

## WHEN TRANSLATION IS NOT THE FINAL ANSWER TO CONVEY THE MEANING OF A MESSAGE

เมื่อการแปลไม่ใช่คำตอบสุดท้ายในการถ่ายทอดความหมายของสาร

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### Abstract

At times means of communication through translation is not enough to convey a message across to receivers. In this article, it shows three types of language interpretation from one language to another language that are used by products which are sold in stores throughout the country. The strategies used are translation, localization and transcreation. First, translation is the process of translating words or text from one language to another. Next, localization is an approach to adapt a product or service to adjust it more suitable for a particular region or country. Most localization can be found in cartoon, game, webpage and etc. Finally, transcreation is a process that used to develop or adapt new content for a specific target market, the new content is not directly translated from the original source but rather it is interpreted to make it sound suitable for the target group. It can be found in product catchphrases, car model names or webpage layouts. However, sometimes there are mistakes and misunderstandings found in using localization and transcreation to market the product in three areas - culture, symbol and meaning.

**Keywords:** Translation, Localization, Transcreation

### บทคัดย่อ

ในการถ่ายทอดความหมายจากภาษาหนึ่งไปยังอีกภาษาหนึ่งโดยใช้การแปลนั้น มีอยู่หลายครั้งที่การแปลเพียงอย่างเดียวไม่สามารถสื่อความหมายไปยังผู้รับสารได้ตามที่ต้องการ ในบทความนี้นำเสนอคลิปวีดีโอในการสื่อความหมาย เชิงภาษา 3 อย่าง ซึ่งพับได้ในผลิตภัณฑ์ที่วางขายในประเทศไทยที่สื่อสารอีกภาษาหนึ่ง นั่นคือ การแปล การปรับให้เข้ากับท้องถิ่นและการแปลแบบสร้างสรรค์ โดยการแปลนั้นคือ กระบวนการถ่ายทอดความหมายจากภาษาหนึ่งไปยังอีกภาษาหนึ่ง การปรับให้เข้ากับท้องถิ่นคือ วิธีปรับผลิตภัณฑ์หรือบริการให้เหมาะสมกับภูมิภาคหรือประเทศนั้นๆ สามารถพับได้ในการ์ตูน เกม หน้าเว็บ และอื่นๆ ส่วนการแปลแบบสร้างสรรค์คือ กระบวนการที่ใช้ในการพัฒนาหรือปรับ

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เนื้อหาของผลิตภัณฑ์หนึ่งให้เข้ากับตลาดที่เป็นเป้าหมาย เนื้อหาที่ปรับใหม่จะไม่เป็นการแปลโดยตรงจากต้นฉบับ แต่เป็นการตัดความใหม่ให้เกิดความรู้สึกว่าเนื้อหานั้นเขียนหรือทำขึ้นเพื่อกลุ่มเป้าหมายโดยตรง ซึ่งพับได้ในวิถีติดปูก ของผลิตภัณฑ์ต่างๆ ซึ่งรุ่นรถยนต์หรือการจดหน้าเว็บไซต์ ทว่าในบางครั้งพบว่า การใช้การปรับให้เข้ากับห้องถีนและ การแปลแบบสร้างสรรค์ยังมีข้อผลิตผลลัพธ์หรือก่อให้เกิดความเข้าใจผิดซึ่งแบ่งเป็น 3 ด้านด้วยกันคือ ด้านวัฒนธรรม ด้านสัญลักษณ์ และด้านความหมาย

**คำสำคัญ:** การแปล การปรับให้เข้ากับห้องถีน การแปลแบบสร้างสรรค์

## Introduction

Translation has played an important role to convey meaning from one language to another for a long time. It is a means to help people who speak different languages to be able to understand each other. Translation can be found around us whether you read a book, or see an advertisement, billboard, bulletin and etc. It can be said that in our everyday life, translation is inevitable especially in advertisement of international brands whose products or services are marketed worldwide. If these international brands want to launch their products or services in a country that do not use the same language as theirs they basically need translation to interpret their messages to target groups or consumers. But more often than not, translation is not the only method to convey the message of a product or service to consumers. The companies need new approaches to make their target groups or consumers become familiar with or recognize their products or services. The approaches they use should make their products or services feel close to the consumers' culture, language and feeling. This is where localization and transcreation come into the picture as transla-

tion alone is not enough to help them getting their message across to international market.

## Definitions of translation, localization and transcreation

### Translation

Translation is the process of translating words or text from one language to another (Cambridge University Press, 2008: 1549). However, if viewing from a marketing aspect, translation is the first step or a stepping stone to introduce a product's information to customers who use other languages. When a company wants to launch a product in a country, one thing that they do is to hire a translator to translate the content of the product into the target language. The content can be anything from user manual, advertisement, handbook and etc. In conclusion, translation deals with language and the meaning in source language is as the same as in the target language.

### Localization

Localization is a method to adapt a product or service to make it more suitable for a particular region or country (Oxford University Press, 2008: 323).

When talking about localization it usually

connects with cross-cultural marketing because localization is the process of adapting a product or language to a target market or country. In short, it aims to give a product the look and feel like it is created especially for a country (GALA, 2015). In terms of translation the meaning of a message that is localized is still the same as in the source language but the content can be adjusted in a way that is culturally suitable (Vita, 2004).

### **Transcreation**

Transcreation is the process used to develop or adapt new contents for a specific target market, the new content is not translated directly from the original source (Ray & Kelly, 2010: 3). If localization is seen as a second step after translation, then transcreation can be viewed as its natural progression. For this step, transcreation is a marketing technique that requires more research and approaches than localization. When a company targets to launch a product locally they not only need the source language to be translated but they need the content of the product to be adapted properly to have the same impact as it does in the original country. That means marketing

techniques, advertising, or languages that are used for a product in the original country have to be changed when using in the target country. In terms of translation when a product is transcreated the people in the target country should not know or feel that the message they read or hear is translated. The language should be smooth as if it is created for that country. The content of the product can be changed to suit marketing purposes.

In conclusion, in terms of getting message across to receivers a language can be translated, localized or even transcreated. It depends on the company and how much they want to go further. If they want only the meaning, they can use translation but if they want their customers to be familiar with and recognize their product better, they can use localization and/or transcreation as their techniques.

### **The difference between translation, localization and transcreation**

The table below gives a clear explanation of the differences between the three approaches.

**Table 1** The difference between translation, localization and transcreation.

	Translation	Localization	Transcreation
Main characteristics	The content stays the same	The meaning stays the same	Different content developed to meet business objectives
Language	Literal word-for-word translation of everything	Translate the meaning of the words in a way that is culturally appropriate	Developed in local language; English may be used as part of the brand vocabulary
Images	No change	Change to meet local expectations / product needs	
Layout	No change	Minimise changes	Change to meet local expectations
Brand vocabulary	No change	No change	Enhance and expand

Source: Vita (2014)

From the table, it shows that when focusing at main characteristics, translation does not change the content, and localization still preserves the meaning but only transcreation changes the content to meet business objectives. In terms of language, word-for-word or literal technique is used for translation, but for localization the message is adapted to suit the local market and its culture. For transcreation, the source language is preserved as part of the brand vocabulary but the message is delivered in a local language. If the message has images, translation still keeps those images. But for localization and transcreation the images need to be changed to suit the local market. As for layout, there is no change in translation and slight change in localization. But whenever transcreation is adopted, it needs to be changed to suit the local market. Regarding brand

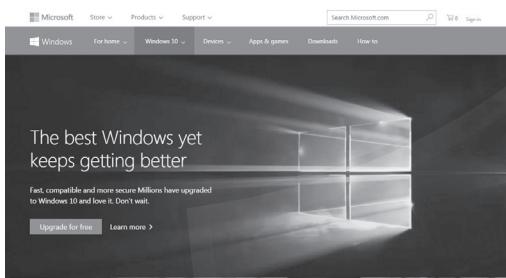
vocabulary, there is no change in translation and localization, but in transcreation its brand vocabulary is enhanced and expanded.

### Examples of translation, localization and transcreation

#### Translation

When a company wants their document or content to be translated in a language, they employ a translator to do the job. Types of translation depend on the document or content that is translated. There are many types of translation that are used in doing business such as general translation, legal translation, commercial translation, administrative translation, literary translation and etc (One Hour Translation, 2015). However in a marketing context, commercial translation is one type of translation that is closely related to localization

and transcreation. It is used for many purposes that encompass a range of activities such as legal, administrative, scientific and more (Pollard & Chan, 2001: 95). Here is an example of commercial translation that is employed for promoting Windows 10 operating system.



**Figure 1** Windows 10 English tutorial webpage

**Source:** Microsoft (2016)



**Figure 2** Windows 10 Thai tutorial webpage

**Source:** Microsoft (2016)

As shown in the previous pictures, the translation of the content in English page is rendered almost the same as in the source language. Some adjustment can be seen in wording to make the message sounds smoother in Thai but the content and layout remain the same as in the original version.

### Localization

A famous American animated sitcom “The Simpsons”, is a good example of localization

as this cartoon has been dubbed or translated into many languages including Arabic, French, Spanish, Chinese, Swedish and Hungarian (Mohan, 2011). Moreover, in 2005, the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) decided to introduce “The Simpsons” to the Middle East countries (Miss Cellenia, 2011) with the new name “Al Shamshoons”. Not only the name was changed, the content of the cartoon was also different from the original too. In Muslim world, Homer or Omar Shamshoon, the main character drank only soda and never ate pork. His meat of choice was lamb or beef (Vita, 2004). Each episode that was chosen to be aired in the Muslim countries was carefully reviewed and edited to remove scenes or dialogues that might be offensive to Muslims (Miss Cellenia, 2011).



**Figure 3** The Simpsons

**Source:** Soundwordsight (2016)



**Figure 4** Al Shamshoons

**Source:** Vita (2014)

Another example of localization can be seen at web pages of Coca Cola in various countries. Coca Cola is an international brand that sells its products around the world. For promotional purposes the company uses their webpage to communicate with their customers. As their products are sold worldwide, they have Coca Cola branches around the world. Each country has different web page of Coca Cola with different layouts depending on their culture and interest.



Figure 5 Coca Cola webpage

in different countries

Source: Vita (2014)

### Transcreation

As mentioned earlier, transcreation is a strategy of transforming from one language into another language that can be seen in advertisement and marketing. Sometimes word-for-word

translation may not be suitable for the target audience or consumers. Transcreation can be found in product catchphrases, car model names or webpage layouts. Take a German confectionery company, Haribo, for example. Haribo is well known for gummy and jelly sweets, and they are sold in many countries. In German, Haribo has a catchphrase that goes “*Macht Kinder froh und erwachsene ebenso*”, which means “Haribo makes kids happy, and adults too”. So when the company decided to introduce its product in the UK, the catchphrase they used must be interesting. If they translate the aforementioned catchphrase literally, it would not be interesting. So the company transcreated it to “*Kids and grown-ups love it so the happy world of Haribo*”.



Figure 6 Haribo's slogan in German

Source: Vita (2014)



Figure 7 Haribo's slogan in English

Source: Vita (2014)

Now take a look at the webpage of SurveyMonkey, which is an American online survey development cloud-based company. The webpage of the company can be viewed in different languages. The English version (US) webpage of the company depicts a Caucasian model whose resemblance is referred to a

native English speaker and the brands at the bottom of the webpage are familiar to Americans. On the contrary, the company's Japanese webpage illustrates a different model and the brands at the bottom are changed to the ones that are more familiar to Japanese people (Kelly, 2014).

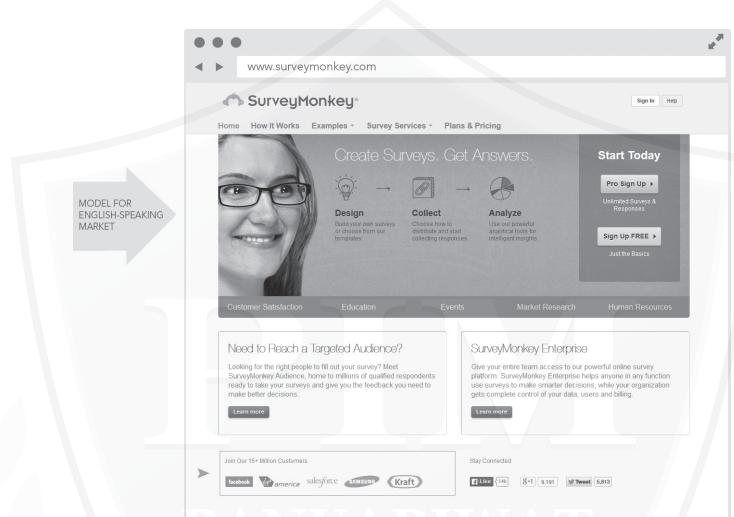


Figure 8 SurveyMonkey the USA webpage

Source: Smartling, Inc. (2016)

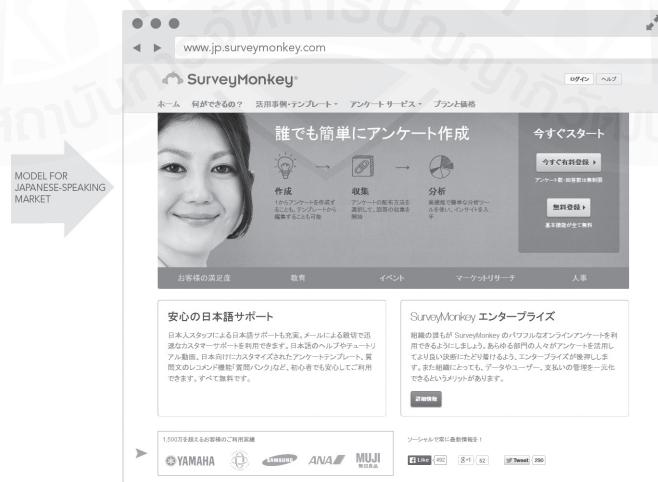


Figure 9 SurveyMonkey Japan webpage

Source: Smartling, Inc. (2016)

## Communication mistakes or failures through localization and transcreation

Communication mistakes mentioned in this article are any mistakes or misunderstandings of communication that occurred by using localization and/or transcreation as a means to convey meanings to the receivers through language, pictures, feelings or culture. Many companies try to localize or transcreate their products to a specific market, which works in other countries but not in other countries. In this article the author will talk about the factors that make their products not successful in some countries in terms of culture, symbol and meaning.

## Culture

Culture is the ideas, beliefs and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a society (Pearson Education, 2003: 340). Back in 2012, IKEA a Swedish company that designs and sells ready-to-assemble furniture and home accessories launched its yearly catalogue to customers. This is a normal thing to do for a company to promote its name through catalogue, and IKEA has many retail stores in many countries including Saudi Arabi. Here in this Muslim country, the 2012 IKEA catalogue was localized and transcreated, and one picture caused a stir outside the country, in non-muslim countries to be specific.



Figure 10 Picture of IKEA's 2012 in a newspaper.

Source: Independent (2012)

From the picture above it shows two different pages of IKEA catalogue. On the left is a picture that was featured in the 2012 catalogue which was distributed to IKEA stores around the world showing a family- a father, a mother and two sons in a bathroom. On the right is a picture of IKEA's 2012 catalogue for Saudi Arabia which was localized and transcreated by removing the mother out of

the picture. In Saudi Arabia women are not often seen in advertising or on TV and if they are to appear, they must wear long dresses with scarves covering their hair and bodies (Quinn, 2012). When this picture was published in Metro, a Swedish free newspaper on October 2012, it was criticized about the women's right in Islamic countries, and IKEA was blamed for their decision. Later IKEA released a statement

apologizing for their shortcoming about this sensitive issue.

### Symbol

Symbol is a picture, shape, color etc. that has a particular meaning or represents an idea (Pearson Education, 2003: 1,475). In 2006, when Sony Computer Entertainment of Europe decided to launch an all-white PlayStation Portable in the Netherlands, they convinced customers to buy the new game console by showing a billboard that depicted a white woman with a threatening stance gripping a black woman by the chin. Although the billboard was launched in the Netherlands only it received bad feedbacks from Americans through gaming message boards and blogs. It was seen as racism or white supremacy that Sony Computer Entertainment of Europe decided to pull the billboard down and withdrew the campaign (Totilo, 2006).



**Figure 11** Sony PlayStation White billboard in the Netherlands

**Source:** Uncyclomedia Commons (2016)

### Meaning

Meaning is the thing or idea that a word, expression or sign represents (Pearson Education,

2003: 909). There are many cases about lost in translation that has been overlooked by many. A word that has a meaning in one language may have a different meaning in another language which can cost a fortune if it is taken lightly. A good example of lost in translation is the case of “Mitsubishi Pajero”. Originally this SUV model was named after Leopardus pajeros, the Pampas cat, but it was soon dropped when the company realized that this word in Spanish means “to masturbate” and it caused a disaster because the model could not sell in Spain. So they changed the name to “Montero”, that means “mountain hunter” (Vita, 2014). Such is the case with “Honda Jazz”, which is the model sold worldwide. Originally Honda planned to market this model in Scandinavia countries with the name “Honda Fitta”, but they later changed the name to Honda Jazz after found out that the word “fitta” in Swedish was equivalent to female genitalia (Carscoop, 2007).

### Conclusion

In terms of marketing, if a company wants their product to be internationalized they can employ one of these three approaches to convey a message across to their customers- translation, localization or transcreation. Translation is the process of translating words or text from one language to another. On the other hand, localization is a method to adapt a product or service to make it more suitable for a particular region or country. This approach is used to make a product look and feel like

it is created especially for a country. Finally, transcreation is the process used to develop or adapt new contents for a specific target market. It requires more research and approaches than localization. The content of the product that is transcreated can be changed or even added to suit marketing purposes.

There are many types of translation, and how they are called depends on the document or content that is translated. There are general translation, legal translation, commercial translation, administrative translation, literary translation and etc. For localization, this approach can be found in cartoon, game or advertisement. An example of localization can be found in an animation cartoon, “The Simpsons”, that was localized to air in Saudi Arabia. The name was changed into “Al Shamshoon”. Each episode that was chosen to be aired was carefully reviewed and edited to remove scenes or dialogues that might be offensive to Muslims. On the other hand, an example of transcreation can be seen in advertisement and marketing. For example, the product catchphrase that Haribo (a German confectionary company) used in its advertisement “*Macht kinder froh und erwachsene ebenso*”. The literal translation of this catchphrase is “Haribo makes kids happy, and adults too”, which the company was not satisfy, so it was transcreated into “Kids and grown-ups love it so the happy

world of Haribo” to make it more interesting.

In this article there are three areas of communication mistake that caused by using localization and/or transcreation. Such as the controversial 2012 IKEA catalogue where IKEA removed a woman image from their catalogue. IKEA was criticized for their negligence on women’s rights in Islamic countries and was blamed for their decision. Another misunderstanding is the case of Sony Playstation White billboard that was launched in the Netherlands in 2006. This billboard showed a white woman with a threatening stance gripping a black woman by the chin. It caused controversy in the USA as it was seen as a symbol of racism. Finally, an example of misunderstandings found in language is the case of Mitsubishi Pajero. In Spanish “Pajero” means “to masturbate” and it caused a disaster to Mitsubishi because the model could not sell in Spain. Later they changed the name to Montero, which means “Mountain Hunter”. In conclusion, the usage of localization and transcreation should be considered for appropriateness depending on the place and situation they are used. To avoid any misunderstandings and mistakes that may rise from the use of localization and transcreation, one must prepare and research carefully whether which situation and what condition are appropriate to use.

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