentially contrasted it with several metaphorizations.

The first metaphor can be referred to as the 'language' metaphor. Translation was 'just a language problem' (Brooks 2000), while localization addressed a number of complex and exciting additional issues. LISA, for example indicated 'localization needs to go beyond language questions to address issues of content and look and feel' (LISA 2004: 11). We will call the next metaphor the 'text' metaphor. This shows the same reductionist approach, and it can be traced back to the common practice of extracting textual strings from software products for translation. Translators handled textual strings, while localization experts handled other cross-cultural aspects. For example, Robert Sprung (2000: 10) indicated that translation was 'the core skill of converting text from one language to another, whether on hard copy or electronically'. In other publications, localization 'generally addresses significant, non-textual components of products or services in addition to strict translation' (LISA 2007: 11). Nevertheless, and as indicated in the same publication, the translation of text 'generally constitutes the bulk of a localization project'. In this metaphor we perceive the interest in placing the technical and management issues at the heart of localization. It goes without saying that the notion of text was atheoretical and did not correspond with linguistics or TS approaches of the time. In [Chapter 3](#) we will review how current linguistic and translation approaches to 'text' incorporate not only running text, but also the images, formatting, sound and interactivity that are part of a holistic global unit (Göpferich 1995a). This multimodal textual approach implies that translation operates in any and all of these different 'components' (Gambier and Gottlieb 2004). In line with this metaphor, another recurrent conceptualization describes translation as the part of the wider localization process that handles 'words'; it is therefore seen as the part of the cycle that deals with the 'translation of words' (Esselink 2006: 28) and is 'focused on communicat-

ing the meanings and messages of words' (LISA 2007: 7). Obviously, this metaphor implies that localization deals with much larger and wider ventures.

Without doubt, the 'adaptation' metaphor is the most pervasive in both TS and industry definitions. Adaptations are seen as the additional component that localization provides, as opposed to the textual or wordly nature of 'translation'. The term 'adaptation' is typically used to indicate the performative action of the localization process. Normally, it is the process of adapting a program for a local market (Microsoft Corporation 2003), the 'linguistic and cultural adaptation of digital content' (Schäler 2010: 209), or the 'the adaptation of any good or service' (Sprung 2000: xviii). The object of the adaptations is normally the product itself (Schäler 2001; Müller 2005; Gibb and Matthaikakis 2007; GALA 2011) or the linguistic and cultural elements within it (ONORM 1200 2000). Rarely are the technological aspects or the deep or invisible coding structure of these products mentioned, even when performing such technical adaptations as calendar formats, measuring conventions, spelling, etc., which represents one of the main issues in software or web localization when compared to other translation modalities (Wright and Budin 2001). Thus, it is surprising that this technological aspect is rarely mentioned as the main adaptation that separates localization from other translation modalities and types.

Taking this later conceptualization as its starting point, the most common model to appear is 'translation plus adaptation'. Normally, definitions distinguish translation clearly from the adaptation stage (Ørsted 2001; Microsoft Corporation 2003; Dunne 2006a; Schäler 2010). This distinction appears in several definitions, such as Esselink (2000: 2) - 'localization is the translation and adaptation of a software or web product' - or that on the GALA website:

Translation is one of several services that form the localization process. So in addition to translation, the localization process may also include adapting graphics to the target markets, modifying content layout to fit the translated text, converting to local currencies, using of proper formats for dates, addresses, and phone numbers, addressing local regulations and more.

(GALA 2011)

In this definition we find the adaptations are mostly technical in nature and, as already mentioned, we certainly agree that technical adaptations are a defining feature of localization, even if some of those mentioned here, such as dates, phone numbers, etc., are common to most translation processes, especially technical translation. For example, in technical translation it is common to add different phone numbers or eliminate sections of instruction manuals aimed at specific countries (Gamero 2001). In audiovisual translation, humour is often adapted in subtitles

and other types of audiovisual (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007), theatre (Zatlin 2005) or advertising translation (Torresi 2010). Thus, apart from technological adaptations, most others are shared with many other translation modalities and types and could not be considered defining traits of localization. For example, cultural, linguistic, text type or genre adaptations have been considered a central notion in linguistic, communicative and functionalist approaches since the 1960s (i.e. Bastin 2008). As Quirion (2003: 547) indicates, these types of adaptations have always been part of the translation process, even if scholars continue to question how they can change the way we perceive translation (O'Hagan 2012a). We thus find two specific components that are not shared with other translation modalities: active co-operation between translators-localizers and development engineers, and the need for a comprehensive understanding of technological issues on the part of translators.

### TS definitions of localization

In the more academic perspective of TS, two trends can be clearly distinguished. The first argues that localization belongs under the umbrella of translation-related phenomena, insisting that localization is no more than a translation modality shaped by specific technological and project-based features (Wright and Budin 2001; Hurtado 2001; Gouadec 2007). The other trend follows the professional approach and mostly focuses on work descriptive of industrial practices (i.e. Dunne 2006a; Schäler 2010; Dunne and Dunne 2011). The latter has been the more productive in the last decade, partly due to the arrival of industry experts in institutions of higher learning to incorporate localization in translation programs. Most published definitions have, therefore, adopted some industry models, distinguishing a linguistic and a cultural component and including adaptation as a key feature, or focusing on the significance of management in multilingual projects (Schäler 2008a, 2010).

Of the definitions found in TS publications, the most complete and comprehensive could be that proposed by Dunne:

The processes by which digital content and products developed in one locale (defined in terms of geographical area, language and culture) are adapted for sale and use in another locale. Localization involves: (a) translation of textual content into the language and textual conventions of the target language, (b), adaptation of non-textual content (from colors, icons and bitmaps, to packaging, form factors, etc.) as well as input, output and delivery mechanisms to take into account the cultural, technical and regulatory requirements of that locale. In sum, localization is not so much about specific tasks as much as it is about the processes by which products are adapted.

Moreover, localization is but one of a number of interdependent processes and cannot be fully (or correctly) understood without being contextualized in reference to them. These processes are referred to collectively by the acronym GILT.

(Dunne 2006a: 4)

The principles laid out in this definition are somewhat similar to those advocated in this book. It separates a translation stage from a technical adaptation stage. It also stresses the existence of a series of interrelated processes that, obviously, require different agents for their completion. However, it does not adequately distinguish textual and non-textual elements: contemporary approaches include visual, graphical and typographic components as intrinsic parts of the text in translation (see Chapter 3). It can also be argued that this could have a detrimental impact on the status of translators, as it could reduce their task to processing 'textual strings'.

The emphasis on localization as a common global project is shared by Gouadec (2007: 29 and 319). His definition focuses on the project-based nature of localization, including a list of what can be subject to adaptations, such as cultural, physical, technical, linguistic, ethic, religious, philosophical, commercial or marketing elements. In his breakdown of all localization-related tasks, the author separates those shared with other 'common' translation processes (ibid: 37-43): out of twenty-nine steps, ten are shared with other mainstream translation types, such as researching the terminology and phraseology or performing a quality analysis. Schäler also stresses the importance of the project-management nature of localization practices, and early on indicated that 'localization is being redefined as the provision of services and technologies for the management of multilinguality across the global information flow' (Schäler 2002: 21). In his entry in the *Handbook of Translation Studies* (Schäler 2010), he precisely underscores that what makes his definition different from others is putting the management of multilingual content at the core of localization. Nevertheless, translation and localization management, in general, are a core component of the global translation industry (Dunne and Dunne 2011). As an example, projects ranging from multilingual technical translation to audiovisual translation routinely incorporate managing multilingual projects in their cycle. Defining the localization prototype on the premise of multilingual management might, however, exclude a wide array of localization practices, such as small non-profit website localization, that can occur without any dedicated management being involved.

Analysis of other TS definitions shows that the two common denominators are the separation of the cultural and linguistic stages, and the adequacy or appropriateness of the target product to the receiving sociocultural contexts. The former shows the clear influence of the industry discourse in the discipline and is even

more common in TS than in industry-based definitions (Wright and Budin 2001; Gouadec 2007; Schmitz 2007; Schäler 2010). To some extent, this separation is surprising, given that cultural adaptation is part of all translation processes. As for the latter, this follows industry definitions that focus on adapting the 'look and feel' of non-translated products so that they are accepted as local productions by users. In most cases the product needs to be made linguistically and culturally 'appropriate' (Wright and Budin 2001; Schmitz 2007), or it needs to be adapted to the 'requirements' of a target market or audience (Schäler 2010; Mazur 2007). Localization is therefore conceptualized as a target-oriented translation type and, in line with the functionalist notion of adequacy, emphasizes users' expectations and achieving the communicative purpose for which the localization was commissioned, rather than equivalence relationships to source texts (STs).

Even though web localization is often included in the general definition of localization, a handful of scholars have also attempted to define it separately (i.e. Gouadec 2007; Sandrini 2008; Pym and Windle 2011a; Jiménez-Crespo 2009a, 2011a). As an example, Gouadec defined web localization as the:

Adaptation of the contents and functionalities of a Web Site for a group of users who share a number of specific cultural and linguistic features different from those for whom the website was originally designed.

(Gouadec 2007: 297)

This conceptualization of web localization is quite similar to the approach to localization in general; Sandrini (2005: 175), though, includes the web notions of accessibility and usability in his definition of web localization: 'a process of modifying an existing website to make it accessible, usable and culturally suitable to a target audience.' In an earlier publication he rightly indicates the similarities between the industry approach to the web localization phenomenon and functionalist approaches to translation, focusing mostly on the role of the translation brief or instructions provided by the client: 'a process of modifying a website for a specific locale according to the goals outlined by the client' (Sandrini 2005: 3). In general, these approaches inspired by functionalist theories can be considered as the prevailing approach in TS literature; mostly from the 'purpose-plus-loyalty' model proposed by Nord (1997). In this model, the overriding role of the function or 'skopos' in earlier functionalist proposals is somewhat modified by a compromise or 'loyalty' requirement towards the clients or commissioners. In some cases, web localization is defined by identifying features that differentiate it from 'straight' translation, as in the case of Pym and Windle 2011a. They offer a brief introductory definition in which web localization is the translation and adaptation of content to

specific local markets, then later present a more comprehensive definition in which web localization is compared and contrasted to non-hypertextual<sup>10</sup> translation. The following specific features are offered in lieu of a straight definition:

- a. The project-based nature of web localization
- b. How translatable elements are identified
- c. The tools needed to render them
- d. The non-linearity of the texts processed
- e. The way in which the translation process is prepared and coordinated and,
- f. The extent of the changes that might be introduced.

In a sense, the approach taken resembles the project-based perspective advocated by Gouadec (2007), in which translation is no more nor less than a step in a global economic and social cycle of production and distribution of translations. This review illustrates that, despite the fact that software and website localization represent distinctively different phenomena (Austermühl 2006), most definitions resemble those previously proposed for software localization: 'products' or 'content' are translated and adapted for a target market or locale.

### ***Proposal for a holistic definition of localization***

In previous publications I have offered a definition of web localization departing from a pragmatic-cognitive translation perspective as 'a complex communicative, cognitive, textual and technological process by which interactive digital texts are modified to be used in different linguistic and sociocultural contexts, guided by the expectations of the target audience and the specifications and degree requested by initiators.' Web localization is seen here in the light of recent perspectives within TS in which translation represents a linguistic, communicative, cognitive and textual process (Hurtado 2001). This definition adds the dependency on technology that both led to its emergence and, at the same time, represents a tool necessary to carry out all localization processes. The role of user expectations is included because of the interactive nature of digital texts and the distinct cognitive environment of reception. Web localization is identified as a salient example of target-oriented translation types, such as instrumental (Nord 1997) or covert ones (House 1997). In this context, localized websites are not 'called on to represent any previous texts' (Pym 2004a: 6) but, rather, serve a purpose effortlessly and efficiently. Finally, web localization also depends heavily on the social and economic context in which it functions, and therefore any definition should account for these

gravitational forces. This definition thus introduces the sociocultural dimension of translation, an emerging area in TS that accounts for the complex interplay of agents, technologies, market forces and processes that shape localization practices (Wolf 2010).

## Localization within Translation Studies

As with most technology-related phenomena (O'Hagan 2012b), the incorporation of web localization into TS has been a slow process. It first appeared as a new modality as early as the late 1990s (Mayoral 1997) and now is clearly consolidated into the discipline, as witness its inclusion in all encyclopedias (Baker and Saldanha 2008), Translation Studies handbooks (Munday 2008; Gambier and van Doorslaer 2010; Malmkjaer and Windle 2011), and all comprehensive monographs on translation theory (Pym 2010; Munday 2012). In early attempts at approaching localization, most scholarly publications adopted the industry-based discourse while attempting to bridge the gap between the industry and academia. The tendency was to focus on describing consolidated industry processes and pay less attention to TS concepts, notions or theoretical approaches. This trend was mostly led by industry experts who had moved across to academic environments. The main drive behind these efforts was to provide an understanding of a relatively complex phenomenon and provide a foundation for both training and research efforts. Some of these descriptive volumes from academic presses were entirely the work of professionals (Sprung 2000; Esselink 2001); others were edited by scholars but included work by both academics and industry experts (Reinke 2005; Dunne 2006a). The second trend was characterized by scholars maintaining that localization is nothing more than what translators have always been doing (Quirion 2003; Wright and Budin 2001). Some scholars attempted to bridge the gap between industry and academia, such as Pym (2003b) in his seminal paper 'What localization models can learn from Translation Theory'. He can be considered the first scholar to attempt to open a dialogue with the industry while at the same time denouncing the potentially dehumanizing nature of their approaches (2004a: 198). In a later publication Pym argued that localization opened up a new paradigm within TS due to the appearance of a new type of culturally-neutral internationalized text and internationalization-based equivalence. In this new type of equivalence STs are prepared from inception as neutral texts, and localization needs to be thought of from the 'very beginning, and planned for at every stage of the product development' (2010: 125). These texts are subsequently localized into multiple locales. He argues that localization should rather be called

'delocalization', as it attempts to erase all traces of the local from STs.

Another initial debate within TS focused on where localization fitted into the discipline. Originally it tended to be included within the emerging notion of 'multimedia translation', and the term 'multimedia localization' was even coined (Hurtado 2001; Gambier and Gottlieb 2004). There was a brief attempt to place localization within the booming field of audiovisual or screen translation, and subsequently the continuous blending of media and digital forms of communication has led audiovisual translation scholars to theorize on a blurring of lines between the translation of audiovisual digital products and localization (Remael 2010). Over the last decade, several attempts have been made to bring localization under the wider umbrella of TS, the first by Hurtado (2001), who proposed a classification of translation phenomena using types and modalities. Translation types are those related to specific professional fields, such as legal, medical or religious translation. The classification by modes, such as dubbing, simultaneous interpreting or sight translation, leads to distinct translation modalities. According to Hurtado, the classification by modes is important, as any source text can be translated following different modes – e.g. any text can be translated or sight translated. Software and multimedia localization were categorized as translation phenomena defined by their modality, and even in 2001 this indicated the relative lack of research on this area, despite its significance. In Vandepitte's (2008) proposed ontology of TS, software and web localization are placed within the branch of studies defined by type and, more specifically, within the studies of translation and translation technology. Obviously, localization can be studied and can be the focus of innumerable cross-categories within this ontology. The researcher acknowledges this fact precisely by suggesting the example of localization.

The debate about whether localization is a completely distinct phenomenon due to technological, management or globalization issues, or whether it is another translation modality is still going on. The 'technological' (O'Hagan 2012b; Cronin 2010) or 'audiovisual' turns (Remael 2010) in TS are fuelling the debate within the discipline about whether translation can be expanded to incorporate the multiplicity of new emerging textual production modes (Cronin 2013). However, if we stop for a second and look at localization in the context of the fast-developing field of audiovisual translation, it would be hard to justify web localization as a process separate from translation just because it includes 'multilingual management' (Schäler 2010), large 'projects' (Gouadec 2007) or distinctive procedural features (Pym and Windle 2011a). Rather, it is better to suggest viewing it as an expansion of translation at its point of junction with technological advances and business forces. As Remael indicates,

It is difficult to predict if the trend towards expanding the concept of translation to encompass this diversification will prevail over the opposite trend, that of introducing new terms (such as localization, technical communication and multimedia localization) that aims to reduce translation to one link within a larger communication chain.

(Ramael 2010: 15)

Ramael rightly points out that the decision about the future direction is not just up to scholars and institutions of higher learning, but also depends on politico-economic developments that determine the translation market. A move towards a prototypical understanding of translation or translation-related phenomena (Halverson 1999, 2010) would be beneficial to the integration of localization phenomena as a new translation modality. This would allow for placing at the core of translation and localization common cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication practices, and to identify areas at the core and the periphery that overlap. In doing so, localization can be easily conceptualized as a technology-based translation modality that requires the collaboration of a number of agents in addition to translators.

## Summary

This chapter has charted the origins of localization and has placed web localization within the paradigm of localization phenomena since the 1980s. We have outlined the different definitions of localization from both industry and TS perspectives, and analysed the initial gap between the localization industry and academia. It is argued that efforts at definition entailed contrasting localization with a dated conceptualization of translation. It has also been argued that the differentiating criteria chosen – adaptation, management, culture – have always formed part of modern approaches to translation (Wright and Budin 2001; Pym 2004a). We have conceptualized web localization as a specific translation modality marked by its

technological dependence and the co-operation between different agents. And we have presented a definition that includes a textual, linguistic, cognitive, communicative, technological, sociological and target-oriented perspective. The chapter ended with a review of localization's place within TS.

## Further Reading

There are a large number of publications related to general localization. For a general descriptive overview of the localization process, see Esselink (2001) for general localization, Yunker (2003) for website localization or Chandler and O'Malley (2011) for game localization. Dunne's (2006a) edited volume on localization includes both academic and industry perspectives. Although the Localization Industry Standards Association no longer exists, its LISA primers are still easy to find and represent an outstanding source for understanding industrial discourse on localization (LISA 2003, 2004, 2007). Another source of professional perspectives on localization are the *Multilingual* guides (<http://www.multilingual.com/guides.php>) and publications focused on localization (<http://www.multilingual.com/downloads/coreFocus131>). For a historical overview of the evolution of localization, see Esselink (2006). For a general overview of localization from a TS perspective, see Pym (2003b, 2004a, 2010: 221-242), Mazur (2007), Schäler (2008a, 2010), Dunne (2006a) or Folaron (2006). For a theoretical approach to web localization within TS, see Pym and Windle (2011a), Jiménez-Crespo (2011a), the functionalist approach of Sandrini (2008) and Sandra Neuert (2007). See Fernández Costales (2011) for the impact of the Web 2.0 on translation and localization, O'Hagan (2012a) for a review of the notion of 'adaptation' in localization, and Folaron (2010) for an overview of translation and the WWW.