

Where digital worlds and translation studies collide: from localization to AI and beyond

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Early academic life

My research career began unexpectedly one day in June 2003, when I knocked at the door of Prof. Ricardo Muñoz Martín at the School of Translation and Interpreting, University of Granada. At the time, I was directing a Study Abroad Program for the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington, where I worked as a lecturer in Spanish and Russian. My academic background had taken me there through quite an international path. I graduated with my BA in Translation and Interpreting from the University of Granada, but my education included additional study at the University of Glasgow and two years at Moscow State Linguistic University. Granada graduates come back to the city and the school like moths to streetlights and in June 2003 I was back at my alma mater in a professional capacity, leading American students through their study abroad experience. I bumped into a former classmate, and she told me she was teaching there, and she briefly explained the two PhD programs the department offered. Intrigued by the prospects, I let my UNCW students explore the courtyard and the palace on their own and set out to get more information about how I might begin doctoral studies myself.

So let us go back to that moment when I knocked. Ricardo Muñoz opened the doors of his office and of the program for me. He supported me through the admission process, arranged to complete the program as a student who could not attend full-time, and solved the complexities of managing coursework from a distance. I have told Prof. Muñoz I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to his visionary perspective and the potential he saw in me, but he smiles and says he was only doing his job. It was a lot of traveling back and forth, and some classes with him on cognitive translology, professors at the psychology department, and some technology and corpus-based translation studies (CBTS) with professors Maribel Tercedor and Clara Ines Lopez, who opened my eyes to the world of corpus linguistics and translation. I remember one reading by Stubbs (1996) on a corpus analysis of texts for boys and girl scouts and how a corpus analysis could discover gender biases in language and discourse (a topic of interest today for machine translation and AI research).

My early research was inspired by my own professional experiences as a freelance translator. I had been translating digital content for a while, such as website content, online forms and surveys. LSPs often provided lists of textual strings in Excel tables that lacked context, such as “The sample is complete”. At the same time, I was also in charge of translating customer emails when they could not complete an online task, or they could not understand a survey. This allowed me to see the localization process full circle; from the LSP commission to my localization work, all the way to user reception. Obviously, my first PhD project for Prof. Muñoz in 2004 was to design an experiment to investigate differences in cognitive effort while translating textual segments with or without full context. I wanted to explore differences in cognitive processing while using (or not) What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) localization environments (e.g. Passolo). I hypothesized that experts would use their expert knowledge (knowledge of digital genres, prior experience in localization, etc.) to help process disambiguate these textual strings.¹ After more coursework, I decided to combine my personal

¹ The experiment was designed in 2004, but I haven’t conducted it yet. Some scholars such as de la Cova and Torres del Rey (2023) are working on similar projects now related to the processing of decontextualized localization segments.

experiences localizing web and digital content for LSPs, with corpus-based approaches to the study of translated language with the guidance of Prof. Maribel Tercedor. Seminal publications in corpus linguistics and especially CBTS from everyone at the University of Manchester fascinated me (Baker, Kenny, Laviosa, etc.). It was only a matter of time before I started compiling digital web corpora for my PhD projects (localizing metaphors on web content and user interfaces, or the features or universals of translated language [Baker 1995] on localized websites). After all, researching corpora could be conducted from anywhere, and hard drives would fit in my backpack while traveling back and forth between Spain and the USA. Experimental setups could be more complex for a traveling student. Nevertheless, I did complete some projects with experimental setups related to cognitive processing of literal translations (e.g. Jiménez-Crespo & Casillas 2020) or translation reception (Jiménez-Crespo 2017b), but much later in my career.

My dissertation was a contrastive study of the textual and discursive features of localized corporate websites into Spanish (2008). It was based on theoretical works by Pym (2004), genre-based approaches by researchers that the Jaume I University and the GENTT group (e.g. García-Izquierdo 2025; García-Izquierdo & Monzó-Nebot 2003), all the CBTS works and methodologies at the time exploring translation universals (or better features of translated language) previously mentioned, some culture-based research on web localization (Singh & Pereira 2005), and a lot of ingenuity. It took many tries, but I managed to download using all 25 computers in our language lab the entire corpus synchronically in one single night (172 localized websites from the largest US companies, and 95 original corporate websites from Spain). A key theoretical principle in my work was that a complete website was a single “hypertext” or textual unit, even when it might contain thousands of web pages. I wanted to analyze full complete websites, rather than single web pages or other types of textual excerpts embedded in a website. It was a lot of data to handle for an independent researcher with a thesis director (Prof. Maribel Tercedor) miles and miles away and with no Zoom. Nevertheless, the excitement of discovery and solving problems was an enthralling adventure. If we fast forward 20 years later, some scholars still attempt to produce generalizable knowledge out of small sample data from a very small number of websites or excerpts from them, oftentimes

marketing texts. These tend to be small case studies that do not analyze entire websites, a practice that was also common 20 years ago. Should then the study of localization using CBTS advance towards much larger corpora given the capabilities or current technologies? If the focus is solely on textual or discursive dimensions, a more powerful dataset tends to yield better insights. This might not be the same for multimodal analyses such as the works of Charalampidou and Meex (2023). In a conversation with Kilgarriff in the late 2000's, he defended the beauty of extracting precise data from massive corpora, rather than building small, specialized ones. Fast forward to today, we have large language models trained on vast portions of the internet, with the added possibility of customizing them or creating personalized GPTs. My struggles with building corpora of websites seem like such a long time ago!

From a methodological standpoint, the use of small corpora of web excerpts in a specific domain (medical websites, beauty products, marketing text, etc.) is one of the main issues I encounter in my peer-review tasks. A question I always pose myself in that situation is whether the corpus is too small to produce any sort of generalizable knowledge. In addition, a common issue is also the common attribution of causality to any factor without justification, even when corpus studies cannot lead to any claims of causation (e.g. Jiménez-Crespo 2016). Oftentimes, papers under review attribute any negative features to issues such as lack of training of the localizer, not spending enough money on the process, and lack of expertise of members of the localizing team. However, localization is such a complex task that only mixed method research and/or triangulation might be able to discover, if at all, any potential causal attribution.

Teaching around the world

I have a diverse teaching background. I have taught in a wide range of settings, from three years in US high schools to the Spanish Army (compulsory service at the time as an officer), or private language schools. At the university level, I started teaching language courses at Moscow State Linguistic University (1997–1998), the University of North Carolina Wilmington (2002–2008) and several community colleges. My teaching in translation

and translation technology started with a course on localization and translation technologies at Wake Forest University while I was still completing my PhD.² In 2008, months before I defended my dissertation, I was offered a position at Rutgers University to direct the MA and undergraduate program in Translation and Interpreting. Who would have thought back then, when a 23 year-old saw the newspaper ad that read “Teach in America”, that almost 30 years later I would still be teaching in the USA. What started as an adventure to see the world, turned into a permanent passion. When I was hired at Rutgers University as an Assistant Professor, I was the only faculty in translation and interpreting full time, until we persuaded the administration to hire a teaching professor in translation, the outstanding Laura Ramirez-Polo. Ever since, I have taught a wide range of courses: specialized, legal, medical, audiovisual translation, translation theory, translation technologies, including interpreting (general and court interpreting). Oftentimes, scholars ask me if I teach exclusively localization, but nothing further from the truth. I enjoy teaching a wide range of courses. While I incorporate technology and localization tasks across the curriculum, we do not offer a course on localization per se. I am proud that over the years, we have educated at the Rutgers MA and certificate programs a generation of translators and interpreters that work at leading positions in the Tri-State area in the USA. I have always attempted to match the latest research in translation competence and translation training with the needs and specific demands of the US market. Oftentimes, a wide range of internships in LSPs, governmental and non-profit sites, as well as courts and hospital systems have allowed to tailor the more generalist translation and interpreting training with the skills and knowledge required in this specific location. One of the things I love the most about teaching Spanish <> English translation in the USA, is the wide range of Spanish speaker profiles we find in our courses; from heritage speakers that use Spanish with their families to those who moved here to complete their degree but were educated primarily in Spanish-speaking institutions, and from over 20 different Spanish speaking

2 One of the most accomplished scholars in TS today in the USA was my student, Christopher Mellinger (I admire so much his work and publications).

varieties. In this regard, one of my favorite tools in the classroom to research dialectal variation is Diatopix, even when today GPTs can also now help with research on dialectal variation. Kudos to Patrick Drouin from the University of Montreal. Today, I often conduct some training seminars and workshops for professional translators, such as the seminar for translation trainers on incorporating AI in the 2025 Conference of the American Translators' Association, and I am a member of their ATA Education Leadership Council.

Leadership and coordination

In terms of leadership I was hired at the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Rutgers University to direct the Spanish translation and interpreting program as previously mentioned. The program includes an undergraduate component, as well as a translation and interpreting certificate that is open to members of the community. Initially, this involves not only teaching two courses a semester on a wide variety of topics but also coordinating hiring and training many part time lecturers to teach all the sections and courses in our program. As such, my coordination involved establishing the curriculum, shared learning goals for the program, supervising and evaluating teacher training and effectiveness, coordinating community internships in a wider variety of placements, from NJ and NYC courts to LSPs, from research hospital clinics to non-profit legal assistance or NJ government ones. In addition, I had to coordinate admissions and all the Master program exams that students complete after taking 8 courses (at least 1 course and up to 3 courses are taken in our PhD program in Bilingualism and Second Language acquisition or our Master of Arts in Teaching Spanish). I also coordinated most practicums in the MA, as well as research MA theses. I have also co-supervised PhD dissertations that included translation and interpreting (such as the projects by Cristina Lozano Arguelles on interpreting, or the project on MT and LLMs in public services by Stephanie Rodriguez).

I have been an active member of the scientific or editorial committee of a large number of journals, such as *JosTrans*, *META*, *Perspectives*, *Translation*, and *Interpreting*. In addition, I have been part of localization related journals such: *The Journal of Localization and Internationalization* (now *the Journal of Digital Translation*) where I was the as Assistant Editor and Co-editor,

L10 Journal. I consistently serve as a peer reviewer for technology-oriented journals such as *Tradumàtica*, the leading publishing houses, and participate in peer review committees in numerous international conferences. My current project involved editing the 2nd Edition of the Routledge Handbook of Translation and Technology. We are already working with most original authors, as well as a number of new authors for new chapters on AI-related content.

I have also taken an active role in promoting translation and interpreting studies in the United States. I have been an elected member of the Board of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association (ATISA) for years. I regularly participate in events by the American Translators' Association (ATA) and affiliated regional chapters, where I am as previously mentioned member of the Educators' Division Leadership Council. In 2024, I was the local organizer for the conference of ATISA at Rutgers University, and we had the opportunity to welcome translation and interpreting scholars from across the world.

About the supposed significance of my main research contributions

After two decades of TS research, my main research contributions focus on analyzing technology-induced changes, practices, and phenomena through the lens of the existing body of knowledge of TS. I believe that my contributions have helped establish frameworks and models that can move discipline forward in this fast-moving field. Since my early days, my research has thus been located at this fascinating intersection of TS and evolving technological phenomena. Scholars often remark on my productivity, which is partly driven by the constant stream of stimulating and exciting research questions posed by new technologies. These questions may relate both to the phenomena themselves (such as localization, crowdsourcing, online collaborative translation, AI, the Internet, and translation technologies including MT), as well as to broader issues associated with them, including quality, professional competence, translator education, research, cognitive processes, and translation products. For example, I initially conducted research inspired on existing research on the so called "translation universals" (Baker 1993,

1995), but I was interested in a novel emerging textual population, namely localized digital genres such as corporate or social networking websites. Obviously, these textual genres did not exist when the seminal works on CBTS were published. Localized websites are structured, processed, localized, reassembled and used interactively through distinct localization workflows that did not exist in the traditional Translate-Edit-Publish (TEP) models. Agile workflows are often used to continually update or expand them. These peculiarities imply that localized websites display distinct textual and discursive features compared to other linear texts. As Baker (1995) claimed to justify her ambitious research agenda in CBTS at the time, translated, or localized, texts were produced under specific cognitive, textual, communicative and structural conditions that did not exist prior to the 2000's (I added "technological constraints" to this seminal statement). Consequently, they could provide new insights into whether these so-called "universal" features were in fact truly, "universal" (see for example Chesterman (2004) for criticisms of this term or programmatic research agenda). Any claim of generalizability could thus be revisited in light of novel phenomena and practices that did not exist when those claims or studies were originally made (digital genres, workflows, translation practices, professional vs non-professional translators, paid vs volunteer translation, interactive vs static texts, etc.).

My research was anchored in CBTS principles and methodologies, primarily employing comparable corpora, and to a lesser extent, parallel corpora (e.g., Jiménez-Crespo & Tercedor 2021). My initial research on corporate websites evolved towards research into other types of digital genres that were booming in the late 2000's, social networking sites (e.g. Jiménez-Crespo 2013b, 2015). These studies required me to engage with another emerging phenomenon that was drawing increasing interest from scholars and translation professionals: the localization by volunteers of Facebook and other highly successful social networking sites (2013b). The open call for volunteers was quite controversial at the time (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Skype, etc.) (Kelly 2009). Professional associations such as the American Translators Association or FIT warned against the potential consequences of these practices. It is interesting how today in 2025, those same warnings about dire consequences for the profession are released against the impact of AI, but let us stay on track. The widespread presence

of online collaboration translations enabled by the possibilities afforded by the WWW attracted my attention. It challenged me to analyze many other translation studies models, frameworks, and perspectives from the vantage point of online collaborative translation. This led to an inquiry into whether basic tenets across TS subdisciplines could be re-examined in a crowdsourcing era (individual translator, single text, translator as a unit of cognition, the role of volunteer activities in structured training environments, the Translate-Edit-Publish workflow, etc.). These two areas, the examination of localization and online collaborative translations through a TS lens have led to my most significant and widely cited contributions, monographs on web localization (Jiménez-Crespo 2013a), localization (2024) and crowdsourcing and online collaborative translations (2017a). I have been also invited to participate in a number of encyclopedias (2019, 2020) and handbooks with chapter contributions on localization (2020, 2019a), crowdsourcing (2019, 2025), the WWW (Jiménez-Crespo & Ramirez Polo 2022), or “translation” as whole (2014; Jiménez-Crespo & Sánchez Ramos 2024).

Today, this thought-provoking research agenda has led me to focus on the impact of AI on translation practices and translation studies as a discipline. I have been especially interested in approaches that locate human agents at the center and in control, such as the Human-Centered AI paradigm. I have currently examined from this lens issues such as transcreation (2024), distributed cognition (2023), or how TS can be advanced in a HCAI era in a special issue in *InContext* on this topic (2025). Central to the HCAI paradigm are both high levels of automation, paired with full human control and autonomy. In a series of online survey studies, I have investigated how professional translators perceived their levels of control and autonomy (Jiménez-Crespo 2024, 2025, 2025), highlighting the need to integrate through inter and multidisciplinary approaches theoretical models and frameworks from neighboring disciplines to move TS forward in this area.

In terms of research methodologies, I started working extensively with CBTS foundations, and I have also used empirical approaches such as keylogging (Jiménez-Crespo & Casillas 2021) or more recently ethnographic ones such as online surveys (Jiménez-Crespo 2024b, 2025). I have worked on advanced statistical analyses using R and have Python in my to-do list.

As such, I consider myself a versatile scholar that tries to keep up with new developments and keeps learning and trying innovative approaches.

The evolution of my theoretical and methodological models of reference

The first theoretical and methodological frameworks that I followed initially were those associated with CBTS from corpus linguistics or discourse analysis, as well as the theoretical approaches to localization. I have extensively discussed how theoretical and methodological models have evolved over time in my publications. In terms of localization, an analysis of this evolution can be found in my latest monograph (2024a), or even handbook and chapter contributions (2018, 2019a, 2020). Similarly, in terms of online collaborative translations and crowdsourcing, I have extensively discussed how theoretical models have evolved in various recent publications (2020, 2021, 2025).

In the rest of this section, I will focus on localization research to provide a more in-depth picture. In TS, early explorations involved a techno- or industry perspective that primarily described industry practices and adopted the industry models and terminology (e.g. Esselink 2000; Schäler 2008, 2010; Dunne 2006, 2014). These approaches enriched the discipline of TS and provided a much-needed foundation to develop coursework in translation programs worldwide. The first theoretical works that critically analyzed localization from a TS lens were the seminal works by Pym (e.g. 2004, 2011). These publications began to offer a more theoretically grounded approach to the study of localization. This was also the objective of my early works, attempting to bridge the gap between sound theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of localization, and more descriptive or applied industry-oriented works. I have personally examined, for example, issues surrounding the definition of localization and the blurring boundaries between localization and translation (Jiménez-Crespo 2016a, 2018, 2019a), the interrelated Globalization /Internationalization /Localization / Translation cycle (GILT), issues related to digital genres in localization, accessibility, usability, economic issues, cultural localization, etc. My most recent book (Jiménez-Crespo 2024a) was the first one to provide in a single

monograph an overview to common issues in all localization types: software, web, videogame, apps. For over two decades, monographs and studies have been published for each of these types, while there was not a systematic study across all localization types to reflect from a global perspective what links and what separates each one of them. Chapters overview issues related to industry workflows, culture, quality, digital genres and textual issues, usability, accessibility, user-experience, MT or AI. This meant that the first chapters were devoted to common issues to all localization types, while the final chapters are devoted to a more practical introduction to each type, including specific issues, digital genres, tools to render them, programming languages, etc. Over the years, in TS some localization types have gained wide popularity, while others seem to have fallen more into oblivion, such as software localization. For example, video game localization arguably continues to be the most productive area of research, due to its direct connection to well-liked audiovisual translation studies (AVT). This subdiscipline has also provided a range of models and methodologies that have advanced the study of game localization, particularly through research on accessibility and audio description. Similarly, web localization is still drawing attention from researchers at all career stages. In this area, the most popular area of inquiry continues to be the contrastive study of localized and original websites in different domains (institutional, corporate, marketing, etc.). These studies often focus on the latest trends such as “transcreation” (Charalampidou & Koustopoulou 2024). In fact, “transcreation” research seems to primarily now be limited to translation and promotional texts on websites (e.g. Kasawat 2020, 2021). The role of machine translation in localization has also attracted the attention of scholars, given its wide adoption in the localization industry (e.g. GALA 2025). Studies have focused on MT and PEMT in game, app or software localization (Liu et al. 2023; Koneru et al. 2023). Nevertheless, differences exist between the various types, given that in some, such as game localization, “the performance of machine translation [...] has not yet been widely tested and evaluated” (Zhang 2022, 377). Today, research on the impact of AI on localization is starting to emerge (Lambson & Liu 2025). Nevertheless, in terms of new AI assisted methodologies, research into the intersection of localization, crowdsourcing, and AI is still limited. In some cases, studies have examined whether AI “augments” volunteer collabora-

tive translators (Jiménez-Crespo 2023), or whether GenAI can be useful in videogame localization (Bassi et al. 2025).

The future of localization research seems to continue evolving through four interrelated areas: (1) the interest in transcreation in digital marketing or promotional texts through contrastive corpus studies, (2) multimodality and multisemiotic analyses, (3) the irruption of ethnographic survey-based studies both with localizers and end users, and (4) the impact of AI and LLMs in localization. In terms of multimodality, the possibilities offered by multimodal analysis hold great promise in this area (Mejias-Climent 2017, 2022; Meex & Charalampidou 2023). As for methodological advances, one key area of development has been the use of popular mix-methods research (MMR), that combines qualitative and quantitative analyses of different types of data. This methodology, as argued by Zanetin & Rundle (2022), is useful as researchers can take advantage of their “complementary strengths to overcome the weaknesses of each [method]”. In doing so, researchers may go beyond purely quantitative corpus-based approaches, which typically do not offer the methodological grounding necessary to analyze causality or explain observed phenomena. These studies have been popular primarily in game localization (Al-Batineh & Alawneh 2022; Afzali & Zahiri 2022; Zoraqi & Kaffi 2023), but also in web localization (Abdulgattah et al. 2023). These mixed methods studies have also explored significant issues such as user reception studies and user experience in game localization (e.g. Deckert & Hedjuk 2022).

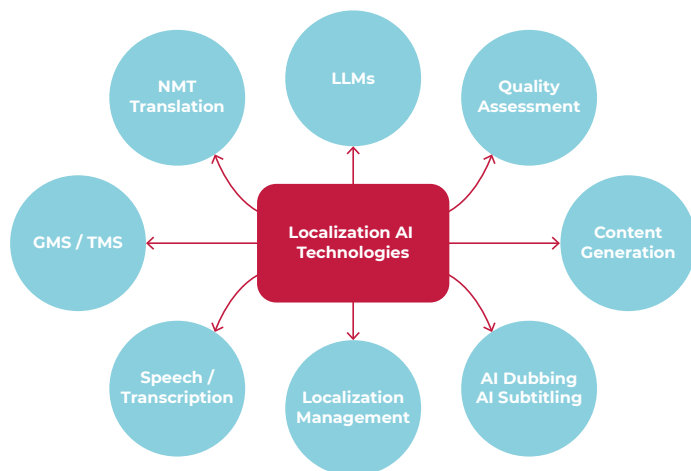
In the study of online collaborative translation and crowdsourcing, it is worth briefly noting that the field has undoubtedly been enriched by the introduction of socio-cognitive and ethnographic approaches and their associated methodologies. A wide range of studies have explored using MMR crowdsourcing and online collaborative translations (see for example Yu (2022) and Yang (2025)), and they continue to hold promise to move study this fascinating set of phenomena.

Promising research avenues in localization and AI: a brief note

As discussed in my paper “The technological turn, are we there yet” (2020), a key issue in the emergence and consolidation of research into techno-

logical phenomena is the ever-evolving nature of technology. These are changes to what O'Hagan (2013) refers as the macro impacts on the practice of translation, that is, changes in global technologies that influence how translations are produced, used, distributed, compensated, etc. We have all witnessed how translation, language and localization technologies continue to evolve, with the AI and GenAI revolution as a case in point (GALA 2024, 2025). Figure 1 shows the different AI driven technologies that might impact localization practices, from localization management to AI dubbing of embedded videos in online stores.

Figure 1. **The AI revolution AI in localization: AI in localization: the wider GILT picture.**

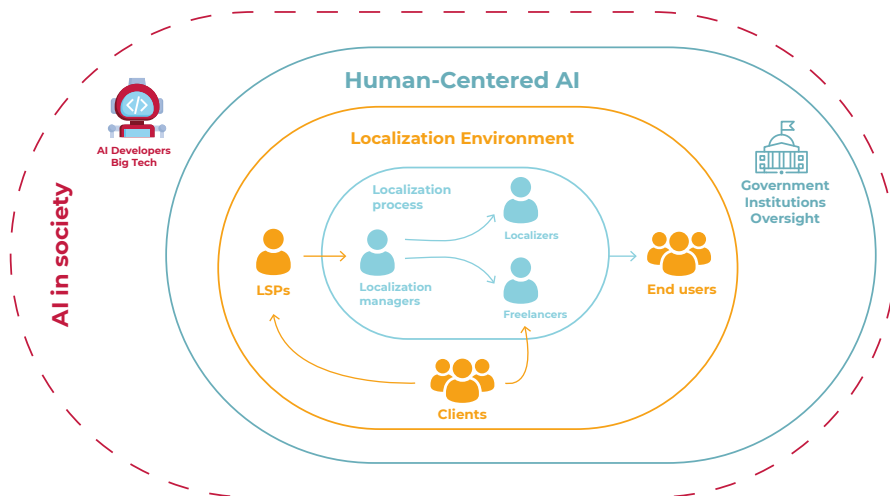


In this global context of AI-driven change, Translation Studies research is evolving accordingly, including reflections on the impact of AI on localization (Lambson & Liu 2025; Jiménez-Crespo 2024a). Nevertheless, scholars often argue that the field has historically been slow to engage with the impact of technology (Doherty 2016, 652). Oftentimes, publications have found a tendency to segregate, rather than integrate, technology-oriented research (O'Hagan 2013). However, this may not hold true amid the overwhelming AI revolution we are currently experiencing. AI has had an

impact on all areas of TS, from research into applied pedagogy research, all the way to research methodologies. To date, research has explored primarily the impact of AI on the profession and training through analyses and survey explorations to all different areas and translation environment and wider contexts, such as professionals' views on AI (Rivas Ginel et al. 2024; Rivas Ginel & Moorkens 2024; Jiménez-Crespo 2024, 2025a, 2025b). In terms of methodologies, it can be argued that methodologies used in cognitive TS, CBTS, or AVT were revolutionized through digitalization. For example, key-logging, eye tracking and other psychometric tests have enjoyed widespread popularity in CTS and AVT, while advances in cloud corpus processing and storage with services such as Sketchengine, allowed those researching digital text to streamline several processing and analysis steps. Nevertheless, we are still not witnessing a wide adoption of AI-driven research methodologies in the field, and this extends to research on localization and crowdsourcing. Despite the vast potential of AI-driven data processing, no study to date appears to have employed novel AI-based methodologies to generate new insights into these phenomena.

To finish this section, I will propose two areas in localization and online collaborative translation that might lead to new research agendas in the new AI revolution. The first one relates to how localization research can be advanced in a human-centered AI era. HCAI has been proposed as a potential paradigm to advance TS research, given that the nature of TS since the emergence of sociological and techno-sociological approaches has primarily focused on the “human” agency, values or preferences (Jiménez-Crespo 2025). Similarly, the main goals of the interdisciplinary field of HCAI are also human values, needs, preferences, and wellbeing (Ozmen Garibay et al. 2023). What does it mean to put the human at the center, and how do we define the notion of “human” in a global and complex localization workflow? In a recent guest seminar at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, I propose a framework to contextualize this notion of “human at the center” in localization. The central core of the localization process involves the interaction of localizers, freelancers, testers, and localization managers. All of them often have different needs and preferences in terms of how AI is incorporated in the workflow. For example, while localization managers might want the highest possible level of automation and control, freelancers

Figure 2. **The localization environment and human users and stakeholders from a human-centered AI perspective.**



might prefer to have full control of the process of integration and use of AI-driven technologies (e.g. Jiménez-Crespo 2024a, 2025). The next circle involves the wider localization environment that includes commissioners or LSPs, clients and end users, all of which might also have different preferences and conceptualizations of what is ethical or useful, and how AI can be centered around them. In the wider ecosystem of HCAI appear governmental institutions that oversee AI, as well as AI developers, big tech and other AI stakeholders. Even when the impact of AI in localization flows from the wider context towards those agents at the center of the graph, one key issue of HCAI approaches is that end-users need to be part of the process of conceiving, designing, testing, deploying, and iterating technologies (Vallor 2024). Kishimoto, Regis, Denis, and Axente also stress the importance of “involv[ing] potential users from the early stages of product and service development” because “inclusive R&D process is imperative” (2024, 3). These users include all human agents identified in Figure 2. Conflicts of interest might arise between different stakeholders. Localization research from a TS perspective primarily focuses on “localizers”, as well as “end users” to a lesser degree. What happens then with the needs or preferences of clients

or localization managers from a HCAI perspective? Does this inevitably lead to exploitative practices, as commonly argued in TS literature? The cat is out of the bag, and this issue opens a highly productive avenue for research.

The second area I address concerns the timely and compelling intersection of AI, localization, and online collaborative translation. I argue that the shared objective of ensuring access to digital content, and the practices involved in achieving this goal, serves as a unifying thread that connects these domains. Everyone recognizes the significant disparities between major languages and low-resource languages, and how these three phenomena contribute to closing the global digital gap. The human and social centered AI paradigms (Shneiderman 2022; Wang, Cooper & Eby 2024) advocate for AI that serves the needs, preferences and well-being of humans, their societies, environments, etc. This paradigm obviously includes “all” humans, no matter the geographical region, language used or socioeconomic status. Surprisingly, two decades ago localization scholars already advocated for what was known as “development localization” or “localization for all”. These programmatic agendas were necessary because access to and presence in the digital world has been and continues to be: “a right for speakers of any language and should not be dependent on their income” (Schäler 2010, 161). Scholars argue that in a digital world, corporations and institutions should take decisive steps to bridge the “global information poverty”. A wide range of collaborative translation projects have attempted to address this issue (see for example Jiménez-Crespo 2017a for a list of projects). Nevertheless, we know that currently “[l]ocalization still largely leaves out minority languages which are not considered commercially significant” (O’Hagan & McDonough-Dolmaya 2023, 3). Similar statements are made today regarding AI and popular LLM models. These efforts towards creating a fairer and more inclusive digital world thus resonate today given the digital gap in AI development and performance between top tier and low-resource languages. One necessary future direction of localization research, in addition to the study how to incorporate AI in workflows and processes to meet global users’ needs, would be to recruit AI stakeholders to continue working towards “localization for all” through AI implementations. Similarly, more inclusive, and unbiased localization and AI-driven practices in translation should continue to be advocated for.

Conclusions: inward and outward looking

It is complex to summarize or analyze in a single article the breadth and scope of my research career and the changes in TS over these years. I hope to conclude this paper, that readers have understood how the intersection of translation, language mediation and ever-evolving technological phenomena continually pose fascinating research questions that need to be addressed. Over the years, I have mostly kept an inward-looking perspective focused on TS research, acknowledging the necessary interdisciplinary contributions, while attempting to have an outward impact in other interrelated disciplines. I have written, for example, handbooks on applied linguistics and language for specific purposes, collaborated in interdisciplinary projects (Jiménez-Crespo & Singh 2016), as well as publications aimed at translation professionals. The AI revolution has just started, and new fascinating phenomena will continue to emerge. TS has the theoretical and methodological frameworks to carry out an ambitious research agenda from a multi and interdisciplinary perspective, outstanding researchers, and a new passionate generation of scholars. Let us continue to grow and aim for a wide impact on society and related disciplines to complete the “outward turn” (Zwischenberger 2019).

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Where digital worlds and translation studies collide: from localization to AI and beyond

Abstract

This paper explores the evolution of localization research within Translation Studies and examines how emerging AI technologies are reshaping multilingual digital communication. Through a retrospective analysis of the author's research career, the paper maps key developments in the study of localization and its evolution through the impact of crowdsourcing and translation technologies from the early 2000s to the present AI era. The discussion highlights how localization practices challenged traditional translation models by introducing new workflows, digital genres, and collaborative environments that required novel theoretical and methodological approaches (e.g. corpus-based translation studies, mixed-methods research, and socio-cognitive perspectives). It also addresses the growing integration of AI-driven tools such as machine translation, large language models, AI dubbing, and automated localization management systems into professional localization workflows. Special attention is devoted to Human-Centered AI as a promising framework for balancing automation with human autonomy, professional expertise, and user needs. The paper argues that future localization research must engage critically with ethical, social, and linguistic dimensions of AI, particularly regarding low-resource languages, digital inclusion, and equitable access to multilingual digital content.

Keywords

Localization, localization technologies, AI, Human-centered AI, crowdsourcing

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