

Jiménez Crespo, Miguel A. (2013). *Translation and web localization*. Abingdon: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-415-64 316-0 (hbk). EUR 113. ISBN 978-415-64318-4 (pbk). EUR 32. ISBN 978-0-203-52002-8 (ebk). EUR 21.

The field of localisation had long awaited a comprehensive, well-documented academic book like this. As stated in the introduction, *Translation and Web Localization* provides “the first comprehensive interdisciplinary overview” of the topic by laying “theoretical and methodological foundations” for its research, largely from the perspective of Translation Studies (TS). Together with O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013), published a few months later, it has “officially” made localisation a main disciplinary concern in our field, with only software localisation lacking a similar scholarly analysis.

The book evolves from Jiménez-Crespo’s extensive expertise and long-standing rigorous research into web genres for localisation and textual adaptation strategies for localised webs. However, it aims to cover the bulk of relevant localisation issues, ranging from its history and present conceptualisations and ties with translation as a complex, multifaceted cultural product and industrial process (“Part I: Technology, Localization and Translation: Evolving Conceptualisations”), through to training and the foreseeable future (“Part III: Localization and the Future). At the heart of the book, Jiménez-Crespo takes us through the most significant scholarly and industrial concerns for web localisation (“Part II: Current Issues in Localization Research”).

From the outset, the author shows his great ability for synthesising complex ideas to make them easily digestible. The result is a book which serves students and researchers alike as an introduction to the specific characteristics of web localisation through the familiar lenses of TS and current and nascent technological developments. Unfortunately, this is sometimes achieved by glossing over complex definitions or explanations, reducing certain phenomena to a list of main features, and failing to explore ideas which fall outside the main theoretical schools Jiménez-Crespo embraces, i.e. functionalism and discourse analysis (with some forays into sociocognitivism). There are a few other minor faults in this otherwise very clear, didactic exposé: some excessively long paragraphs with insufficient logical connections and signposting; a somewhat baffling organisation of sections and subsections; and a very limited subject index.

The first two chapters (“The emergence of localization” and “The web localization process: from GILT to web usability”, constituting Part I) offer a very useful and informative overview, combining the history and the typical definitions of the localisation field and its processes with the author’s own comments on the specificities of web products. However, two confusing or even contradictory aspects soon emerge. Firstly, it is often unclear whether his definitions and observations are related to localisation in general or web localisation in particular. He often reminds us that the former is more content-oriented and – from a textual perspective – more genre-rich, whereas other areas like software localisation require higher technical expertise and have rather limited genre variation. Despite the progressive boundary blurring that he himself identifies, he emphasises textual aspects conditioned by web user expectations and prototypical uses and forms, setting web localisation apart as a differentiated translation genre (pp. 28-29). However, certain (not all) generalisations about “localisation” he makes are

hardly applicable to the whole field. Secondly, in rather bluntly separating “a translation stage from a technical adaptation stage” (p. 17) and repeatedly denying translators’ or localisers’ prototypical responsibility for structural, design-bound and more technical issues, he runs the risk of suggesting that translation is “just a language problem” in the context of localisation, the kind of detrimental “metaphor” which he himself denounces.

Part II can be subdivided into two blocks: the first (chapter 3, “Web localization and text”, and chapter 4, “Web localization and genres”) is Jiménez-Crespo’s main original contribution to the field as regards the definitions and significance of textual structures and genres. It supplies translators and localisers with ammunition to assert their importance vis-à-vis other industry actors with limited sensibility or knowledge of their communicative task. The author presents an enlightening account of the importance of textual cohesion and coherence for successful communication in websites and how this can also be adapted to new hypertextual structures. He also warns of the short-sightedness of CAT- and CMS- based segmentation for textuality (although his rejection of decontextualisation as prototypical in web localisation is shocking), presses the case for expanding the definition of “text” to include “non-verbal means” (i.e. multimedia, interactive mechanisms, typographic elements, etc.), and sets up a convincing analytical framework for digital genres, including key parameters such as textual structures or layers, the importance of user expectations and genre conventions, and a useful taxonomy of web genres.

Although extratextual aspects and functionality are highlighted in the analysis of genres, websites are regarded in a rather static fashion, with an insufficient exploration of the technological and communicative aspects of the medium itself. Both here and in the following block, I would have preferred a greater focus on alternative or complementary approaches (some of them mentioned in the book) such as Pym’s distribution model (2004), language as action, Communication theory, Semiotics, Robinson’s embodied agency (1999; 2001), Human-Computer Interaction, socio- and techno- cultural approaches, post-structuralist redefinitions of authority, intertextuality, and so on.

The second block in Part II deals with assessment, evaluation and research, and is based on the ideas set out in previous chapters about textual conditions, genres, the localisation task, relations with the industry, and the theoretical approaches and methodological expertise contributed by Jiménez-Crespo. As in the rest of the book, Chapter 5 (“Web localization and quality”) provides us with an exhaustive review of the related literature, from TS (mainly intrinsic, text/discourse- or communication-based) as well as the industry (mostly extrinsic, process-oriented and standards-based). Again, Jiménez-Crespo offers us a valuable synthesis of quality-assessment approaches (i.e. error-based, holistic/functionalist, textual-pragmatic and corpus-based). His main contribution is to challenge the validity of narrowly microtextual methodologies and to embrace the legitimacy of extratextual constraints as another quality factor.

In my opinion, however, it is problematic to relate quality assessment to extratextual constraints, except as mitigating circumstances: while constraints do have to be taken into account in a client-satisfaction model, time, cost and other such restrictions are often alien, even detrimental, to communication quality, as opposed to striking a balance between resolution and weight in multimedia web objects for example, which does affect the effectiveness and efficiency of communication. Conversely, more attention should be paid to how following the “necessary and sufficient rule” may impact communication, sales and branding. It would also have been interesting to include the perspective of professionals, who

would have a lot to say about constraints, frustration, quality zest and adaptation to new requirements.

Chapter 6 (“Web localization and empirical research”), together with Part III, provides us with excellent overviews and constitutes a basis for research and localiser education planning, if only within the mainstream (and – granted – most-favoured) approaches and methodologies that Jiménez-Crespo is most comfortable with. Once again, he walks us deftly and comprehensively through the birth, development and consolidation of Translation Studies, and adapts existing graphs and maps to accord a place to Localisation Studies. He also outlines the foundations of empirical research, a particular kind of research that he has cultivated very successfully.

In Part III we look to the future, both in terms of training would-be localisers and of foreseeable social trends. Chapter 7 (“Web localization and training”) is the most prescriptive section, revolving around the notions of competences and subcompetences (notably in the light of the approach from the PACTE group in Spain), the interplay between declarative and, mainly, operative knowledge, and professional versus bilingual expertise. Jiménez-Crespo rightfully asserts the importance of basing localisation subcompetences on translation competence first and foremost, and for the strategic subcompetence to orchestrate all other subcompetences. He makes a useful, adaptable distinction between three profiles – localisation expert, localisation engineer and localisation manager – and applies the PACTE competence model to determine which translation subcompetences should be more and less developed for each of those profiles.

In his commendable effort to fit localisation into the translation field, he unsurprisingly places web localisation close to “simple” translation, while associating software localisation with more instrumental competences and engineering concerns, and completely ignoring video game localisation (p. 180). His firm reliance on this model is complemented with the provision of long checklists of declarative and operative knowledge items to cover each subcompetence, which would be useful particularly for localisation programmes outside larger translation curricula. Nevertheless, his search for methodological approaches and translator education literature that could be adapted to teaching localisation remains somewhat limited, disregarding holistic models presented in the 1990s by scholars like Gile (1995) or Kussmaul (1995), linguistic-contrastive approaches like those of Baker (1992), discourse-analysis methods like those developed by Beeby (1996) and Hervey and Higgins (1992), Robinson’s sociocognitivism (1997), or post-structuralist approaches such as Arrojo’s (1993, 1996) – see Torres del Rey (2005). He also takes little advantage of constructivist approaches, which are akin to the collaborative nature of websites, ad-hoc web corpus building, and a holistic view of competences and knowledge as something that transforms the learner and helps construct learning in an interdisciplinary, open way.

No concluding remarks are offered, which seems appropriate as most current developments and features of web localisation are clearly and critically summarised throughout the book. Chapter 8 (“Future perspectives in localization”) serves as the conclusion by combining Jiménez-Crespo’s well-argued reflections from previous chapters with a balanced look into “new specializations” for web translators and localisers in the wake of phenomena such as crowdsourcing, collaborative projects and the post-editing of machine-translated content.

To sum up, this book offers an excellent introduction to the main present and future web localisation issues from an academic perspective, while trying to find common ground with industry conceptualisations, processes and needs. It is particularly useful for those wishing to embark on empirical research in the field, but could also help scholars, students, professionals and industry experts to gain a broad overview of the significance of this activity from varied perspectives, which would no doubt encourage mutual understanding. Although it covers most theoretical and methodological approaches to web localisation, the author's analysis sometimes takes a too positivistic stance, lacking a more cultural, sociological, semiotic and technological-interactive-communicative viewpoint. Ultimately, however, Jiménez-Crespo reflects the state of the art in this promising research area, where *Translation and Web Localization* can now be considered a seminal book.

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