The Moving Text.
Localization, Translation, and Distribution

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Photo: Authors’ hands at The Mission, Kellerberrin, Western Australia, August 2002

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Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1

1. Distribution

Localization in the computer ................................................................. 5
Software localization is seen as a case of general localization, visible in its mistakes. Translation is a part of localization, but both are general processes that work on language.

The movements behind localization ...................................................... 7
A wider sense of localization is found in a French newspaper advertisement, structured by the logics of material distribution.

Types of locales and localization ......................................................... 11
The logics of distribution set up positions for participative, observational and excluded locales, which may in turn correspond to different degrees of localization.

Determination by distribution ............................................................. 12
The degrees of localization respond to variable resistance to distribution, in both the computer and the newspaper advertisement.

What our notion of distribution is not .................................................. 13
This kind of distribution is material movement in time and space; it does not necessarily involve cultural integration; it is not a mental process.

Distribution is a precondition for localization ................................... 15
Localization and translation are responses to distribution, but only as general phenomena; there is no one-to-one causation.

Exactly what is distributed? ................................................................. 17
Texts are distributed, as objects marked with meaningful materiality, found in the example of an indigenous cave painting. Texts cannot be separated from this materiality, so localization cannot be separated from distribution.

Where do locales end? ...................................................................... 20
The limits of a locale can be defined as the points where texts have been localized. Localization thus forms locales.

Localization can be approached from distribution ............................. 22
The material determinants on distribution can account for the adaptation of texts, as seen in an English translation of De Gaulle.

Distribution can be approached through localization ....................... 23
The logical analysis of distribution and its negation can produce the concepts of “source text” and “distributed text”, both non-material positions, and thus account for pseudotranslations.

Internal and external knowledge ......................................................... 25
Internal knowledge of localization works on the alternatives not selected, and thus on logics of negation. External knowledge works from material distribution. Our theory needs both approaches.

2. Asymmetries of distribution

Defining localization ............................................................... 27
Standard definitions create confusion between localization, internationalization, and globalization.

Internationalization ................................................................. 28
Internationalization is the preparation of a generic text for multiple localizations. The concept can be extended to include terminology databases and controlled languages, occupying the guiding position once accorded to the source text.

**Internationalization and differences between locales** ................................. 33
Internationalization can enhance rather than restrict the differences between locales, as is suggested by the language varieties that computer programs are marketed for.

**Asymmetries based on the size of locales** .................................................. 35
The principle factor determining how many texts move may be the relative size of locales. It is possible that the larger the locale, the greater the percentage of texts moved from that locale and the smaller the percentage of movements into that locale. It is also possible that the distribution a locale receives without localization tends to be directly proportional to the distribution it receives with localization.

**Against complete localization** ...................................................................... 40
Localization is rarely complete, since asymmetries remain in the technical terminology. This incompletion potentially allows end-users to move to the locales of production.

**The lure of the global** .................................................................................. 43
Complete internationalization may be an ideal, but it could involve saying as little as a message sent into space.

3. **Equivalence, malgré tout**
   **Defining translation** .................................................................................. 44
   Industry discourse on localization defines translation in a very restrictive way, in terms of discontinuities that can be identified in practice.

   **A brief history of translational equivalence** ............................................... 46
   The restrictive notion of equivalence comes at a time when translation theory is moving toward a broader view, like that of localization.

   **An equivalence-based theory of translation** ............................................. 49
   Traditional translation theories associate equivalence with the end result of a one-way process occurring in an apparently subjectless place.

   **Signification and value** ........................................................................... 50
   Saussure’s distinction between signification and value would make translational equivalence difficult to ground, although the distinction becomes relatively inoperative in fields structured by internationalization.

   **Equivalence in translation and internationalization** ................................. 52
   The kind of equivalence based on internationalization is not like the operative fictions used by translation, where equivalence retains its associations with directionality and constrained quantities.

4. **How translations speak**
   **Seeing anonymity** .................................................................................... 55
   The operative anonymity of translators is a consequence of translational equivalence. It may be thought of in terms of discontinuities rather than clines.

   **Two maxims defining translation** ............................................................... 57
   Translation can be defined in terms of a maxim of first-person displacement and a maxim of quantitative equivalence.

   **The utterance “I am translating” is necessarily false** ............................. 58
   Since the first person of a translation cannot refer to the translator, the discursive operator is best described as “translates as”, relating texts rather than people.

   **Second persons** ....................................................................................... 60
Translational discourse also tends to shift second persons to neutral worlds, characterized by third-person relationships.

*Participative and observational second persons* .......................................................... 62
In these terms, translation or non-translation can be used to change the status of second persons, as seen in the French newspaper advertisement.

*Third persons in paratexts* ........................................................................................................... 62
The textual frontiers that present translations are in the third person; they can use defining or relative clauses.

*The discursive creation of neutral worlds* ............................................................................. 65
In some circumstances, translators can speak through their translations, challenging the representational maxims. In other circumstances, retreat to the third person conceals the positions not just of the translator, but of the source and target locales as well.

*Third persons can conflict* ..................................................................................................... 68
In some cases, the need to select between third-person terms must itself position the translator. This is yet another instance where translation can be used to modify and direct discourse.

5. **Quantity speaks**

*Why quantity is important* .................................................................................................. 70
The maxim of representational quantity contradicts Zipf’s rank-frequency law, making it difficult to maintain in practice.

*Types of quantitatively based equivalence* ........................................................................... 71
The maxim is challenged differently according to whether the presentation is with or without a source text, or with more than one target text.

*Transliteration* ....................................................................................................................... 72
The straight use of source-text material attains a degree of equivalence so absolute as to be often unacceptable.

*Double presentation* ............................................................................................................. 74
If a translation is presented alongside its presumed source, the presumed source will tend to be accorded more value than the translation, although this relation may undergo ironic inversion in cases of extreme quantitative discrepancy.

*Quantities of translation within localization* .......................................................................... 76
Non-ironic journalistic localizations of the Spanish term “La Movida” suggest that the longer the translation, the more value is accorded to the source.

*Predication is a quantitative threshold* ................................................................................ 78
Translational expansion is difficult to extend beyond the level of the sentence.

*Single presentation* ................................................................................................................ 78
When only the translation is presented, there is limited codification of expansion, abbreviation, addition, and deletion.

*Notes are expansion by a different name* .............................................................................. 80
Translators’ notes give the translator a first person not possible in in-text expansion.

*Deletion and abbreviation* .................................................................................................... 80
Reductive strategies are difficult to justify, since most distributions are away from the centers of highest frequency and thus require longer, more explicit terms.

*Deletion and addition* ............................................................................................................. 82
Explicit deletion and addition mostly require an authority external to the translating translator, although translation has frequently been linked with editorial responsibilities.

*Multiple presentation* ............................................................................................................ 84
The presentation of more than one translation leads to contradictory modes of equivalence. The most recent translation might be accorded more value, but there is also a right of first possession, allowing some translations to be come pseudo originals.

**Archaizing translations**

A translation may adopt a language variety older than that of the target locale, enabling it to work as a special kind of pseudo-original.

6. **Belonging as resistance**

*The opposite of localization* 
Localization opposes non-distribution, which itself depends on the various ways in which texts belong in some locales and not in others.

*There are no solo performances* 
Performatives link texts not just to a first-person action, but also to a second person who recognizes the power to perform.

*Extending performance* 
Performatives can be seen at the base of instrumental translations, as opposed to documentary translations. Translation may thus extend performance away from the locales of primary belonging.

*How discourse resists distribution* 
The distribution of discourses is largely restricted by the structuring of the I-here-now. The resulting elasticity may be tested on the thresholds of shared, referential, or unlimited distribution.

*Textual worlds overcome resistance to distribution* 
The more a text is explicit and codified within its own world, the easier it is to distribute and the weaker is its belonging to an original I-here-now.

*Variation and implicit knowledge* 
The use of local variants can have a performative effect, resisting distribution by creating implicit knowledge. The movement of such texts may require extreme explicitation, creating textual worlds through the use of narrative.

*Belonging and vagueness* 
Belonging means that the specific referents of many terms remain vague even in their source locales, creating significant indeterminism even before the moment of distribution to another locale.

*The tongue carries forgotten belonging* 
Natural languages strongly reinforce relations of belonging because they bind together experience in many different fields, and do so by discursively structuring the subject. This power is overlooked in many models of localization processes.

*Embeddedness is complex belonging* 
Natural languages use terms in many different locales, and thus embed language within cultural complexes. This embedding resists distribution.

*Cultural embeddedness conditions difficulty* 
Relative embeddedness explains why specialized texts are easier to localize than general texts, terminology is easier than everyday language, and distribution over long distance may similarly reduce resistance.

7. **Transaction costs**

*Assuming effability* 
Everything can be localized into every locale if and when unlimited effort can be invested in the localization processes. Real-world projects then require calculations of how much effort is justified in each case.

*The size of communication acts*
In this analysis, the size of the communication act is defined by the mutual benefits to be attained.

**Negotiation and mutual benefits** ................................................................. 106
Cooperation is defined as the attainment of benefits for all participants in a communication act.

**How this concerns communication between cultures** .......................... 109
Cooperation is harder to attain in cross-cultural communication because there are more occasions for potential mistrust. More effort is thus put into communication, or the information loads are reduced.

**Transaction costs** .................................................................................. 110
Transaction costs quantify the effort put into communication. The lower they are, the more leeway there is for cooperation to be attained.

**Localization as a set of transaction costs** ................................................ 111
Localization and translation involve relatively high transaction costs, although they can be used to structure such costs.

**The parameters of localization costs** ....................................................... 112
Localization costs can be adjusted in accordance with the diversity of locales and the size of the communication act. These adjustments are different for internationalization, translation, and language learning.

**Reducing transaction costs** .................................................................... 116
Transaction costs can be reduced by limiting directionality, promoting passive language competence, using internationalization, or reducing the quantities or qualities of texts.

**The interests of intermediaries** ................................................................. 118
The reduction of transaction costs may be in the long-term interest of intermediaries because they will gain more work from the enhanced possibilities of cooperation.

**Defending the transaction-cost model** ..................................................... 120
The neo-classical model can be extended beyond its simplistic psychology, becoming compatible with several realist strands of translation theory.

8. **Professionalization**

**Segmentation** ......................................................................................... 123
One of the effects of globalization is the breaking up of the market for linguistic mediation into separate segments, with technology as a major hurdle between the segments.

**The effects of market segmentation** ....................................................... 126
Segmentation leads to a narrowing of the role of translation within localization, and the development of separate professional institutions.

**Professionalization and professional identity** .......................................... 128
Segmentation may be challenged by controlling the mediating professions bureaucratically, or by trying to develop a shared professional identity.

**Suspicion of the intermediary** ............................................................... 129
All intermediaries are subject to mistrust, which has historically been controlled by restricted access to the profession or by hierarchical state regulations.

**Inspiration** ............................................................................................ 131
A later solution to the problem of mistrust was to claim collective inspiration, making the profession its own control mechanism.

**Teamwork** ............................................................................................. 132
The authority of mediating teams was then historically enhanced through the principle of diverse provenance, where professionals are selected because of their differences and can thus check on each other.

*The hierarchy of languages* .................................................................................................................. 133

The medieval professions also drew authority from the ideological hierarchy of languages, a structure that returns in the age of electronic communication.

*An unstable source* ............................................................................................................................... 134

Medieval mediation was also characterized by unstable source texts, which allowed the mediator greater professional responsibilities. This too returns in the age of constantly rewritten electronic texts.

*Ethical principles* ................................................................................................................................. 136

Ethical principles also build professional identity, but should not do so on the basis of idealist understanding or assumed neutrality. An ethics of cooperation can avoid those essentialisms.

9. **Humanizing discourse**

*Seeking the long view* .......................................................................................................................... 139

Mediation should seek to humanize cross-cultural relations, working with technology rather than against it.

*Adaptation as humanization* .................................................................................................................. 141

If humanization involves working at local levels of discourse, it should be the ideological aim of localization. Localization technology, however, brings about significant transformations in the way language is used.

*The loss of discursive linearity* ............................................................................................................. 142

One of the main effects that internationalization and localization have on discourse is the relative loss of linearity. This may not be dehumanizing in itself.

*Persons* .................................................................................................................................................. 144

Technical discourse, like translation, tends to avoid first and second persons. This can be reinforced by the loss of linearity and is felt to be dehumanizing.

*Accessibility* .......................................................................................................................................... 147

Professional technical texts are less accessible than technical texts for general users. This might be dehumanizing if localization locks the user into one kind of text or another.

*Renaissance and social segmentation* .................................................................................................. 148

Renaissance humanism sought exchanges between many types and levels of discourse, working against segmentation. Humanizing discourse might be that which pedagogically enables users to move between locales, and uses linearity to this end.

*Explicitness* .......................................................................................................................................... 150

Professional technical discourse is more explicit than non-professional discourse. Explicitness, however, may be pedagogically empowering and should be regarded as a positive value.

*Mediation and its vices* .......................................................................................................................... 151

Localization and translation can be used to humanize discourse in all these aspects. Complete localization, however, which would position users in just one locale, does not promise the necessary mobility.

Notes ......................................................................................................................................................... 153

Works cited .............................................................................................................................................. 157

Index ......................................................................................................................................................... 166