

## Cross Cultural Transfer in the case of Local or Regional Websites of Transnational Companies

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**Abstract:** *“Website cloning” was forbidden some time ago. Lately, it has become an important marketing tool for small businesses and large transnational corporations. Replicating a website as a business development objective is neither a matter of creating a perfect replica of the original website, nor necessarily a crime if website replication ethics is observed. This means creating a rather different website sometimes, often in another language, by maintaining specific features of the ‘leader’ site. The content of the source site is modified by actions such as customization and/or localization. Localization is a cross cultural transfer in point of linguistic content, while customization may also take into account transformation of semiotic, graphic, and design elements so as to make the local/regional company website appropriate to the expectations of a particular audience. Redesigning, customizing, localizing, translating the contents of the leader website are corroborate actions in the business virtual environment, meant to enhance the image of the foreign company in a host culture and society, and to correct, improve and foster business habits of the host environment. Localization is performed by specialized agencies which also provide interesting definitions of localization and motivation. About one third of Internet users do not use English as the main language for communication. Thus, it has become necessary in a business context to transfer information about brands, companies, products distributed globally to local cultures. This study highlights some of the main characteristics of the transfer of a business website form and content to another cultural (also geographical and business) setting, pointing to the way in which neglecting particular elements in this transfer may have a larger negative impact at society level and looking at possible effects of the interaction between English and Romanian in the virtual business environment. The analysis is concerned with a comparison of the Unilever global company website and the corresponding Romanian local website (for Unilever Romania). Present day Romanian seems affected by the use of English in business practice. This use might have positive effects and negative consequences. Lack of language policy of host states may affect the image of transnational corporations.*

**Keywords:** *cross-cultural transfer, company, localization, translation, website*

## Introduction

Phenomena characteristic of globalization have become commonplace today, working to destabilize the previously solid outlines of the local. International trade has become possible owing to collaboration among companies from different cultural settings. Alongside businesses, communication and discourse have also become global. It has been considered that the globalisation process provides a fairly good “topical illustration of the interaction between linguistic and cultural factors” [Gotti 2007: 143] in discourse organisation and construction. Regardless of whether one supports the notion of the world-as-whole (constructed on the principles of sameness and homogeneity) or whether one opposes this view, replacing it with that of the world-as-puzzle (based on difference and heterogeneity), it is certain that cross-cultural interactions imply fuzzy borderlines, where the global meets the local, and where mutual contamination takes place. The emerging glocal nexus, dialectic and dialogic in essence, ultimately signals “the ambivalence and ambiguity of the contemporary human condition”. [Robertson 1994: 35]

In theory, the glocal resembles a cultural melting pot where opposing forces are brought together and processed into a construct which is new, but carries the traces of the initial ingredients. In practice, the predominance of one force is identifiable, as are the marks left on its cultural other. The importance of information provided through discourse and carried forth through its translation is largely acknowledged by specialists in communication and discourse analysis: “...discourse is an inherent and irreducible element or facet of all social phenomena and all social change”. [Fairclough 2007: 10]

Determined by both globalizing and localizing vectors, the glocal nexus is commonly facilitated by “translation-mediated communication”, which enables “the Message to be adaptable to the condition that may be imposed by Receivers who do not share the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds as the Sender” and which addresses “linguistic and cultural barriers specific to the Receiver who does not share the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds as the Sender.” [O’Hagan & Ashworth 2002: 66-67]

A case in point is that of website translation, undertaken by large transnational companies to promote brands, services, products and to support their various branches worldwide. In terms of problematic globalizing synergies, website translation brings to attention the transformations of semiotic, graphic and design elements, together with the modifications resulting from the linguistic cross cultural transfer.

In the contemporary business and trade context it has become essential to transfer information about brands, companies, products distributed globally to local cultures. Website localization, mainly involving website translation, can be defined as “the process of modifying an existing website to make it accessible, usable and culturally suitable to a target audience.” [www.languagescientific.com] It is estimated that more “than 1/3 of all internet users are non-native English speakers” [idem]. Website visitors manifest what is called *site stickiness*, staying more on websites in their own language [Forrester Research, quoted by the same source]. It becomes thus obvious that companies are or should be interested to invest in website localization. In this way, they can grow in new markets, have more chances to gain notoriety in front of a global audience, and expand their global sales.

## **1. Website customization and the use of Romanian**

The websites of some multinational companies acting in the Romanian business environment have been designed or redesigned according to the global company website. Some textual elements have been borrowed in the translation, adaptation, customization from the global website. Observation of some of these websites has revealed a certain lack of interest for linguistic issues of the administrators and/or designers of the local or regional websites in Romanian. This has been the reason for the analysis included in the present study.

### *1.1. Romanian in the educational, professional, and business environments*

Romanian is one of Europe’s small to medium languages, spoken by about 20 million people in Romania (according to the Ethnologue – Languages of

the World website, based on data collected in 2012) and by another 2.5 million people in the Republic of Moldova, where it is called Moldavian on an official basis. It may be estimated that Romanian is also spoken as a native language more or less sporadically in Europe, in North America and on the other continents by another million people (Romanians and Moldavians) in ordinary conversation at home and when socializing in small groups of co-nationals. In total, it is spoken by less than 24 million [cf. Ethnologue].

Romanian is used in Romania as instructional language, although for the Hungarian ethnics, Hungarian may be the language of instruction. At tertiary level, foreign students may study Romanian in universities for a year to get a B2 level which enables them to attend study programmes in Romanian at bachelor's, master's and PhD levels.

Romanian is a language of Latin origin. The alphabet is Latin, and writing is phonetic, with several particularities for rendering sounds which did not exist in Latin. For these sounds there are several diacritics, as in letters *î*, *â* (pronounced both /i/, as in *în*, "in", *pâine*, "bread"), *ă* (pronounced /ə/, as in *mamă*, "mother"), *ș* (pronounced /ʃ/, as in *și*, "and"), and *ț* (pronounced /t/, as in *îți*, Dative of "you" in the singular). The diacritics are present in many words belonging to the main stock of the vocabulary and the handwriting, as it is taught in schools, contains them all as well. Computer keyboards are adapted and most licensed software applications make it available. Official documents and commercial notices on products are written using diacritics.

Romanian is the main language used in professional and business contexts. Notable exceptions are communication among Hungarian ethnics and communication in international events taking place in Romania, where English and/or French may be the rule. For some of these events, especially in academic contexts, simultaneous translation is not provided, starting from the premise that most participants will be able to understand and communicate in one of these foreign languages.

Linguists in universities and research centres belonging to the Romanian Academy have shown very wide and constant interest in the study of Romanian as a linguistic system and in its uses in everyday communication and professional contexts. In 2004, Law 500, on the use of

the Romanian language in public places, relations and institutions was adopted by the Romanian Parliament. Article (2) defines a text of public interest (*text cu caracter de interes public*) as

any text which, as work assignment, is posted, exhibited, distributed or pronounced in public places or in the media, and is aimed at informing the public with regard to a denomination, datum or message with a direct or an indirect advertising content.

[orice text care, în cadrul unor atribuții de serviciu, este afișat, expus, difuzat sau rostit în locuri publice ori prin mijloace de informare în masă, având ca scop aducerea la cunoștința publicului a unei denumiri, a unei informații sau a unui mesaj, cu conținut direct ori indirect publicitar.]

Article (1) stipulates that any such text written or spoken in Romanian

shall be correct with respect to term use adequacy, as well as grammar, orthoepy, and, as the case may be, with respect to punctuation and spelling, according to the academic regulations in force.

[trebuie să fie corect din punct de vedere al proprietății termenilor, precum și sub aspect gramatical, ortoepic și, după caz, sub aspectul punctuației și ortografic, conform normelor academice în vigoare.]

With the exception of this law, there are no other regulations concerning the use of Romanian in the media and in professional and business contexts. As mentioned above, regular practice in official and commercial settings applies these regulations. However, infringements of this law may frequently be identified in public contexts, with no repercussions on the institutions or instances having generated them. This may be due to the fact that there are no legal mechanisms to enforce the regulations, but also to the lack of an institutional body created to ensure follow-up and monitoring, and to regulate less orthodox practices.

Such practices may be identified on a regular basis in the digital environment, for instance in the dissemination of news by the digital media and on company websites. They consist in the use of ungrammatical structures, spelling inconsistencies, absence of diacritics, debatable lexical

innovations, and unjustified borrowings. The situation is similar to that of Czech spelling, where, as Neustupný & Nekvapil remark, “the influence of electronic mail may be perceived” [2003: 246] today, as compared to the pre-digital age context, in which all documents issued would be correctly rendered on the page.

### *1.2. Website customization in the Romanian business environment*

There are an important number of widely known and reputed multinational or foreign companies which currently do business in Romania. One of the means by which they make themselves and their products known in the new culture is the local or regional website. Companies such as Orange, Carrefour or Avon have their own Romanian website, mainly targeted at consumers and thus generally presenting products and services provided by the company. Unilever, L’Oréal, Nestlé, Coca-Cola have websites targeted at the stakeholders in general, comprising not only information about products and services, but also supplementary information on the history, activities, projects of the company.

However, as obvious from some of these company websites, the Romanian pages of global companies do not reflect a preoccupation for compliance with current Romanian legislation concerning the use of the Romanian language in official documents. This involuntary attitude towards the use of the Romanian language opposes the assumption that a business website is expected to act as a mirror of the company identity and display interest in respecting cultural issues, among which the correct use of a national language in their marketing practice. The negligence with respect to the application of the current regulations cannot be blamed entirely on businesses as long as there is no control and monitoring of these websites from the linguistic or cultural perspective. On the contrary, businesses should be advised to change their attitude with respect to language and communication matters by raising awareness as to the risk of treating spelling and orthoepical issues, as well as composition and writing, too superficially. The global use of English as the international language which is the most widely used in business practice has consequences on the use of national languages in marketing practices.

The study focuses on a comparison between the Unilever global company website [www.unilever.com] and the corresponding Romanian website [www.unilever.ro], on the shift from the global to the local business environment. This shift appears to be governed by fuzzy language transfer strategies in the Romanian business context. The case study is meant to show that the passage from hegemonic English to Romanian as a language spoken by a smaller community is characterised by a series of flaws and bad practices. It also aims at pointing to the particular strategies of website customization which are recurrent in the Romanian context.

## 2. Analysis

### 2.1. Content and General Presentation of two Unilever websites

The international site of the Anglo-Dutch company Unilever [www.unilever.com] introduces itself in the upper part of the home page (right corner) as *UNILEVER GLOBAL*. To the right of the Unilever Global tag, a link directing to other locations of the company is provided.

When first consulted in February 2014, the global website advertised world peace and gender harmonization via a close-up of a soldier's face, advertising the Axe brand. The attractive macho image was associated to the well-known slogan "Make love, not war", which may be seen as evoking the spirit of the American counter culture of the 60s. (see Fig. 1)

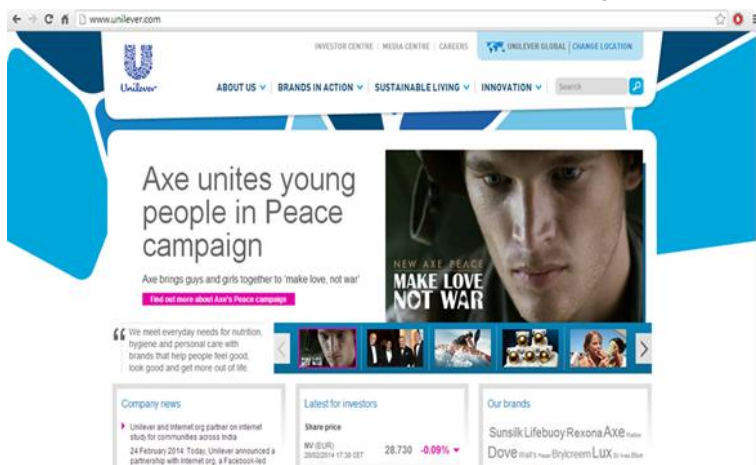


Fig. 1. Unilever Global Homepage – February 2014

In November 2014, the same homepage shifted to a social responsibility and commitment. It showed a Haitian mother holding her daughter in her arms, thus illustrating the company's concern for the future of endangered nations and communities. (see Fig. 2)

The text is entitled *Empowering women in Haiti*, and develops on the company's responsibility programme:

- (1) A partnership between the Unilever Foundation, Population Services International and Fonkoze is helping to create a brighter future for Haiti.



Fig. 2. Unilever Global Homepage – November 2014

The February 2014 Romanian equivalent of the site opts for a pedagogical statement, instructing on the meaning and the benefits of “a sustainable lifestyle” (see Fig. 3). Some linguistic decisions may be considered debatable here (see *infra*, the translation of the term *sustainable*). The message clearly shows the company's commitment to sustainability, with the construction of women as involved in household activities. This is operative at the visual level: a young woman is picking up a bag of frozen greens from the fridge.





Fig. 3. Unilever Romania Homepage – February 2014

The text accompanying the picture says: *Ce înseamnă un stil de viață sustenabil și care sunt beneficiile sale?* [What is a sustainable lifestyle and which are its benefits?] – the correct spelling with diacritics being *Ce înseamnă un stil de viață sustenabil și care sunt beneficiile sale?* The text advances the idea that adopting a sustainable lifestyle may save money for a family. In November 2014, the Romanian homepage of Unilever was simply an advertising one, introducing one of the products distributed by Unilever (see Fig. 4).

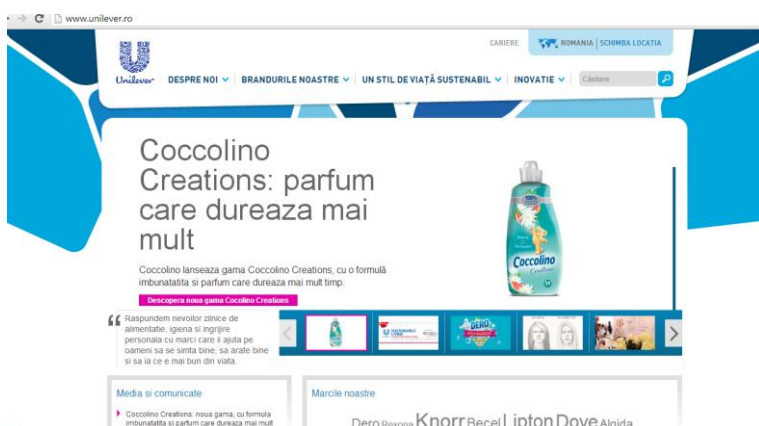


Fig. 4. Unilever Romania Homepage – November 2014

This presentation of the homepages of the two websites shows that the Unilever websites are dynamic. Subsequent analysis should take into account the set of changes made to the homepage in order to identify what motivates these changes and foreground the metamorphosis from the global to the local.

## *2.2. Form and Compliance with Local Standards: Spelling and Lexical Choice*

As already mentioned, in point of spelling, the use of diacritics in written Romanian is necessary to indicate the correct pronunciation of the words. For instance, the letter ș is pronounced [ʃ] and the letter ă is pronounced [ə]. In many ordinary contexts of written communication (social networks, e-mail messaging, texting, notes) and only when word processing is used – not handwriting –, individual users tend to omit diacritics from their writing. This may have as a cause: time saving purposes, lack of Romanian keyboard or licence for Romanian type characters or, more generally, a habit. Lack of diacritical marks does not prevent the Romanian reader from understanding the text. Since the message does not become ambiguous and can be usually reconstructed with no great difficulty, the practice of omitting diacritics is quite general. It should be however noted that the letter ș, pronounced [ʃ], is read as an s [s] when the diacritical mark is not used, and the letter ă, pronounced [ə], is read as an [ʌ] when it lacks the diacritical mark. This may be somewhat annoying when reading longer messages and, with no specific research on this issue, we may still presuppose that reading a text is slower if the spelling lacks diacritics.

On the Romanian Unilever website, however, diacritical marks are used sporadically, which indicates negligence on the part of the customization / localization agent. This is not a singular case. Some local websites of transnational companies observe the norm (Chevron – [www.chevron.ro](http://www.chevron.ro), Schwarzkopf – [www.schwarzkopf.ro](http://www.schwarzkopf.ro), Mercedes – [www.mercedes-benz.ro](http://www.mercedes-benz.ro) etc). Other company websites, however, either use diacritics partially or irregularly (L'Oréal – [www.lorealparis.ro](http://www.lorealparis.ro)) or omit them altogether (Coca-Cola – [www.coca-cola.ro](http://www.coca-cola.ro), Renault – [www.renault.ro](http://www.renault.ro)).

This may have as a cause the fact that localization by specialists in the field of cross cultural mediation (translators and localizers) is not yet the practice in Romania, and in no way a concern or a tradition. Tradition is difficult to build if the common practice is sporadic or missing. Within the Romanian setting, the common practice of companies for editing text meant to be posted on their website appears to be that of using existing staff who are not specialized in translation and localization. Texts written without diacritical marks are frequent, with infringement of current legislation.

On the other hand, this situation might also point to the fact that, in some companies, IT specialists are in charge of mediating across cultures rather than professional localizers. This study is intended to show that this practice is no way appropriate to represent the company image. Apparently, the company strategy is not to invest or to have a focused policy for correct localization of websites in appropriate conditions for circulation of the company image in national cultures. Nevertheless, at least one professional in translation should be consulted for proofing, translation and adaptation or customization of web content for the Romanian websites or required to provide the customized text.

In point of lexical choices, one may notice the recurrent use of Anglicisms, resulting from calques, which render the text artificial and unnatural.

A calque, or a loan translation, is the transfer of a meaning or of a lexical unit and its meaning from a source language to a target language (for a comprehensive presentation on basic tendencies in the field of lexical borrowing and calque, see Wach 2013). In the case of the *semantic calque*, the meaning of a lexical unit in the source language is transferred and associated to an existing lexical unit in the target language. This results in enrichment of the target word meaning. In the case of the *structural calque*, the more important form of loan translation, the lexical unit in the source language is transferred and adapted to the target language by a kind of word by word translation and lexical adaptation, with the source language meaning attached to it: "The result is the origin of a completely new formation due to the translation of foreign elements." [Wach 2013: 162] This has lexical innovation and enrichment as a consequence.

The following excerpt, symptomatic for the whole site, features the use of the Romanian calque from English *sustenabilitate*, “sustainability”, for which in French the phrase *développement durable*, “sustainable development”, has been created and used on a general basis. *Sustenabilitate*, more difficult to pronounce (eight syllables) than to write, is omnipresent in written contexts for the sake of simplicity and rapidity, especially when source documents in English are used either for translation purposes or as reference materials.

- (2) Prin stimularea sustenabilitatii în fiecare componenta a activitatii noastre, Planul deschide noi oportunitati si genereaza crestere...  
[By stimulating sustainability in each component of our activity, the Plan opens up new opportunities and generates growth...]

As may be assumed from a Google search, which indicates about 151,000 occurrences of Rom. *sustenabilitate* compared to approximately 382,000 occurrences of Rom. *dezvoltare durabilă*, a calque of the French *développement durable*, the latter has been used for a longer period of time. Other companies, like Coca-Cola, also use the noun Rom. *sustenabilitate* on their website, and do not make any use of the term *dezvoltare durabilă*. It may also be considered that the term *sustenabilitate* has imposed itself for ease of lexical transfer. The lexical equivalence in Romanian has been achieved by calque neology. The adjective Rom. *sustenabil* is easy to use and conveys the notional content of the corresponding noun, which the adjective Rom. *durabil*, “lasting”, equivalent of *sustenabil*, cannot convey – *durabil* is derived from the verb Rom. *a dura*, “to last”, and its content is much larger, including all the array of possible meanings of this verb.

At the lexical level, Anglicisms may range from neologisms of Anglo-Saxon origin to borrowings from English which are not as yet used on a large scale in the Romanian cultural context and are not easily understood by some stakeholders. An example in point is the use of English acronyms, such as BMI, “body mass index”, which has a Romanian counterpart, IMC (the same as in French), “indice de masă corporală”, but which the localizer of the Romanian Unilever branch does not make use of on the website:

- (3) oamenii care consuma mai multa supa tind sa aiba un BMI mai mic...  
[people who consume more soup tend to have a smaller BMI...]

Words of Anglo-Saxon origin or English borrowings from other languages, i.e. Engl. *chef*, borrowed from French, are transferred as such. The case of *chef* is one in point. Since the word has been used lately in Romanian as a borrowing in various media environments, especially in TV programmes and commercials, the borrowing has become more and more adopted by media communicators. The average speaker of Romanian does not use it on a large scale and seems to be less aware of it, especially that this English borrowing of French origin is homonymous with the word Rom. *șef*, “boss”. In the excerpt below, the word is used in the plural, and it looks rather like an inappropriate linguistic adaptation of the borrowed term to Romanian grammar, with the common *-i* plural. Although this linguistic move may eventually be accepted, when the word has been sufficiently rooted in Romanian usage, it appears artificial and inadequate in the translation provided on the Romanian Unilever website where it has been brought up by a translation of an excerpt from a post on the Facebook account of the host global company:

- (4) O echipa de chefi care isi desfasoara activitatea la sediul Knorr din Heilbronn, Germania, se implica in dezvoltarea de noi produse Knorr...  
[A team of chefs, working at Knorr’s headquarters in Heilbronn, Germany, are involved in developing new Knorr products...]  
(Original text: A team of chefs based at Knorr’s headquarters in Heilbronn, Germany, help come up with Knorr’s culinary creations...)

The less effort-saving, non ‘economical’ term *maestru bucătar*, “chef”, is used on a large scale in standard Romanian and is adequate as an equivalent of Fr./En. *chef*, also because it avoids the ambiguities engendered, in pronunciation, by the homophony with Rom. *șef*, “boss”, and, in writing, by the homograph form of the word Rom. *chef*, “desire, wish”. Media articles and editorials use the loan Rom. *chef*, adapting it to the Romanian plural as well, *chefi*. The use of this term is also facilitated by the possibility of an interpretation of the meaning in the context – the

newspaper article or the TV programme is about cooking, cuisine, etc. The example above is translated from a text posted on global Unilever's Facebook account. If the translation uses *chefs*, a suitable or acceptable Romanian equivalent could have been in the given context a somewhat less economical phrase, Rom. *maestri bucătari*, "chefs".

Thus, on the lexico-syntactic level, Anglicisms are represented by foreign patterns brought to Romanian by inadequate translation. These instances may lead to over generalization of this practice, with extension of malformed lexico-syntactic structures, and adaptations which lead to somewhat improper lexicalization, i.e. *the identity comprises...* as in this localized translation:

- (5) 1969 O noua identitate vizuala e introdusa pentru Coca-Cola. Identitatea contine culorile consacrate, rosu si alb. (Coca-Cola website for Romania, <http://www.coca-cola.ro/ro/istoric/>)  
[1969 A new visual identity is introduced for Coca-Cola. The identity comprises the consecrated colors, red and white.]

This text is likely to have been translated and adapted from a booklet available on the company's website, having *Coca-Cola – 125 years of sharing happiness – A Short History of the Coca-Cola Company* as a title, by deletion of some parts and concentration of the source text. The original text for the year 1969 is:

- (5') A new graphic look for the Coca-Cola system is introduced, featuring a red-and-white color scheme and logo.

To sum up, such practices, with no necessary impact upon the consumers, may nonetheless have a negative impact on the Romanian advertising and marketing activity of other sectors, by establishing the common or general idea that non specialized staff for text adaptations and translations can well do the job of cultural mediators.

In the next section, this study provides, among other things, the example and a discussion of the translation of the term *sustainable* and of the phrase *sustainable living*.

### 2.3. *Recontextualization: Changes in Content and Form*

When objects or practices are borrowed or taken from a context and brought to another, they have to be rearticulated with local objects and practices [see also Fairclough 2007: 14]. Such a 'rearticulation' may ensure that a brand or the image of a product is more easily transferred to a new cultural setting, while educating the audience or the consumer to take up the products and to learn new practices.

In business strategy, the product a company provides is transferred to new locations both as a practice and as an object. In marketing, products are accompanied by discourses introducing and describing them. Rearticulation of the product with new practices and other objects necessarily involves transformation. In this way, marketing discourse has to undergo transformations. For Chouliaraki and Fairclough [1999], recontextualization appears as "colonization / appropriation dialectic". Adapted to the case under focus, this may be described in the following way: a particular entity is disarticulated from a local culture and it colonizes the new context. This means that the new context adopts the new practice or behaviour. These moves have to do with transformation of consumer practices and may finally bring about social changes. These changes may also be of a linguistic nature and concern, just like the practice of website customization and localization for regional and local purposes. As mentioned earlier, the practice of not approaching a specialist translator for website customization has at the same time a social and a linguistic impact.

This section provides insights to the analysis of the Unilever global website and the Unilever Romanian website.

Two hyperlinks are missing from the top of the local homepage as compared to the global one: *Investor centre* and *Media centre*. This study has not had as an objective to contact the specialized departments in the companies and ask for reasons, as it was mainly concerned with identifying differences in point of form and content between the global and the local websites. A hypothetical explanation of the deletion mentioned above could be that the information provided under these tabs on reports and accounts, quarterly results, share prices, dividends, shareholders and

investors, financial calendar, and corporate governance is either considered irrelevant or regarded as useful only outside the local branch, as indeed is the information on press releases, speeches and interviews, news and features, executive biographies, images and logos, media contacts. A further step of this research is to validate the hypothetical explanation the study suggests with the specialized departments in companies.

Unilever Global – Main Page [www.unilever.com]	Unilever Romania – Main Page [www.unilever.ro]	Back Translation of Romanian Version
Investor centre	<i>no equivalent</i>	
Media centre	<i>no equivalent</i>	
Careers	Cariere in Unilever *	Careers in Unilever

\* Misspelled text. Correct text: *Cariere în Unilever*.

The four links situated immediately below the ones already mentioned appear on both main pages, with significant alterations and touches of local colour in the case of the Romanian site.

The heading *About us* (Fig. 5) finds a culturally appropriate translation in *Despre noi*. The introductory sentence underneath omits the reference to *corporate structure*, inserting one to principles (*principiile*) and emphasising the European scale and rank of the business / production facility owned in Romania: *una dintre cele mai importante capacități de producție pe care le deținem în Europa* [one of the most important production facilities we own in Europe]. As for the subsections listed underneath, they feature different entries and a modified hierarchy. Common to both sites are *Purpose & principles*, *Unilever foundation*, *Our history* and *Our leadership*.

More recently, a new sub heading was added on the global page, *Project Sunlight*. The signalled missing *Media centre* appears here (*Centru media*). The tags *awards and heroes*, *suppliers*, *nutrition and health* are omitted. The introduction to Unilever is replaced by an Introduction to Unilever Romania. To this, the presentation of the company's vision is added (*Viziunea noastră / Our vision*).

*Brands in action* (Fig. 6) becomes *Mărcile noastre* [Our brands], via semantic and syntactic approximation. The short description given adds the



reference to the millions choosing a Unilever product each day: *În fiecare zi, 160 de milioane de oameni aleg un produs Unilever*. [Every day, 160 million people choose a Unilever product.] Other transformations involve the specification regarding food “for the family” (*hrana familiei*) – missing from the original English version, the omission of “beverage” and that of “personal care”.

UNILEVER GLOBAL	UNILEVER ROMANIA	Back Translation of Romanian Version
<b>About us</b> Find out about our history, mission and <i>corporate structure</i> , and the way we do business.	<b>Despre noi</b> Afla despre istoria si viziunea noastra, despre <i>principiile</i> dupa care ne conducem operatiunile si despre <i>afacerea noastra din Romania</i> - unde se afla <i>una dintre cele mai importante capacitati de productie pe care le detinem in Europa</i> . *	<b>About us</b> Find out about our history and vision, about the principles according to which we conduct our operations and about our business in Romania – where one of the most important production facilities we own in Europe is located.
• Introduction to Unilever	• Unilever in Romania	• Unilever in Romania
• <i>Purpose &amp; principles</i>	• Unilever se prezinta	• Unilever introduces itself
• <i>Unilever Foundation</i>	• Viziunea noastra	• Our vision
• <i>Our history</i>	• <i>Obiectiv si principia</i>	• <i>Objectives and principles</i>
• Young Entrepreneur Awards	• <i>Istoria noastra</i>	• <i>Our history</i>
• <i>Our Leadership</i>	• <i>Conducerea Unilever</i>	• <i>Unilever management</i>
• Supplier portal	• Centru Media	• Media centre
• Nutrition & health	• <i>Fundatia Unilever</i>	• <i>Unilever foundation</i>
• Unilever’s Heroes		

\* Lack of diacritical marks for all the text. The same for the tags under the *Despre noi* tab.

Fig. 5. Unilever Homepages: ABOUT US (Global and Romanian Websites, February 2014)

UNILEVER GLOBAL	UNILEVER ROMANIA	Back Translation of Romanian Version
<b>Brands in action</b> From food & beverages to home & personal care, our brands are part of everyday life.	<b>Marcile noastre</b> <i>In fiecare zi, 160 de milioane de oameni aleg un produs Unilever.</i> Marcile noastre fac parte din viata lor de zi cu zi, incepand de la hrana familiei si pana la mentinerea curateniei in locuinta.*	<b>Our brands</b> <i>Every day, 160 million people choose a Unilever product. Our brands are part of their daily life, beginning with food for the family and ending with maintaining the home clean.</i>
• Brands in action	• Alimente	• Food
• View brands	• Ingrijire personala	• Personal care
• Latest from our brands	• Ingrijirea locuintei	• Home care
	• Alimentatie	• Nutrition
• Improving health and wellbeing	• Sanatate, igiena si frumuseti	• Health, hygiene and beauty
	• Publicitate & marketing	• Advertising & marketing
	• Unilever Food Solutions	• Unilever Food Solutions

\* Lack of diacritical marks for all the text. The same for the tags under the *Mărcile noastre* tab.

Fig. 6. Unilever Homepages: BRANDS IN ACTION (Global and Romanian Websites, February 2014)

The following entries differ altogether. The Romanian site details the brands in question, classifying them as pertaining to food, personal care, home care, nutrition, health, hygiene and beauty, adding two entries: on *Advertising & marketing* (*Publicitate & marketing*) and on *Unilever Food Solutions*, simply transferred or transliterated from English. It may have been judged as more adequate for the Romanian public to introduce brands by classifying them into types: food, personal care, home care, nutrition, health, hygiene and beauty. This may have been motivated by the fact that the Romanian distributors and retailers are not directly familiar with some

brands or are more likely to look for categories of products provided by Unilever.

UNILEVER GLOBAL	UNILEVER ROMANIA	Back Translation of Romanian Version
<b>Sustainable living</b> Find out how we are making sustainability a driver of everything we do so that each time a consumer chooses one of our products, it improves their life, their community and the world we all share.	<b>Un stil de viata sustenabil</b> Află mai multe despre cum punem <i>sustenabilitatea</i> în centrul tuturor activităților noastre astfel încât, de fiecare dată când un consumator alege unul din produsele noastre, își îmbunătățește stilul de viață, contribuind la bunăstarea comunității și a planetei pe care o împărțim cu toții. *	<b>A sustainable lifestyle</b> Find out more about how we place <i>sustainability</i> at the centre of all our activities so that, each time a consumer chooses one of our products, he improves his lifestyle, contributing to the wellbeing of the community and of the planet we all share.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unilever Sustainable Living Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planul Unilever pentru un Stil de Viață Sustenabil</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unilever Plan for a Sustainable Lifestyle</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>News, videos &amp; reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prezentarea susținută de Directorul Executiv</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation by the Executive Director</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our approach to sustainability</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health &amp; hygiene</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sănătatea și igiena</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health and hygiene</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Îmbunătățirea alimentației</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving nutrition</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenhouse gases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gaze de seră</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greenhouse gases</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilizarea apei</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water use</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waste &amp; packaging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deseuri &amp; ambalaje</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waste &amp; packaging</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable sourcing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resurse sustenabile</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable resources</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better livelihoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mijloace de trai mai bune</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better livelihoods</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responding to stakeholder concerns</li> </ul>		

UNILEVER GLOBAL	UNILEVER ROMANIA	Back Translation of Romanian Version
• <i>Customers and suppliers</i>		
• <i>Assurance, data &amp; commentary</i>		
• <i>Sustainability events</i>		

\* Lack of diacritical marks for all the text. Part of the tags under the *Un stil de viață sustenabil* tab have diacritical marks.

Fig. 7. SUSTAINABLE LIVING (Global and Romanian Websites, February 2014)

*Sustainable living* (Fig. 7) becomes *Un stil de viață sustenabil* [A sustainable lifestyle]. The list of entries is shortened, with *News, videos & reports, Responding to stakeholder concerns, Customers and suppliers, Assurance, data & commentary* and *Sustainability events* left out. Other aspects to be noted are: the incorrect use of capital letters in Romanian titles, as in *Planul Unilever pentru un Stil de Viață Sustenabil* [Unilever Plan for a Sustainable Lifestyle], the unnatural use of the & sign for the conjunction Rom. și [and], the personal reference to the Executive Director rather than one to the company as a whole, in *Prezentarea susținută de Directorul Executiv* [Presentation by the Executive Director]. An example of quite inappropriate lexical choice is that of the translation of the phrase *Sustainable living* as *Un stil de viață sustenabil* [A sustainable lifestyle]. This illustrates cultural transfer where *sustenabil* (the Romanian for *sustainable*) shows calque at work. In English, *sustainable* means “able to be used without being completely used up or destroyed; involving methods that do not completely use up or destroy natural resources; able to last or continue for a long time”. [cf. Merriam-Webster] In Romanian, *sustenabil* means “1. (despre probe, argumente, idei etc.) Care poate fi susținut. 2. Care poate fi îndurat, suportat. [1. (about evidence, arguments, ideas etc) which may be sustained. 2. which may be endured, come to bear as burden.] [DEX]

The translation into Romanian of the explanatory passage is the only section in which diacritical marks are used. This is however not

consistent throughout the whole passage. The translation opts for presenting sustainability as a rather more passive feature, and not as a *driver*.

Sustainability [*sustenabilitatea*] is thus presented as something to be placed at the core of everything: *în centrul tuturor activităților noastre* [at the centre/core of all our activities]. The Romanian word *sustenabilitate* is a new creation, a somewhat strange neologism, already included in the dictionary. The dictionary also indicates that the Romanian corresponding term for *sustainable development*, for instance, is the calque after the French *développement durable*, the Romanian *dezvoltare durabilă*. Since the adjective Rom. *durabil* is used in this context quite often, the adjective *sustenabil* may be felt as less appropriate. In the context of the phrase *sustainable living*, an appropriate solution could be *Un stil de viață într-o lume durabilă* [A lifestyle in a sustainable world].

The noun *planet* [*planetă*] was preferred instead of the equivalent *lume* to translate the English *world*. This choice has left aside the connection with communities and the society, bringing forth an association with a desired eco-lifestyle instead.

The last heading under focus in this study is that of *Innovation*, with the Romanian equivalent *Inovație* (see Fig. 8).

UNILEVER GLOBAL	UNILEVER ROMANIA	Back Translation of Romanian Version
<b>Innovation</b> Learn how Unilever's innovations build <i>leading brands</i> and develop our capacity to meet consumer needs for nutrition, hygiene and personal care.	<b>Inovatie</b> Afla cum, prin inovatiile noastre, construim <i>marci puternice</i> si ne dezvoltam capacitatea de a raspunde nevoilor consumatorilor de alimentatie, igiena si ingrijire personala.	<b>Innovation</b> Find out how, through our innovations, we build <i>strong brands</i> and develop our capacity to meet consumer needs for nutrition, hygiene and personal care.
• Innovation in Unilever	• Inovatia in Unilever	• Innovation in Unilever
• Our R&D locations	• Centrele noastre de cercetare & dezvoltare	• Our research & development centres

UNILEVER GLOBAL	UNILEVER ROMANIA	Back Translation of Romanian Version
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable Innovation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Inovatii de produs</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Product innovations</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Strategic Science</i></li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Collaborating with Unilever</i></li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Safety &amp; environment</i></li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Product &amp; ingredient safety</i></li> </ul>		

Fig. 8. INNOVATION (Global and Romanian Websites, February 2014)

Leading brands are presented as ‘strong brands’ [*mărci puternice*], emphasising force of market penetration. In as far as the accompanying list is concerned, four entries are deleted in the Romanian version: *Strategic Science*, *Collaborating with Unilever*, *Safety & environment* and *Product & ingredient safety*. Also, *Sustainable Innovation* was translated as *Inovații de produs/ Product innovations*, avoiding the problematic ‘sustenabil’ mentioned earlier. It is likely that the headings *Sustainable Innovation* and *Products and ingredient safety* have been merged into *Inovații de produs* [Product Innovations].

### Concluding remarks

This study shows that in the Romanian version of the Unilever website the focus is more on the product than on the company’s actions, commitments, and strategy. The global website seems to be addressing the large category of global stakeholders. The Romanian version appears to target distributors, retailers. These are apt to direct products to end customers and to educate them with respect to the products, if necessary. The Romanian website may as well target directly end consumers, possibly individual investors, a national network of stakeholders interested in the particular field of activity of the company. With respect to end consumer education, the Romanian website provides information to be used so as to

guide the end customer to establish an option, a choice and create consumer habits.

The case study analysis of the sampled sites illustrates a series of inappropriate practices which occur in the process of company website customization and localization. To summarize: there is lack of diacritical marks, translations contain inappropriate terms or structures, some texts appear artificial and lack coherence.

These may be, in part, to the lack of coherent linguistic, cultural, marketing and human resources policies within host states. This may also mean that website customization does not follow a clear strategy of employing professional translators in Romania. In the Romanian setting the occupations of translator, of terminologist, of expert linguist, of copywriter are still precariously dealt with and the necessity of such expertise is not recognized as a must in various fields of activity. Such professionals could take care appropriately of the quality of a translation and of the correct use of text with diacritical marks on the Romanian website. In the case of Unilever or Coca-Cola, the global management of the company may well be unaware of the fact that the text in the Romanian website does not comply with linguistic regulations in use. A signal from a body such as the Romanian Cultural Institute should have pointed this aspect to the multinational. This study is in line with Zafiu's discussion about the influence of English – as a language of globalisation, international communication, sciences, and entertainment industry [2010: 16].

The research carried out suggests that all problems encountered in the transfer of a business website (like Unilever) to another cultural setting (the Romanian one in this particular case) may impact on customer reaction. Customer reactions to the particular issues pointed to here could be identified and decoded following a questionnaire-based survey which the authors consider as the object of future research. It is to be expected that cultivated customers should react to the inappropriate practices pointed to in the study, while the 'usual customer' will not be much affected by this.

If customers' reactions to such an issue do not exist or, at least, do not affect at all their commitment to the products or services, there is a group of decision makers who might be interested in the issue. This group

is represented by the marketing decision makers in the local branches of the companies, who are interested in maintaining a good image of the company on the local market. Although the customers' decision is not influenced by the inappropriate linguistic practices illustrated in the study, the task of the linguists is to identify, categorize, and share them in the community with the hope that the amount of observations could sensitize the legal instances to the necessity of a regulatory organ or institution in the context described. The practices discussed tend to over generalize in the absence of a monitoring and regulatory body which is expected to deal with infringements of linguistic regulations. This has an impact upon "linguistic" sustainability which is not taken into consideration by companies, presumably unaware of the long term effect of the tendencies pointed to in the study.

The findings validate the thesis according to which "the extent of cultural reworking in translation [...] is much greater than the naïve substitutionalism which underlies much corporate thinking about localization" [Cronin 2006: 30]. They also demonstrate the need for change and for the implementation of clearly formulated strategies, including translation policies, to support the communicative effectiveness of the text.

This case study shows that customization of a website may have largely to do with recontextualization of the information provided in the passage from global to local. The concept of glocalization may be instrumental in showing that, on the one hand, the aspects of global interest are adapted to and merged into the national local culture. On the other hand, the local culture is enriched with new ways of looking at global issues and good practices borrowed from other cultures. This case study also brings to the attention again the necessity of language planning, keeping in mind that language management is necessary on a theoretical and practical basis in the present-day context of multinational companies acting on local levels, as shown by Neustupný & Nekvapil [2003] and Nekvapil & Sherman [2009]. Local practices may be improved based on protocols of communication and counselling with specialist linguists and translators in order to avoid neglecting basic communication principles such observing linguistic regulations in use. A more stable setting for the



reconsideration of the status of linguist specialists is necessary in Romania in order to have website administrators look more carefully at the way in which they and the websites they design or manage represent the image of the brands, irrespective of the impact this has on the customers. Last but not least, over generalization of the practices discussed in this case study may lead to unsustainable cultural consequences. Confronted with such practices on a consistent basis, and having in view the expansion of the digital media, the younger generation tends to care less about the way in which they write in their mother tongue.

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