

Web Page Translation

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Why translate a website?

Web pages give the first impression of an organization. Today many people check the web page of an organization before they approach a human representative. Therefore, a website with a professional feel will inspire more trust and confidence on the part of the user. I have read an article stating that in one instance correcting a spelling mistake on a website doubled the effectiveness of the site.

Having been raised in a Hispanic environment for the first 28 years of my life, I find that language is not only necessary, but comforting. Spanish speakers who can manage an English-speaking appointment without an interpreter may be more comfortable with Spanish reference materials on the web. In an appointment, the participants are having a conversation. Reading, however, does not provide an opportunity for questions and dialog. In the case of a hospital site, we also have to consider that when a person is under stress or is not physically well their ability to think clearly is diminished, and the dominant language is a more comfortable language.

When I lived in Boston, I interpreted in public meetings for one of the charter schools. Many Hispanic parents preferred to pick up the English materials they knew they wouldn't understand because they knew that the Spanish materials had spelling and grammar mistakes, so they weren't reliable.

Issues to consider when preparing to translate a web page.

- Website translation¹ is a team effort (website design team and translation team working together)
- Web pages are constantly updated. The translation process needs to be embedded in the website design.
- Websites need to be consistent.

¹ **Translation:** Process comprising the creation of a written target text based on a source text in such a way that the content and in many cases the form of the two texts can be considered to be equivalent. ASTM standard F2576-06

- Web pages are graphic (consider cultural appropriateness of images in the culture of the other language)
- Websites are a public relations and marketing tool.

Collaboration:

Website translation involves **close collaboration** between the website designer and the translation team (translator, reviewer and quality assurance). Even if the foreign language version of the website is directed at residents of the same geographical community, there will be some differences that affect the design of the site, such as the fact that “buttons, list boxes and menus need to be expanded to allow space for the translation, typically 30% expansion for Western European languages”.²

Some members of the translation team may perform more than one function, but their responsibilities are:

- Website designer for the organization that orders the translation
- Translator
- Reviewer
- Quality control reviewer, who verifies functionality of the site.
- Project manager, who coordinates the steps of the translation process.

Updates:

Website updates increase the need for close coordination between the translation team and the website designer. In order to be consistent with previous translations, it is best if at least some members of the translation team remain constant through the process.

Translating a website involves a one time setup, which is logistically demanding. However, it needs to be updated on an ongoing basis. Therefore, the translation team needs to be continually involved in the process. The organization should have a process in which translation is considered every time a page is developed or updated after the initial translation.

A website that is not updated becomes obsolete. So does the translated version of the website.

Consistency

Because of the variety of elements translated in a website, **consistency** is maintained more effectively if the translation team uses a translation memory tool. Tools such as Trados, Fluency, Wordfast, and others ensure that the translator can remember the way a phrase was translated previously and use the same terminology in the new page of the website.

Graphics

In a website, the translation team must be very aware of the **graphical format** of the target document, in order to avoid having to recreate the graphics surrounding it. Giving the translation team access to the complete site in the source language, even as a beta testing document, will ensure that the team can contribute to the development of a well connected site in both languages.

² Introduction to Localization, by Virginia Anderson, Canvas Dreams, 2000

Because a website is a combination of graphics and text, if there is text in the graphics the entire graphic will need to be edited to change the text. If the text is on top of the graphics in the HTML, that is not an issue.

Public relations and marketing

Because a website is a **public relations** tool, the focus will be more on localization³ than on a simple translation. Localization will involve making the product culturally relevant to the target audience. Transcreation⁴ might even be involved in some cases. The translation team will need close communication with the organization that orders the translation to understand the purpose of the translation and be able to develop a final product that meets the needs.

Search Engine Optimization is part of this, and the translator needs to be directly involved in the decisions about SEO terms in the target language. The translation team should coordinate with the SEO specialists on this topic, so the SEO terms are reflected in the translation.

General questions:

Some questions that will have to be answered are:

- Who is the intended audience of the site? What is the best way to communicate with this audience? Is the website being developed for the sake of completeness, along with a plan for distribution of printed matter that is consistent with the site, or is it an independent project?
- What is the nationality of the target audience?
- What is the socioeconomic status of the target audience?
- How much localization is expected?
- What format does the delivered text need to be in?
- Who is responsible for the final desktop publishing or formatting? If the translation team is not involved in this step, the final product shouldn't be released without the translation team's verification of functionality and correctness.

³ **Localization:** Cross-cultural communication process of preparing locale-specific versions of a product or service, consisting of translation of textual material into the language and textual conventions of the target locale, and adaptation of non-textual materials as well as input, output, and delivery mechanisms to meet the cultural, technical, and regulatory requirements of that locale.

Localization encompasses not only the translation and adaptation of computer software, but also the preparation of many types of products and services for particular locales.

ASTM standard F2576-06

⁴ **Transcreation:** the process of adapting a message from one language to another, while maintaining its intent, style, tone and context. A successfully transcreated message evokes the same emotions and carries the same implications in the target language as it does in the source language.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcreation>

Possible approaches to website translation:

Human translation	Machine translation ⁵	No translation
Qualified translation team	Example: Google Translate	
Appropriate for text that is key to the mission of the organization. The main pages, buttons, and other items that must be consistent to ensure good communication should be translated by a human.	Appropriate for gisting. In other words, materials that the reader is less likely to access, and where the nuances of the text are not important. Google Translate, however, allows any internet user to suggest a different translation. This could cause security issues, and removes control of the content published.	Common approach for last minute news items from a news feed because of the logistical and financial challenges of staying current.

<https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/html/kaiser/index.shtml>

The Kaiser Permanente website has a Spanish page that explains that they have only translated certain parts of the site, and links them. The rest of the website is simply untranslated. However, it is easy to find the parts that are available in Spanish. The upper right corner of the site has an “Español” button on every page.

<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/spanish>

The Boston public schools have a dual approach. They have used Google Translate for a lot of their website, and have ended up with significant mistranslations on their Spanish front page. A notable one is “Boston Rocks!” translated as “¡¡¡Rocas de Boston!” (Rocks from Boston). However, some of the links take the user to a Word document that is translated by a human.

⁵ **Machine translation (MT):** A mode of translation in which a computer program analyzes a source text and produces a target text, typically without human intervention at the actual time of translation.

Except in the case of gisting, machine translation (also called *automated translation*) generally requires human participation before the computer processes the source text (called pre-editing) or after the translation is produced by the machine (called post-editing), or both. In machine translation, the translator supports the automatic translation process by adapting the source text to accommodate the machine or by post-editing the target text to accommodate the human reader. In computer-assisted translation (CAT), the machine supports the translator.

Conclusion:

I would like to help others determine what approach is best for their website translation project and connect them with appropriate resources. I view this as a way to serve my community better by allowing minorities to have better access to the resources our community has available.

Sources:

ASTM standard F2576-06, Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation, 2011.

Introduction to Localization, by Virginia Anderson, Canvas Dreams, 2000

Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcreation>

The Guide to Translation and Localization, 7th Edition, by Lingo Systems

Consultation with Martha Warrington, my website designer