A Research on the E-C Translation of Chinese Enterprises Websites from the Perspective of Localization Theories

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Keywords: Chinese corporate websites, localization theories, localization strategies

Abstract: With global economic integration, an increasing number of Chinese enterprises have begun to seek for business opportunities around the world. Corporate websites, as a window for corporations outside China to know Chinese corporations, plays an important role in showing corporate images and introducing corporate products and services at the global platform. However, the quality of the E-C translation of Chinese enterprises varies greatly, some of which are far from satisfactory. Based on the facts mentioned above, this study aims to analysis the translation and localization of Chinese corporate websites. To be specific, this research firstly aims to find out the similarities and differences between the English versions of the Chinese corporate websites and the English local websites of western countries, based on which, the problems in the English Versions of the Chinese Corporate Websites can be found out. Then, it aims to further explore the translation and localization strategies which can help Chinese corporations to localize their websites, and to cater to the needs of their target users.

1. Introduction

In the post-epidemic era, cross-border e-commerce has become an important engine for promoting China's open economy. In 2020, data from the General Administration of Customs shows that, China checked and released 2.45 billion import and export lists through the customs cross-border e-commerce management platform, with an increase of 63.3% over the previous year. Moreover, the import and export of cross-border e-commerce is 1.69 trillion yuan, with an increase of 31.1%, of which imports were 0.57 trillion yuan, an increase of 16.5%, and exports were 1.12 trillion yuan, an increase of 40.1% [1]. With the fast development, corporate websites, as a window for Chinese corporations to show their images, serve an increasing important role in helping enterprises to enter into global market and seize business opportunities in overseas market. Therefore, Chinese corporations have to establish high-quality English websites to expand their international influence of in the overseas market. However, many Chinese corporate English websites are not standardized, and there are a wide range of websites localization issues, which bring some difficulties for target users to understand and accept their English websites. In view of

this, researchers propose that it's important for Chinese corporations to translate and localize corporate websites which can cater to the needs of target customers.

2. Connotation of Websites Localization

According to LISA, the Localization Industry Standards Association, localization is "the process of modifying products or services to account for differences in distinct markets [2]". Moreover, Bert Esselink pointed out that localization "is the translation and adaptation of a software or web product [3]". In his view, the process of localization consists of translation and other necessary activities such as multilingual project management and so on. What's more, the development of modern technology changes the content for website localization, which changes from "traditionally large sets of HMTL pages and images" to "database tables with structured content". In addition, Esselink advised to develop "the site content to simplify hosting and display of localized information [4]". To sum up, Esselink thought that website localization is a complicated and all-inclusive activity involving different aspects.

The above theories shows that websites localization is a broader concept than translation. Translation is converting one language material into another, while websites localization refers to providing enterprises' web page in a target language so that target users can read it in their own language when they access the localized page.

Websites localization is more complicated than translation mainly because it covers the following issues: 1) Translation of user interface, online help and documentation; 2) Adapting the website pages to make them become more local-like, for example, formatting the numbers, dates, time, address, character sets and so on; 3) Adjusting websites navigation bars based on target customers' reading habits and cognitive habits; 4) Ensuring that the language, layout, iconography and color used in the web pages cater to the local culture, 5) Building, testing and debugging the localized version which covers the work of source texts editing, proofreading, and page layout [5-7].

3. Problems in the English Versions of the Chinese Corporate Websites

There has been a noticeable gap between the English versions of the Chinese corporate websites and the English local websites of western countries. It's a common problems that English native speakers feel uncomfortable with some of the English websites launched by Chinese businesses. Research shows that word-for-word translation and negligence of web style are two major problems in Chinese corporate websites localization.

3.1. Word-for-Word Translation

Word-for-word translation is a common problems in the English versions of the Chinese corporate websites. It is not difficult to find honorary titles such as "observe contracts and keep promise enterprise", "May 1 labor certificates", "Four-good advanced team 2", and slogans such as "Aviation Repay Back Nation", "Three Represents", and "Strengthen Nation Richen People 3". Obviously, those phrases are strange and confusing to English native speakers, they would feel puzzled while reading such information. The above mistakes occur because the translators neither have a good knowledge of English nor rich experience in localization. And translators should avoid word-for-word translation like that.

3.2. Negligence of E-C Textual Style Differences

The English local enterprises tends to use condense and clear text structure in their websites texts. And the website design of the American enterprises is more user-friendly. Instead of providing the long and complicated text, they usually provide subheadings and hyperlinks which will help the target readers to get the information easily [8]. However, Chinese corporations tend to use long sentences and lengthy texts and in their websites texts, the negligence of E-C textual style differences can lead to the consequence that the target readers fail to keep their interest in finishing reading the contents of the websites.

3.3. Negligence of Cultural Differences

Chinese and English represent different cultural background. Negligence of cultural differences in localizing websites obviously can hinder effective communication with their target customers in their websites. And such a problem is very obvious in various aspects, for example, neglecting the fact that the English local websites usually don't overemphasize leadership. As is shown in Figure 1, English websites established by Chinese corporations tend to include address or statement from the CEO or other corporate top leaders as an important part in their navigation bars, while western corporations hold different perception towards their corporation leaders and they seldom present leader address in their websites.
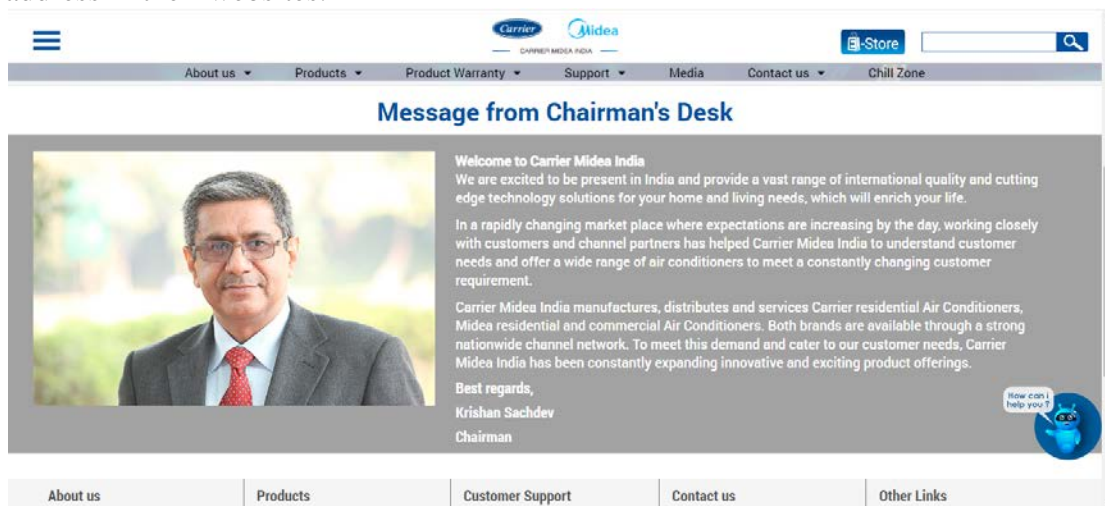

Figure 1: Design of "About Us" Column of Midea.

4. Strategies of the Chinese Corporation Websites Localization

The problems mentioned above indicates that there is still much room for improvement in terms of Chinese enterprises' English websites localization. This paper proposes several strategies to guide Chinese corporate websites Localization.

4.1. Deletion and Addition

In websites localization process, it's important to figure out what information can be omitted and what need to be added. For example, contents of "Shi er wu" and "Zhuang ti" can be omitted even if they exist in the original Chinese websites. Because those phrases are strange and confusing to the target customers, and may cause the foreign customers to lose interest in reading their web pages. What's more, foreign local websites tend to provide detailed information about "Contact Us"

and "Customer Service". Chinese websites also have navigation bars like "Contact Us" and "Customer Service". However, they may fail to offer enough information to help their target customs which may raise a wave of disappointment. In this case, some key information should be added. For example, English local websites usually provide different phone numbers for different services and address, while Chines websites usually provide only one phone number throughout the whole web page. Moreover, English local websites usually provides several hyperlinks with various information under the navigation bar of "Customer Service", which can help their target customers to solve their problems efficiently. However, Chinese websites may not do well in this regard. Therefore, it's necessary to add necessary information in websites localization process to make their websites more user-friendly.

4.2. Restructuring Information

As mentioned above, the contents in the original Chinese web page need to be processed with addition and deletion method. With some information added into it and some other omitted from it, the remained contents in the web page may not be presented in a logic or coherent manner. In view of this, it's necessary for translators to rearrange the information in a logic and coherent manner. In order to ensure that the restructured contents are consistent with the English article and conform to English speakers' reading habits and cognitive habits, translators need to have a good knowledge of the characteristics of English local websites and the reading habits of English native speakers. Besides that, the translators have to bear in mind that the information presented in the web page should be concise and efficient, otherwise, the target readers may not have the patience finishing reading it.

4.3. Avoiding Language Mistakes

It's common to find some spelling and grammatical errors in the English websites of the Chinese corporations. For example, spelling errors such as double full stops, extra space between words are common to find in the web pages which should be carefully examined and corrected. Moreover, grammatical errors such as "equipments" also exist.

4.4. Catering to Target Customs' Cultural Preference

Hofstede researched the cultural differences from power distance [9], individualism vs collectivism. He pointed out that China is a large-power-distance country and many western countries are small-power-distance countries. Firstly, in terms of power distance, people in a large-power-distance country respect their top leaders and firmly observe their instructions and decisions. This explains why Chinese websites tend to present leader address in their web page and foreign customers pay little attention to those contents. Therefore, it's important for Chinese corporations to localize their websites based on small-power-distance culture. Secondly, in terms of individualism vs collectivism, Hosftede pointed out that Chinese people hold collectivism values while people in many western countries hold individualism values [10]. In Chinese culture, when achieving great success, people tend to give the credit to the whole organization rather than one individual. While in a typical individualism society, people do the opposite. This explains why foreign websites usually give a detailed introduction to their leader, including their diploma, working experience and other achievements. Therefore, Chinese websites should do some improvements in this regard while websites localization.

5. Conclusions

This thesis focuses on the problems in the English Versions of the Chinese Corporate Websites and develops localization strategies for Chinese corporate websites. Websites localization is still a new filed in translation studies, is a much more complex than it could have been imagined. And it requires much experience and insight in both translation studies and localization industry, but the authors only have limited abilities in both field. It calls for more advanced research results to deal with Chinese corporate websites localization issues.

Acknowledgements

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