Defining Localization

Concepts, Processes, and Evolution in the Digital Age

From the Locale Code to the Global Industry

More Than Just Translation

"The complex set of processes that make these interactive digital texts available for users who do *not* share the linguistic and sociocultural context of those for whom the original digital product was intended."
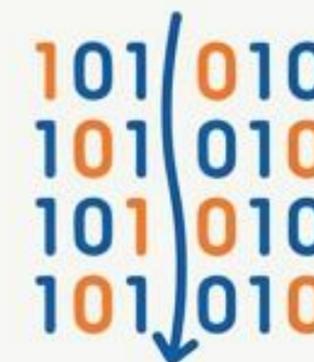
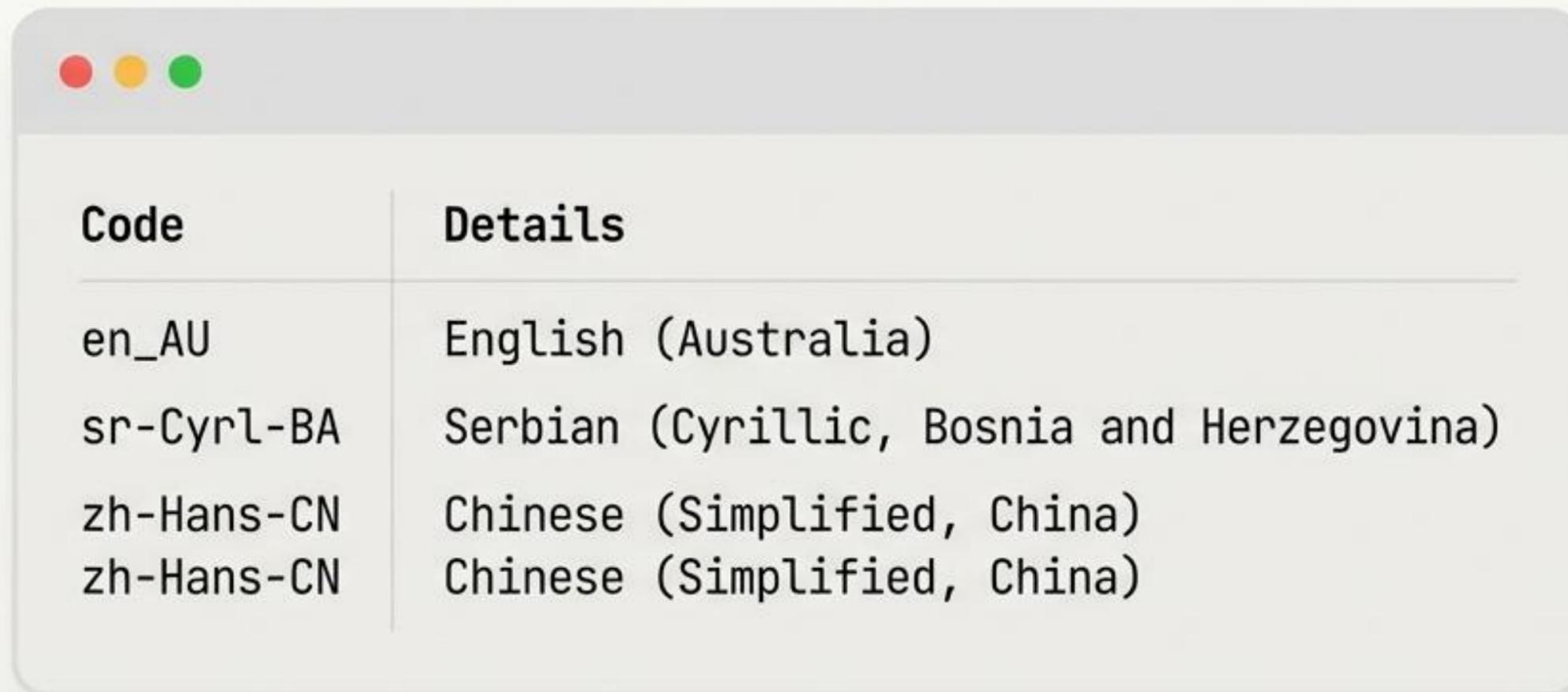— Jiménez-Crespo (2019)

INTERACTIVE

MULTIMODAL

DIGITAL

The Fundamental Unit: What is a "Locale"?

Locale = Language + Region + Culture

Code	Details
en_AU	English (Australia)
sr-Cyrl-BA	Serbian (Cyrillic, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
zh-Hans-CN	Chinese (Simplified, China)
zh-Hans-CN	Chinese (Simplified, China)

Did You Know?

Microsoft differentiates between a "Neutral Locale" (e.g., "en") and a "Specific Locale" (e.g., "en_US"). This specificity is crucial in the Windows Language Code Identifier (LCID) system.

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The Emergence of an Industry

1980s

US Software Origins

1990s

The FIGS-J Era

French, Italian, German, Spanish, Japanese

Today

The Simship Era

Simultaneous Shipment

The Old Way: TEP
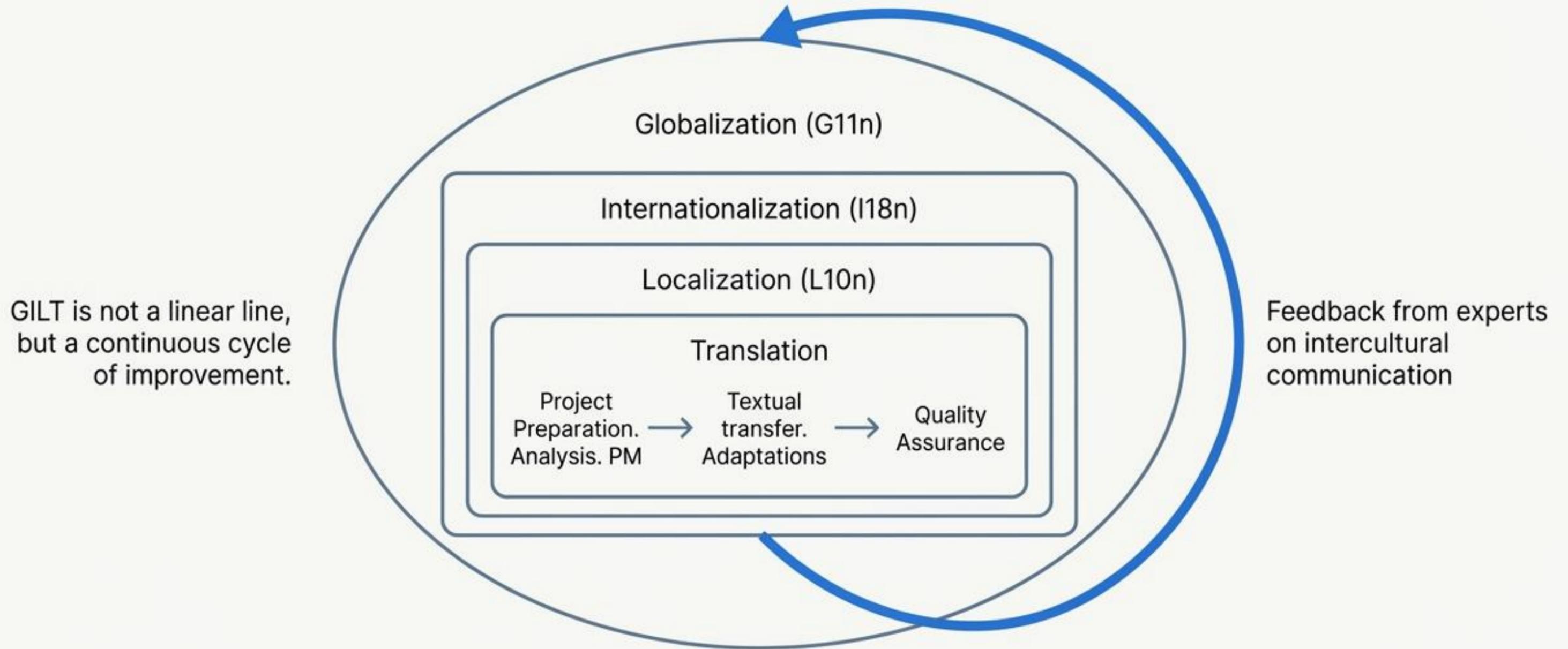
Translate-Edit-Publish

Failed for digital products because text was immersed in code.

The Modern Way

Resource Separation

Text is separated from code, allowing simultaneous engineering and translation.

The Interdependence of the GILT Cycle

Globalization (G11n)

Internationalization (I18n)

Localization (L10n)

Translation

Project Preparation. Analysis. PM → Textual transfer. Adaptations → Quality Assurance

GILT is not a linear line, but a continuous cycle of improvement.

Feedback from experts on intercultural communication

5 Prototypical Features of Modern Localization

Based on Jiménez-Crespo (2016)

Specific Digital Genres

Games, Apps, Websites.

Digital Nature

Content embedded in code; non-linear reading.

Tech & QA

Requires Localization Quality Assurance (LQA).
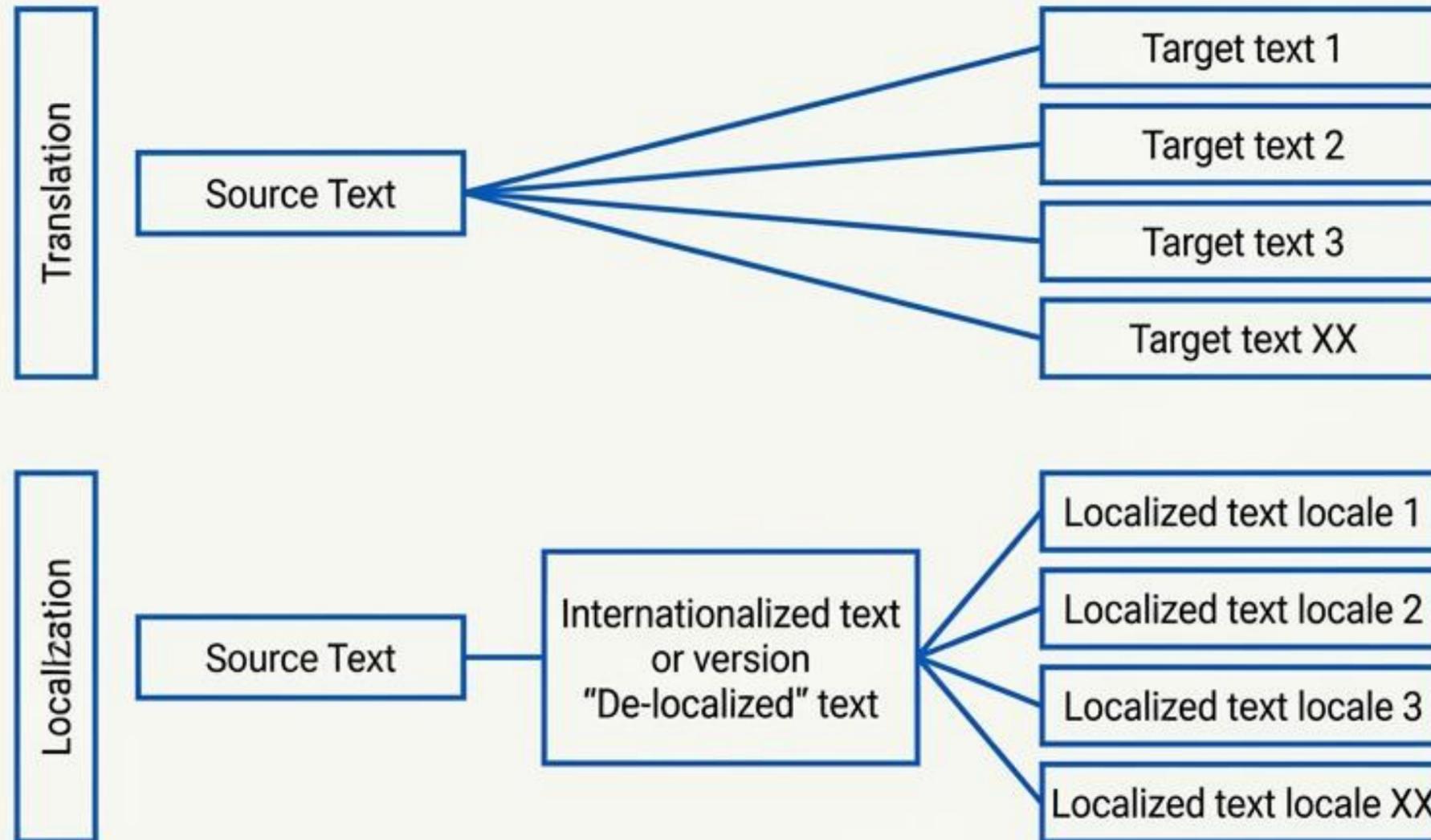
Project Management

Large multilingual projects with complex components.

Collaboration

Engineers + Linguists + Managers working together.

The "Internationalized" Text
From Source to De-localized Pivot to Target

De-localization: Purposely removing culture-specific features to create a neutral version for faster simultaneous translation.

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"We need to **hit a home run** with this new software release."	"We need this new software release to be **a huge success**."	**Idioms:** An idiom primarily understood by those familiar with baseball culture is replaced with a universal and direct expression of success.
"Our massive sale starts right after **Thanksgiving**!"	"Our massive sale starts at the **end of November**!"	**Cultural Events / Holidays:** A specific holiday unique to certain cultures is changed to a clear time frame that can be understood globally.
"The nearest gas station is 5 **miles** away, just past **Wendy's**."	"The nearest fuel station is 8 **kilometers** away, just past the **fast-food restaurant**."	**Brands and Units of Measurement:** A brand with branches only in specific regions is changed to a general concept; a local unit of measurement is converted to the universal metric system.
"He was complaining like a total **Karen** at the **DMV**."	"He was complaining **aggressively** at the **government office**."	**Pop Culture and Institutions:** Internet slang specific to US culture and an abbreviation for a local government agency are replaced with general concepts that the translator can easily transfer to the target language.

Reverse Localization

When "Foreignness" is a Feature

Standard Localization

Reverse Localization

結獄ゲーム

ENGLISH SUBTITLES

PRESS START
OPTIONS
LOAD GAME

EN–JP

English Text

Culturally Adapted

Goal: Total Adaptation.

Goal: Preserve Foreign Aesthetic.

Case Study: Japanese Video Games

Products adapted for North America are sometimes sold back in Japan with English subtitles to appeal to fandom cultures who value the "cool factor" of the foreign interface.

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Foreignization as a Marketing Strategy (Exoticism)

According to Reinhard Schäler's industry definitions, this is the deliberate preservation or addition of "foreign" elements related to the product's origin when adapting it for a target audience. The goal is to use the product's original identity as an indicator of prestige, authenticity, or quality.

Application: A French cosmetics brand intentionally using French expressions (e.g., *Eau de Parfum*) or a French accent in an advertisement prepared for the American or Turkish market. The aim here is not to fully localize the text or product, but rather to emphasize its "Frenchness.«

The Boomerang Effect (Return to the Original Market)

Common especially in the video game and entertainment industry, this occurs when a product is first localized for a global market and then re-released in its home country in this "localized" form.
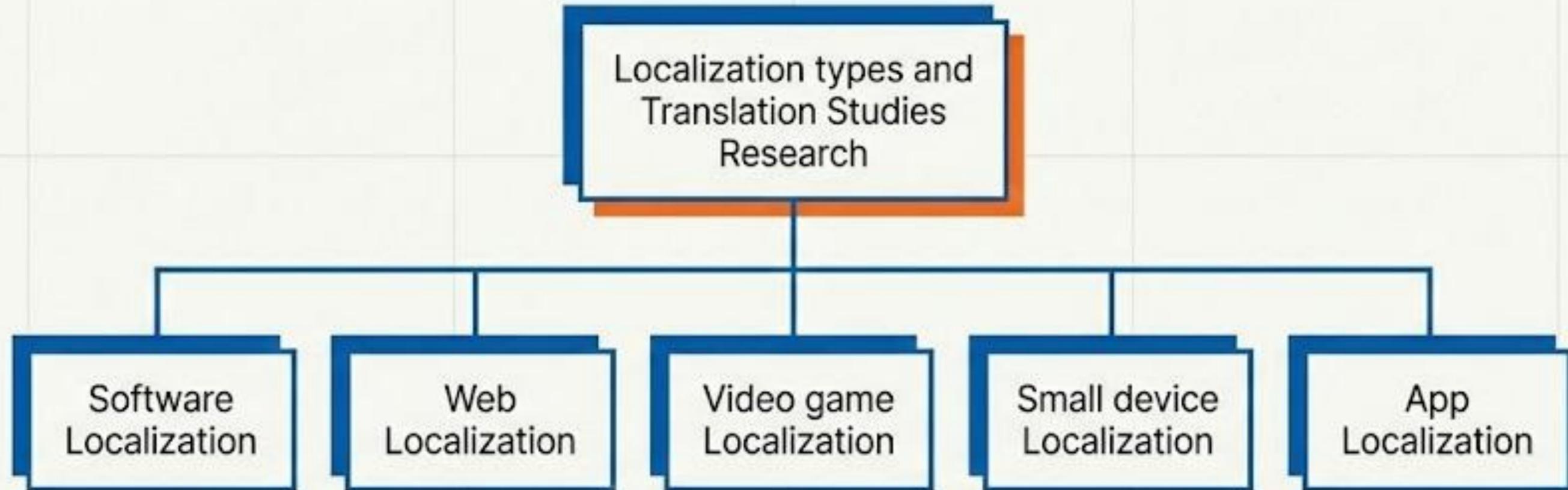
Application: A game developed in Japan (e.g., the Final Fantasy series) being released for the Western market with English voiceovers and cultural adaptations, and then the same game being resold in Japan under the title "International Version" with English voiceovers and Japanese subtitles. This is done to offer local players a different, "Westernized" experience.

Minor to Major Orientation (Local to Global)

Localization is generally done from major (global) languages like English to more local (minor) languages. Reverse localization also describes situations where this flow is inverted. It is the process of adapting content belonging to a highly specific and local market for the global market.

Application: Taking local content that caters only to the Turkish market or a specific Middle Eastern culture and expanding it globally (into English). How specific concepts belonging to the local culture will be transferred to a global audience is the main focus of reverse localization in this process.

Areas of Research in Localization Studies

Localization types and Translation Studies Research

- Software Localization
- Web Localization
- Video game Localization
- Small device Localization
- App Localization

The 'Tech Turn': The field has expanded from desktop software to include web, mobile, and intelligent assistants.
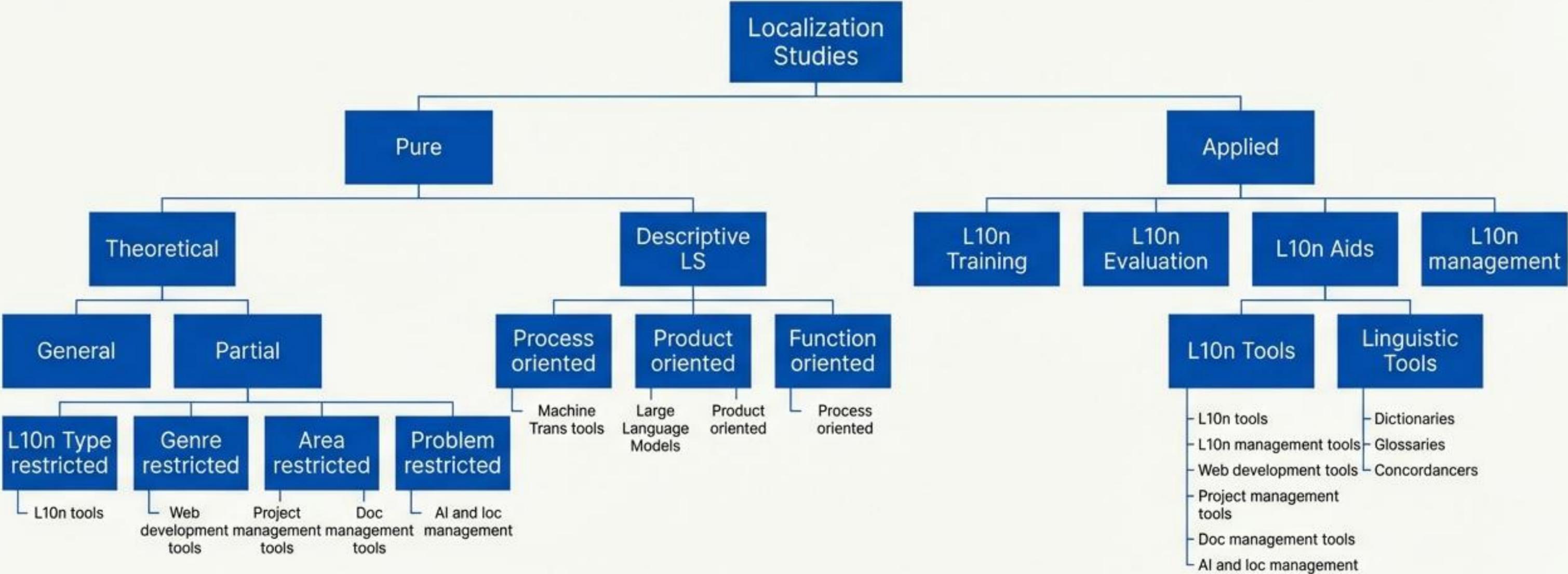
Mapping the Discipline

Figure 2.4 Proposed map of Localization Studies by Jiménez-Crespo (2013: 141). Adapted from the map of TS from Holmes (1988) and Toury (1995: 10).

Applied Localization: Tools and Evolution

Zooming into the "Applied" branch

Training

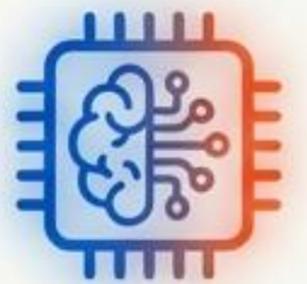Education of localizers and curriculum development.

Evaluation

Quality Assurance (QA) and criticism.

Tools (The Tech Stack)

CAT Tools & Terminology Management

Neural Machine Translation (NMT)

Generative Large Language Models (LLMs)

The Human-Machine Collaboration

"*Localization* is a lucrative, dynamic and interprofessional field, often involving marketing, design, software engineering, as well as linguistic processes."
— Pym (2011)

The Global Intersection

Concluding Summary

Localization has evolved from a niche engineering task in the 1980s to a massive global industry.

It is the precise calibration of Code, Culture, and Commerce.

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