Localization and Its Place in Translation Studies

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Abstract

This article deals with localization theory in Slovakia and elsewhere. It opens with an introduction to localization and the basic concepts used in localization research (based on Jiménez-Crespo 2019). It then presents several prominent theories and definitions of localization before summarizing them into one general theory. Following that, the article investigates localization research in Slovakia starting from the 1990s. Here, more than twenty years of research are divided into four major periods. It is clear that localization research in Slovakia has gained traction since 2017. The article aims to address the boundaries of localization, contribute to the discussion on general localization theory, and present the situation concerning localization and research in Slovakia. It works with current and older sources on localization and translation theory.

Keywords: localization, software, video games, websites, localization theory

Introduction

Digital technologies in the 1980s and 1990s had a significant impact on translation theory and practice. Computers and the internet, and their impact on social interactions, resulted in the emergence of various new technologies that attracted researchers from the field of translation studies. Phenomena such as human–computer interaction and the influence of technology on the work of translators gradually became the focus of translation studies, resulting in the development of new theoretical approaches and methodologies that confirmed the interdisciplinary nature of the field (Snell-Hornby 1994). Applying new "computer" technologies led to a "technological turn" (Cronin 2010; O'Hagan 2013). Indeed, "[t]ranslation theories began to incorporate the

increasingly evident impact of technology [on the work of translators], in turn providing a relevant theoretical framework to language and translation technology research" (O'Hagan 2013).

In these contributions to the *L10N Journal*, we want to address the impact of interactive digital texts on translation; these began to appear in the 1980s. The focus is on localization – a complex, communicative, contextual, text-forming, and cognitive process in which source interactive digital texts (i.e., websites and non-game and game software) are modified so that they can be received in the target language and sociocultural contexts (Jiménez-Crespo 2013). This is a fundamental pillar of the journal, and its future will be based on the spirit of localization and technology in translation.

Localization is an invisible part of modern life. Every day, a multitude of digital texts are created which users access via computers, game consoles, and mobile devices. "Localization" is an umbrella term for two theoretical trends:

1. Translation processes related to digital texts, such as software (Dunne 2006, Roturier 2015), websites (Jiménez-Crespo, 2013), video games (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013), and applications for smartphones and other mobile devices (Serón-Ordoñez 2017)
2. Approaches that apply localization models to non-digital texts, such as news reports (Bielsa and Bassnet 2008), advertising texts (Declercq 2011), and comics (Zanettin 2008)

We ask the following questions: What is localization? When, how, and why did localization arise? What is the relationship between localization and translation studies? What processes take place during localization? How does technological progress affect localization? Similarly to Jiménez-Crespo (2013) and Munday (2016), we ask whether we can talk about localization as an independent discipline with its own theoretical models and research.

This article addresses the origin and development of localization, the emergence and evolution of definitions of localization, and the relationship between localization and translation studies. It tries to point out that the absence of a generally accepted definition of translation (Hermans 2013) leads to various approaches in localization that may not always relate to translation as such. It also examines the relationship between localization and audiovisual translation (Gambier 2003 and 2014). It then moves to the Central European context and presents thinking about localization in Slovakia from a diachronic perspective, dividing it into four main periods. To compare and illustrate,

we will supplement these periods with significant international publications. The article has a primarily descriptive character, presenting various theorists' views on localization while also trying to define localization as a separate type of translation with its own specificities. For this purpose, various sources are analyzed from which we offer comprehensive conclusions.

1 The origins of localization

Localization can be identified as a result of the digital revolution of the second half of the twentieth century, which engulfed the whole world and created digital communication across sociocultural and sociolinguistic communities. It is a "lucrative, dynamic, and inter-professional field, often involving marketing, design, software engineering, as well as linguistic processes" (Pym and Windle 2011). Its roots can be traced back to the late 1970s and early 1980s, when personal computers broke through in the American market and computer companies decided to offer their products and services to international users without programming skills (Esselink 2006). The initial focus was on the FIGS (France, Italy, Germany, and Spain) countries and Japan and their languages. Localization initially facilitated communication from English into these languages, but, with the advent of video games and the internet, the trend changed and extensive localization between different languages began. Localization derives from the concept of the "locale," which the localization industry started using to denote the combination of a sociocultural domain and a language (Jiménez-Crespo 2013). The locale encompasses all the information related to a specific geographical area, including cultural, legal, ethical, technical (e.g., keyboard layout), ideological, and political elements (Pym 2004a). It should be noted, however, that in the field of translation studies, the term "localization" was already used, for example, to refer to the transfer of theatrical plays into a domestic environment (Reiss 1971).

The original issue of the difference between localization and translation arose from the initial approach of programmers toward localization. After completing a software product (such as user software, a video game, or a website), developers would add translation as an addendum. They viewed translation as a straightforward linguistic process in which textual strings extracted from the computer code were processed (Dunne 2006; Dunne 2014; Jiménez-Crespo 2013). Translation, which they considered to be a regular process of interlingual equivalence, was perceived as a secondary step in the overall product development. Once completed, developers integrated the translation into the software product; however, soon all involved parties (business partners,

developers, localization managers, and translators) realized that separating localization from development was impractical. (For example, translated text segments were often longer and did not fit within the space, and the text contained code parts – so-called hard-coded strings – that could not be translated.) They began to recognize that localization had to be part of the development from the beginning, leading to the emergence of the GILT (globalization, internationalization, localization, and translation) process (Dunne 2006; Esselink 2006; Pym 2010; Jiménez-Crespo 2013). Globalization refers to the process in which a company adapts to various international standards in order to even consider localization. Internationalization, on the other hand, refers to the changes in the software product or its development that facilitate subsequent localization. Localization itself involves the translation of textual strings as well as their integration into the software product and linguistic testing. In the context of the GILT process, translation continued to refer solely to the process of interlingual equivalence. By default, developers, managers, localization engineers, and translators should collaborate in this process to ensure smooth product localization (Gouadec 2007). The individual steps of the GILT process are represented as concentric circles, which led to the assumption that translation is a simpler step compared to other technologically oriented tasks.

This perspective on translation (where translation is seen as merely a lexical operation) gave rise to the "translation plus" model (Jiménez-Crespo 2013), which considers translation to be the processing of text parts or isolated textual segments, while localization encompasses additional processes (Pym 2004a). These processes primarily include adaptation, collaboration, multimodality, and user-focused considerations. The inclusion of these elements in translation sparked debates about whether they were specific to localization or part of every translation. (Is collaboration a specific characteristic of localization? No – because translators and editors also collaborate in literary translation.)

The localization industry began to discuss localization from the perspective of programming, software development, and economics. Publications emerged that also laid the foundation for translation studies (Dunne 2006; Esselink 2000; Reineke 2005a, 2005b). These publications initially approached localization from a "technocentric" viewpoint (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). The first publications that focused on integrating localization into translation studies came from the field of audiovisual translation (Gambier and Gottlieb 2004).

In 1998 Esselink published the first book on localization from the perspective of the localization industry, while Pym addressed localization from a theoretical perspective in

2004(a). This was followed by the first compilations (in Spanish by Reineke 2005a; in German by Reineke 2005b; in English by Dunne 2006). The first issue of a journal dedicated to localization, *Tradumàtica*, was published in 2002. Based on various publications, we can now talk about the following types of localization (Jiménez-Crespo 2019): software localization (Esselink 2000; Pym 2004a), website localization (Jiménez-Crespo 2013), video game localization (Bernal-Merino 2015; O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013), and mobile application localization (Roturier 2015; Serón-Ordoñez 2017).

As interest in localization expanded, terminology also evolved and adapted. The term "localizer" (used by Esselink in his 1998 monograph) emerged but is problematic because it is not clear who is referred to by this term. In the narrowest sense, it can be considered synonymous with being a translator, but, in a broader sense, it encompasses roles such as localization engineer, localization manager, editor, tester, and essentially anyone involved in the localization process.

As localization expanded, new processes and practices began to be utilized within the field. In addition to traditional translation, machine translation and post-editing started to play a significant role in localization along with transcreation and copywriting (TAUS 2019).

We now have an understanding of the origins of localization, and we hope that it is firmly established in current research and practice; however, a precise theoretical definition of localization, especially considering its boundaries and intersections with other disciplines, is still not fully developed. In the next section, we will reflect on basic definitions and models of localization.

2 The relationship between localization and translation

Localization is often discussed in theory and practice, but the understanding of this term is still not uniform (as indicated by the aforementioned streams of thought). It should be noted that there is a certain ambiguity between localization and translation as both terms "are currently used, often interchangeably even within the industry" (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). A clear definition of localization in relation to translation is still lacking. The main problem arises from there being still no universally accepted definition of translation (Halverson 2010; Hermans 2013).

Halverson (2010) presents at least five perspectives on translation. For localization, two "contradictory" views on translation are of interest. On one hand (Chesterman 2009; Hatim and Munday 2004; Pym 2010), "translation" is seen as an umbrella term that

also includes publishing practices, the ethics of translation, and political and ideological issues. On the other hand, certain models of localization (Dunne 2006; Gouadec 2007; LISA 2003) consider translation to be part of the entire process, while other aspects (such as internationalization and technical text processing) fall outside their understanding of what constitutes translation. The paradox is that without translation, the other parts cannot come into existence.

Similarly to Remael (2010), we can likely assume that the development of further attempts to define translation and localization will mainly be influenced by the socioeconomic situation and practical developments, given that the latter usually outpace the publication of academic works.

Some definitions of localization have been outlined above (translation plus). We do not intend to list the various definitions of localization here; they have already been compiled by Jiménez-Crespo (2013). Instead, we will focus only on the most influential ones. The first definition of localization, offered by the Localization Industry Standard Association, was as follows: "taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold" (LISA 2003). Definitions from the perspective of industry experts often rely on simplistic notions that equate translation to a simple and almost mechanical process of transferring words from one language to another. These definitions often use metaphors to justify the added value (and cost) of localization (Pym 2004a).

One of the earliest and most widely adopted concepts of localization was the "translation plus" adaptation model, which likely originated from Esselink's publication (1998). This model defined localization as the translation and adaptation of a software product. Due to the association of localization with adaptation, localization became applied to almost any process of transforming text. We can find examples such as the localization of news (Clausen 2004) and the localization of comics (Zanettin 2008); however, Pym and Windle (2011) differentiate between such types of localization and add that they do not require any technical adaptation (e.g., code modification) and were performed even before the advent of localization.

Some scholars have tried to identify specific features of localization that distinguish it from other types of translation and adaptation – such as its connection to technologies, the involvement of translation management, text processing, text programming, testing, and quality management (Achkasov 2017; Jiménez-Crespo 2013; Pym 2004a, 2010). Nevertheless, given that the majority of texts are now processed digitally, it cannot be definitively argued that management and technological processes and adaptations

separate localization from translation as such, as these aspects are somewhat present in other types of translation as well (particularly in specialized and audiovisual translation).

We might make progress by analyzing localization from an interdisciplinary perspective. Localization in games brings together collaboration with fields and disciplines such as linguistics, computational linguistics, computer science, graphic design, desktop publishing, documentation creation, information management, accessibility and the simplification of access, game studies, media studies, and areas like crowdsourcing and fan translation. Thanks to these interdisciplinary connections, along with specific disciplines, the question arises as to whether we could consider localization to be a separate discipline (localization studies) (Munday 2016), even though Jiménez-Crespo (2013) originally proposed localization to be a subdiscipline of translation studies.

Opinions on the position of localization in relation to translation studies differ:

- Mazurová (2007) and Sandrini (2005) consider localization to be an external discipline and recommend that translation studies addresses it. O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) perceive localization in a similar way, adding that translators mainly view localization as a business model rather than as a type of translation.
- On the other hand, Remael (2010), Munday (2008), Jiménez-Crespo (2013), Kabát (2021a), and Koscelníková (2022) view localization as a subdiscipline of translation studies, whose scope varies depending on the context (e.g., the project, number of people involved, and budget).

This divergence of opinions may stem from the fact that while the first group sees localization as a separate step in the GILT process, and translation as another (independent) step within this process, the second group does not separate localization and translation because both steps often occur simultaneously and are performed by those same individuals who are commonly referred to as translators. In localization, the term "localizers" has been adopted – in a narrower sense as a synonym for translator and in a broader sense as anyone involved in localization, including programmers who modify the program and graphic designers who adapt a visual aspect to fit the target locale.

Regardless of the position of localization in relation to translation studies, localization nonetheless receives little scientific attention (especially compared to other areas of translation such as literary, specialized, and audiovisual translation). Conferences dedicated to localization (e.g., GALA and Localization World) primarily focus on technological aspects and have little translation theory. So far, only two journals – *Journal of*

Internationalization and Localization and *Localisation Focus: The International Journal of Localisation* (the last issue being published in 2015) – have been exclusively devoted to localization. The *L10N Journal: Translation in Software, Software in Translation* aims to fill this gap in dedicated media.

Let's return to the relationship between localization and translation studies. Even from this brief overview, it is evident that the distinction between localization and translation is still unclear (Munday 2008). Perhaps that is why opinions have emerged suggesting that localization is part of audiovisual translation. There are two reasons for this integration: both forms of translation have a limited length, and translated content is often multimodal (Schäler 2010). Terms such as "DVD localization," "film localization," "audiovisual localization," and "screen translation" have all been coined (Gambier & Gottlieb 2004; Gambier 2003). The idea of screen translation was particularly problematic; Gambier (2013) states that "screen translation also involves localization [...] although it is not a type of AVT." Gambier (ibid.) further argues that both forms of translation involve teamwork and working with more than just the source and target texts and that quality is measured by adequacy as well as comprehensibility, accessibility, and usability. Due to streaming platforms, it seems that localization is practically used as a synonym for audiovisual translation. In the academic field, it appears that both forms of translation are clearly distinguished from each other (Jiménez-Crespo 2019).

The latest attempts to differentiate translation from localization introduced concepts such as "translation proper" and "localization proper." Achkasov (2017) states that localization is often used for processes that do not involve digital texts, while "localization proper" refers to processes that include digital texts such as software and video games – but not comics, news, or theatrical plays.

From the idea of "localization proper," we can directly move to the prototype of localization. Following the model of Halverson (1999), Jiménez-Crespo (2016) identifies three characteristics of localization (to which we can add a fourth):

1. Localization works with digital genres, such as software products, operating systems, websites, video games, and communication applications.
2. Localization cannot do without digitally mediated communication because the client and the localizer (in a broader sense) can be located anywhere in the world.
3. Texts are interactive and are stored in a digital format.
4. The localization process broadly involves the intervention of technology (often at the code level).

Anything else – such as management issues, adaptation, and internationalization – is not a prototypical feature of localization and falls under a broader understanding of this concept. If we wanted to arrive at a single general definition of localization based on these prototypical features, we could expand on Jiménez-Crespo's (2013) definition and define localization as the translation of interactive digital texts that cannot be done without the intervention of technology.

3 Localization in Slovakia

As a subdiscipline of translation studies, localization in Slovakia is still perceived as a relatively young field of inquiry. The first books by international practitioners and academics began to emerge in the second half of the 1990s, naturally coinciding with the rise of the internet and computer software, which manufacturers wanted to make accessible to a broader international audience. Slovak academics did not react to these initiatives at all. The boom of localization was hardly recognized, and, for many years, research in Slovakia focused on literary translation and specialized and audiovisual translation. Compared to literary, specialized, and audiovisual translation, localization faced a rocky road because the academic community did not have a clear understanding of the terminology or a suitable nomenclature for translating software products. Discussions often raised questions and doubts as to whether it was a form of naturalization and adaptation in disguise. Even now, the term "localization" can seem problematic; however, given its active use in practice and abroad, it is not easy to break free from established conventions. The Slovak translation studies community encountered the term "localization" for the first time in Popovič's *Theory of Literary Translation* (Teória umeleckého prekladu, 1975), where it is briefly mentioned in relation to the style of a text. Popovič adopted this concept from Reiss (Ortbezug) and characterized localization as a change in the setting or theme. Perhaps this definition motivated other researchers to adopt and apply it to any changes in setting within translation; however, this understanding of the term is not sufficient for naming the process of translating interactive digital texts (e.g., software, websites, applications, and video games), and we must view it in a more comprehensive manner. The absence of localization research and its specific characteristics following the widespread use of computers and the internet has meant that localization in Slovakia began to be thoroughly and systematically studied only in recent years. In reference to Ferenčík's *Three Fruitful Decades* (Tri plodné desaťročia, 1982), the following section will present the genesis of localization in Slovakia in comparison to international developments.

3.1 The early period of localization research in Slovakia

The localization of software began to gain momentum in Slovakia with the entry of Microsoft into the market in 1996.[1] Translation service providers in Slovakia started using the term "lokalizácia" (localization) following the international model, which gained acceptance in the market but not in academic sources. The first mention of the "localization of software products" can be found in a 1998 article by Benko and Rajčanová, where they jointly described their practical experiences with software localization.

Research and discussion on translation trends are reflected in a series of conference proceedings from the Summer School of Translation (formerly the Summer School of Interpreting Original and Translated Texts); this is a significant event that has shaped many academics and practitioners in Slovakia. The proceedings only started to be published from 2002 onwards, with the first volume containing contributions from the event's twenty-fourth edition. In the accessible records of lectures from 1975 to 2002, it is possible to find intersecting topics concerning localization. There was a lecture by Piťha on machine translation in 1986, Piaček's lecture in 1991 on the use of computer technology in translation, Rakšányiová's lecture in 1992 on localization/transcreation and the translation of advertising, and Tomášik's lecture in 2000 on the use of computers as aids in translation (Keníž 2003). As can be observed, during the period when the first books and articles on localization were being published abroad, such as Uren's, Howard's, and Perinotti's *Software Internationalization and Localization: an Introduction*" (1993), Esselink's *A Practical Guide to Software Localization*[2] (1998), Hickey*'s The Guide to Product Translation and Localization* (1999), and Sprung's *Translating Into Success: Cutting-edge Strategies for Going Multilingual in a Global Age* (2000), localization in Slovakia was only discussed in an article by Benko and Rajčanová (1998). If we compare the extensive research and discussion on literary translation and the gradual integration of specialized translation and interpreting into the discourse (Keníž 2003), and take note of the references to international authors in monographs and articles by Slovak academics, it is as if the translation of software products did not exist despite the fact that academics abroad began to learn about localization precisely from practitioners.

It is likely that localization was still the subject of discussions and articles, but, within discussions about translation, we can only rely on the first compilation from the Summer School of Translation (Keníž 2003). Since the chronology of earlier summer schools

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[1] Interview with Radoslav Tihlárik, Director of Slovak Localization Agency, 2002, available at: https://zive.aktuality.sk/clanok/10383/chcete-vediet-ako-sa-preklada-windows-do-slovenciny/. Last access date: May 2022

[2] Later redacted in 2000 as *A Practical Guide to Localization*.

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only contains a list of speakers with the titles of their lectures and not their full content, it is difficult to determine from the lecture titles whether there was any debate on software translation (i.e., localization) in the 1990s, when software began to be widely used in Slovakia. The lectures focused on the translation of specialized or pragmatic texts, and some were titled too vaguely to discern their specific subject (e.g., Tomášik – The Internet). This represents a significant impoverishment in Slovak thinking about localization in the technical sense as it was not considered in today's context.

There was no specialized journal dedicated implicitly or explicitly to localization during this period. In contrast to international academics and practitioners, who built upon the first publications on localization, Slovak academics only sporadically reflected on localization in their research in the following decade. From the perspective of the Slovak academic community, localization hardly seemed to exist. Localization was mentioned implicitly in discussions about new trends or challenges in translation but never in detail, and thus research on localization in Slovakia practically remained out of reach.

3.2 Research beginnings (2001–2009)

In the field of localization research, especially in the localization of video games, it is not uncommon for final thesis works to serve as a starting point and incentive for research by many domestic and international researchers. Indeed, in the area of video game localization, Frasca's *Videogames of the Oppressed: Videogames as a Means for Critical Thinking and Debate* (2001) has been cited in 848 publications.[3] Many academics have built upon it, particularly because it explains the concept of video games, which is crucial for subsequent research on their localization, despite not focusing on translation aspects in that particular work. Another noteworthy work from that period is Fernández's *Web Site Localisation and Internationalisation: A Case Study* (2001), in which she presents various aspects of localizing a specific website. Such works can serve as theoretical foundations for further research and inspire research in general; however, in Slovakia there do not appear to have been any final thesis works on this issue during this specific period that would clarify the work of academics with resources and the circulation of these resources in research. It is quite challenging to locate such works due to the absence of a comprehensive register of final theses, which only started to exist from 2009 onwards. University libraries ought to have records of final theses before 2008 in their

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[3] Profile of Gonzalo Frasca's works and their quotes on Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=2Ft-PyUAAAAJ&hl=en Last access date: November 2022

catalogs, but, in the case of non-existing institutions and universities, it can be very much a case of detective work that requires further in-depth research.

In 2001 the Summer School of Translation took place and focused on the topic of "Globalization and Translation into National Languages" (Keníž 2003). Unfortunately, we only have access to a list of lectures without further specification of the discussed topics. For example, Tomášik gave a lecture on the internet, but it is difficult to determine whether he spoke about research in translation or about website translation and so on. Tomášik confirmed that he did not discuss localization, but this is an isolated case. It is not always possible to contact all participants and ascertain their specific thoughts on a given topic during the event as the information about the Summer Schools of Translation until 2002 was limited to a list of authors and the titles of their contributions (Keníž 2003). Nonetheless, valuable information in the first conference proceedings and subsequent ones demonstrate a changing interest in the following period. Unfortunately, in the first half of the 2000s, localization was not a topic extensively explored in scientific research in Slovakia.

During this period, an increasing number of articles discussing the role of localization in translation studies emerged abroad. For example, Pym's *Localization from the Perspective of Translation Studies: Overlaps in the Digital Divide?* (2004b), O'Hagan's *Conceptualising the Future of Translation with Localization* (2005), and Ketzan's *Rebuilding Babel: Copyright and the Future of Machine Translation Online* (2007) explored the position of localization in translation studies. Additionally, publications specifically focusing on localization appeared, such as Lommel's edited volume *The Localization Industry Primer* (2003, second edition), Chandler's *The Game Localization Handbook* (2005),[4] Pereiro's and Singh's *The Culturally Customized Web Site* (2005), and Dunne's edited volume *Perspectives on Localization* (2006). In addition to these publications, specialized journals dedicated to localization and translation technologies began to flourish; these included *Localization Focus* (since 1996), *Revista Tradumàtica* (since 2001), *The Journal of Specialised Translation* (since 2004), and *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization* (since 2009). By contrast, in Slovakia it is hardly possible to speak of specialized publications or journals. Indeed, localization was not adequately reflected upon within the academic community. Discussions about localization and its place in translation studies sparked little interest, and any discussion tended to be brief. Software localization as a new dynamic field was mentioned by Gromová and Preložníková in 2007. The term

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[4] It was published for the second time in 2012 as *The Game Localization Handbook,* this time co-authored with Stephanie Deming.

"lokalizácia prekladu" (localization of translation) appeared, but it primarily referred to advertising (Rakšányiová 2007)[5] and "glokalizácia" (glocalization) (Rakšányiová 2011; Bohušová 2012).

In 2005, seven years after Benko and Rajčanová's article, an article by Motyková and Škrlantová titled *Intercultural Communication in Translation Practice: A Case Study of Localization* (Interkultúrna komunikácia v prekladateľskej praxi na príklade lokalizácie) was published; it directly addressed localization as a type of translation. It provides an initial exploration of localization applied to websites but only briefly touches on the issues and does not comprehensively delve into localization. In 2006 Dudová published an article directly focused on localization titled *Translation versus Localization* (Preklad versus lokalizácia 2006). This work takes a more comprehensive look at software localization, although it also lacks many relevant sources on localization; these are compensated by the author's practical experience. In addition to these two articles, three more articles were published in 2009 by practitioners (Dudová, Smolík, and Tihlárik) in the conference proceedings of *Specialized Translation 4: Information Technologies and Their Terminology* (Odborný preklad 4: Informačné technológie a ich terminológia). Unfortunately, Dudová and Tihlárik do not provide academic studies but rather a collection of PowerPoint presentations with text that is not so easily readable. Only Smolík (2009) transformed his presentation into a significant article; however, even in this case, the article lacks verifiable and usable sources and does not meet the requirements for a scientific study. Similarly, references to localization are not found in relevant textbooks as part of the teaching of translation and interpreting. Despite a certain resonance abroad and a clear distinctiveness from other types of translation, *Chapters from an Introduction to Translation* (Kapitoly z úvodu do prekladateľstva) (Gromová 2000) and *Selected Chapters from the Theory of Translation of Literary and Artistic Texts* (Vybrané kapitoly z teórie prekladu literárno-umeleckých textov) (Huťková 2003) do not really reflect on localization and emphasize literary and specialized texts instead. Apart from the aforementioned articles, the available sources and various translation proceedings, such as *Translation and Interpreting* (Preklad a tlmočenie, Matej Bel University 2000–2009) and *Translation and Culture* (Preklad a kultúra, Constantine the Philosopher University 2000–2009), do not further explore localization from a scientific perspective. By contrast, the collections of departments of media studies, such as the *Media and Text* (Médiá a text) proceedings from the University of Prešov from 2005 to 2009, offered the

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[5] Jana Rakšányiová uses this term in this context in her other articles as well, such as her article from 2011.

necessary interdisciplinary insight into the world of digital texts and their behavior in software form, thus presenting an ideal opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration that had not yet been established in the local academic environment in the field of localization.

There was also a significant discussion about the impact of globalization on translation, but scientific studies focused more on literary and specialized translation in the traditional sense (i.e., textual translation concerning non-software texts). While globalization resonated within the translation community, the academic community did not discuss the rise of the internet, software, and related translation and understanding within the GILT process. This remained unchanged in the following period.

In Slovakia, practitioners had more knowledge about the localization process than theorists did. After the amendment of the Higher Education Act in 2009, access to final papers on localization opened up, allowing us to verify the circulation of used sources in initial research by students; however, even with better access to information and digitized publications on translation, this did not contribute to more frequent research on localization.

3.3 An impoverished period (2010–2017)

While there was debate about localization abroad in the mid-2010s, localization was still not properly discussed in Slovakia. Researchers mentioned it only sporadically, mostly in relation to audiovisual translation, or they addressed it only marginally, as can be seen in works by Želonka (2012), Dlhošová (2012), and Janecová (2014). Nevertheless, even before 2010, academics explicitly or implicitly called for more thorough research on localization, as mentioned by Gromová and Preložníková (2007) and Rakšányiová (2009). Gromová (2012) briefly mentions software localization, while Rakšányiová (2012) discusses localization in slightly different contexts, using the term "lokalizácia prekladu" (localization of translation) in relation to advertising texts, referring to what we understand today as transcreation. No researcher continued to focus on localization or built upon the works of Motyková and Škrlantová (2005), Dudová (2006, 2009), Smolík (2009), and Tihlárik (2009).

Localization was also absent from the curriculum, although in her textbook *Introduction to Translatology* (Úvod do translatológie) Gromová (2009) implicitly defines it within the field of translation studies (*Teória prekladu pre audiovizuálne a elektronické médiá*). In other textbooks, such as *Selected Chapters of Translatology* I and II (Vybrané kapitoly z

translatológie I. a II., Biloveský and Djovčoš 2010 and 2013) and *Communication, Interpreting, Translation*[6] (Komunikácia, tlmočenie, preklad, Müglová 2009), there is no implicit or explicit mention of localization.

Since the establishment of the Central Register of Final and Qualification Theses (Centrálny register záverečných a kvalifikačných prác) in 2009,[7] access to the final theses of translation students as potential sources and stimuli for further research has become much easier.[8] Despite often being partial and incomplete student theses with improperly cited sources, some of them are worth mentioning as they are valuable contributions to localization research. The works of Feldsamová (2012), Takáčová (2013), Gáll (2013), and Donoval (2015) are all notional steps toward localization research, although at that time they did not fully reflect the current state and practice of localization. In addition to the international publications mentioned in the previous section, we can also mention Yunker's *The Art of the Global Gateway: Strategies for Successful Multilingual Navigation* (2010) and Dunne's *Translation and Localization Project Management* (2011).

Elsewhere there was a flourishing of publications dedicated to localization in general and to specific types of localization. Notable works include Jiménez-Crespo's *Translation and Web Localization* (2013), O'Hagan's and Mangiron's *Game Localization* (2013), Bernal-Merino's *Translation and Localization of Video Games* (2015), and Roturier's *Localizing Apps: A Practical Guide for Translators and Translation Students* (2015). In Slovakia, discussions about localization began to take place directly and in more detail, thanks in part to articles by Jožio on the translation of WordPress software (2015) and diploma theses by Foltanovičová (2017) and Koscelníková (2017); Koscelníková perceived localization within audiovisual translation, which was typical for that period and approaches to localization in the education of translation and interpreting students. In 2014, the publication *Thinking about Translation in Slovakia* (Myslenie o preklade na Slovensku, Vajdová 2014) was released, but despite the efforts of some researchers, localization seemed to be nonexistent. (Similarly, audiovisual translation appears to be in the same situation within that publication, although it began to be directly discussed in comprehensive monographs from 2014 onwards.) Translation had long been exclusively used to refer to literary and specialized texts; however, researchers in Slovakia

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[6] The selected chapters from translation studies were published in an expanded form in the third edition in 2019. *Komunikácia, tlmočenie, preklad* (Communication, Interpreting, Translation) was published in the second edition in 2018. Despite the shift in thinking about localization, at least in terms of research, these works did not really reflect on the existence of this subdiscipline.

[7] https://crzp.cvtisr.sk/

[8] https://www.postoj.sk/57542/s-kontrolou-starsich-prac-moze-byt-problem-tvrdia-vysoke-skoly?page=3490.

started focusing on localization after 2017, and thus it finally got the attention it deserved.

3.4 A productive period and a new era (2017–present)

Localization research in Slovakia has experienced significant growth since 2017 during a new era of thinking. Despite the lack of localization in translation textbooks, discussions about localization have become more frequent, including in bachelor's, diploma, and doctoral theses. Examples of this include works by Marčanová (2018), Bartoš (2018), Cabajová (2019), Ľubocká (2020), Ferenczová (2021), Daňová (2021), Diamant (2021), Litviková (2021), and Koscelníková (2022).

Koželová and Kuľbak (2019) discuss the localization process in the context of audiovisual translation. There is now systematic research on localization by Koscelníková (2018, 2020, 2021) and Kabát (2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2021b), with both authors contributing a chapter on *Training Localization* regarding didactics (2021). The first comprehensive university textbook focusing on the stylistics of Slovak localization, *A General Stylistic Guide for Software Localization* (Všeobecná štylistická príručka pre lokalizáciu softvérových produktov, Kabát 2022) was published, and localization began to be taught at Comenius University in Bratislava.[9]

Although there are no specialized discussion panels dedicated directly to localization in Slovakia as there are abroad (e.g., video games – panels at *Media for All9*[10] and *Languages and the Media* 10[11] as well as conferences specifically focused on localization, such as Barcelona's *Fun for All*[12] and the *Translation and Localization Conference*),[13] we hope this may change at the upcoming *Translating, Interpreting, and Culture* international conference, which will be organized in Slovakia, if the organizers include localization as a topic.

The culmination of our research efforts can also be seen in this journal, which is meant to be a platform encouraging contributions on localization and related topics and which aims to educate a new generation of researchers who will continuously and consistently

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[9] The Localization of Websites and its Cycle (Lokalizácia webových lokalít a jej cyklus) and the Localization of Non-Gaming and Gaming Software (Lokalizácia neherných a herných softvérov) are subjects taught by Marián Kabát.

[10] The program of the Media for All conference has a panel dedicated to video games (and their localization): https://jornades.uab.cat/media4all9/content/main-conference-%E2%80%93-day-1

[11] Languages and the Media 2022 conference topics are here: https://www.languages-media.com/conference_themes.php

[12] https://jornades.uab.cat/videogamesaccess/

[13] https://translation-conference.com/

devote themselves to this subject. We hope that localization will "see better times" and that it will find a well-deserved place in Slovak translation studies.

Conclusion

In this article, we attempted to concisely present thinking about localization in Slovakia and internationally. Localization involves t he translation of digital interactive texts, which cannot be done without the involvement of technology. While this field has been receiving attention internationally since its early days, in Slovakia localization has primarily been the subject of sporadic contributions by practitioners and then by theorists. A significant change occurred only after 2017. Over the last five or so years, quite a lot has been written about localization in Slovakia, and we believe that, thanks to the *L10N Journal*, there is much more yet to be written.

These first two issues of the journal are the beginning of an open discussion on localization, through which we aim to contribute to international discourse. We believe that our journal has something to offer in this field. The first issue focuses thematically on various areas of localization. Veronika Litviková addresses the absence of general software terminology, which is largely influenced by corporate culture and language. Through a sociological survey, she explores how the unification of at least basic terminology could be achieved. Diana Pavlíková delves into machine translation and its post-editing. Using the evaluation template of the TAUS expert group, she examines how it could contribute to the objectification of translation evaluation, while also highlighting the need for post-editing training. Finally, Nikola Ácsová presents the process of transcreation from its beginnings to the present day. She seeks to define it in relation to translation and localization, demonstrating its practical application through selected advertising slogans.

Video game localization is enjoying great popularity, and the second issue of the journal is dedicated to this topic. Linda Janíková focuses on the localization of the MMORPG genre from a general perspective and addresses the localization issues of a selected video game into Slovak. She also provides potential necessary resources that could help potential localizers. Katarína Bodišová's contribution explores intertextuality in video games. Alongside many international examples, she examines intertextuality in the Slovak localizations of video games and she touches on transcreation in video game localization. Finally, Nikol Daňová presents gamification in the translation of web content with video game elements. Gamification has gained interest as video games as well

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as in applications involving task lists and daily physical activities. The issue concludes with an interview by Milan Velecký with Mário Csaplár on the fan localization of video games in Slovakia and with the Final Variable (Záverečná premenná) section, where new interesting and inspiring works in localization and translation technologies are presented.

Localization can be studied from various angles and approaches, as indicated by the contributions in these two issues. We sincerely believe that this is an optimistic beginning for the journal and that it will create a space for open professional (academic and practical) discussions, shifts in thinking, and inspiration for researchers and practitioners in localization and translation technologies.

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