

## Translating call-to-action Texts in Localization from English into Bulgarian

*Maria Todorova*

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” (Bulgaria)

*Мария Тодорова*

Софийски университет „Св. Климент Охридски“ (България)

*Maria Todorova*. TRANSLATING CALL-TO-ACTION TEXTS IN LOCALIZATION  
FROM ENGLISH INTO BULGARIAN

<https://doi.org/10.60055/phl.2023.44.51-63>

**Abstract.** This paper focuses on the translation of call-to-action (CTA) texts in localization from English into Bulgarian, providing insights into the most commonly applied translation solutions, the linguistic and extralinguistic factors that affect these solutions, as well as into matters of conventionality in the CTA text type. To provide those insights an analysis of three websites of digital platforms that belong to the same domain (air travel) and that have been localized from English into Bulgarian is performed. All CTA texts from the English homepages of these three platforms are excerpted in parallel with their equivalents from the Bulgarian versions thereof with the aim of identifying potential conventions and patterns. When any inconsistent solutions are encountered, they are analysed within their superstructural context so as to determine the potential circumstances that have led to their use.

The paper contributes to the study of translation problems in localization from English into Bulgarian, outlining issues related to one of the key text types in digital media. However, further research is needed on translation problems related to other text types within the digital genres in order to build a comprehensive picture of localization-specific translation problems in the English-to-Bulgarian language pair.

**Keywords:** call-to-action, software localization, website localization, digital genres, translation problems

*Мария Тодорова. ПРЕВОДЪТ НА ТЕКСТОВЕ, ПРИЗОВАВАЩИ КЪМ ДЕЙСТВИЕ, ПРИ ЛОКАЛИЗАЦИЯ ОТ АНГЛИЙСКИ НА БЪЛГАРСКИ ЕЗИК*

**Резюме.** Статията е посветена на превода на текстове, призоваващи към действие (от английски: *call-to-action texts*, или *СТА*), при локализация от английски на български език, като целта е да се опишат най-често прилаганите преводни решения, езиковите и извънезиковите фактори, които оказват влияние при вземането на тези решения, както и да се очертае конвенционалността на текстовете от типа *СТА*. За да се стигне до заключения по тези въпроси, са анализирани три уебсайта на дигитални платформи, които принадлежат към една и съща област (въздушен транспорт) и които са локализиращи от английски на български език. Всички призоваващи към действие текстове от английските начални страници на тези три платформи са ексцерпирани паралелно с техните еквиваленти от българските версии на страниците с цел да се идентифицират потенциални конвенции, зависимости и модели. Откритите несъответствия с тези конвенции и зависимости са анализирани в рамките на суперструктурния им контекст, за да се определят потенциалните обстоятелства, довели до употребата им.

Статията допринася към изследванията в областта на проблемите при превода при локализация от английски на български език, като очертава въпроси, свързани с един от ключовите типове текст в дигиталните медии. Въпреки това са необходими допълнителни изследвания на проблемите при превода, свързани с останалите типове текст, употребявани в рамките на дигиталните жанрове, за да се изгради цялостна картина на специфичните за локализацията проблеми при превода в двойката английски – български език.

**Ключови думи:** призив за действие, локализация на софтуер, локализация на уебсайтове, дигитални жанрове, проблеми при превода

*Research/Научно изследване*

## **Introduction**

Website and software localization aims to adapt digital products for a specific audience determined by its locale. The ultimate goal is to create in users an intuitive experience of the product as if it has been created in the user's locale in the first place. As a process, localization can be applied to several general types of media: software, websites, mobile phone applications, video games, as well as a fifth set of sub-categories that can be grouped under the cap of "multimedia advertising" (Ardelean, 2014, p. 26). Although it emerged as early as the 1970s, initially, localization mainly dealt with software applications and relevant technical documentation, "accelerating in volume and intensity with the mass commodification of personal desktop computers in the mid to late 1990s" (Folaron, 2006). Before resulting in an ever-growing need for localization, this acceleration gave rise to various new text types, communicative purposes, and genres.

When discussing the pragmatic quality of translation solutions in localization, Jimenez-Crespo refers to the conventionality in genres and translation adequacy in finding corresponding conventions in source and target languages (Jimenez-Crespo, 2009, p. 68). Conventions in the website/digital genres, however, when it comes to globally and commercially minor languages such as Bulgarian, should be approached with caution. Even if generic conventions do exist in regard to the medium, they have been heavily influenced by localization practices, because at the dawn of localization “the majority of software and web applications [were] being developed [in English] in the United States” (Esselink, 2000, p. 4). Hence, most revolutionary digital products with their underlying generic conventions have originally appeared in English and the latter have further been established in other languages through finding functionally equivalent solutions to already existing paradigms in English originals. As Postolea puts it, “especially when their target language is lesser known and terminologically standardised, specialised translators, just like journalists or authors, are creators of language too [...] From this perspective, specialised translators have responsibilities towards the target language too and they should be wary of the risk of introducing loose translations and poor style into the target context.” (2016, 63) Later on, in her review of the relationship between genre analysis and translation studies, Biel points out their importance of focusing on text types in translation training. She then goes on to specify the main role of genre analysis in translation studies as that of “identifying differences in generic structures, conventions and expectations across languages and cultures” (2018, 151–155).

Nevertheless, research into text types, conventions, and translation problems related to localization into Bulgarian can be defined as scarce at best and this further surfaces in translation programmes curricula in Bulgaria, where localization is rarely mentioned out of the scope of technical-competence disciplines. More systemic research is needed related to specialized translation for localization, which belongs to the greater field of Applied Translation Studies, in order to inform the creation of new disciplines or improve existing curricula.

In the current paper, we focus on a text type found in digital platforms or websites, namely the text type of call-to-action (CTA) texts. CTA texts are essential elements of websites and applications as they encourage user engagement and drive conversions (Investopedia, 2022). Examples of such texts are the standard “SEARCH”, “CLOSE” and “NEXT” buttons which you would find in almost any piece of software. Our aim will be to answer the following research questions:

- What translation solutions are applied in CTA translation from English into Bulgarian?
- Can we speak of conventionality found therein?
- Can any factors affecting the translation solutions regarding CTAs be identified?

- Based on those findings can a set of guidelines be proposed for the translation of this text type?

In order to investigate the translation problems in the localization of CTA buttons from English to Bulgarian and their solutions as applied in real localization projects, we will analyse a set of CTAs and their translation across three different platforms. Such an analysis will help identify best practices in translation for localization from English to Bulgarian that can inform translation training curricula, as well as future localization-related textbooks and style guides.

## CTAs Selection

CTAs in general products and websites can vary based on the product or website's intended functionality. Thus, in order to achieve a high level of generalisability of the study, the CTAs analysed are excerpted from the homepages of localized platforms as the homepage is a critical element of any website, regardless of its specific purpose and domain. Furthermore, to achieve comparability, all three platforms chosen are of the same type, namely transport booking platforms focused on air travel. The platforms are selected based on their visibility and are the three top results on Google when searching for plane ticket platforms localized from English into Bulgarian<sup>1</sup>: Skyscanner, Esky and Kiwi.

The main limitation of the study is the lack of open access to the technical files and procedural context in which the websites analysed were localized in. This is a significant problem in localization research since the main subject of such research are privately-owned digital products (websites, software, applications) where deep-dive research can be conducted on a single-case basis within terms determined by the owner. Nevertheless, conclusions can still be drawn in regard to the translations produced, taking into account both linguistic and extralinguistic factors that are standard for the medium and the textual components analysed.

## Analysis

One of the first findings in our analysis of the three homepages was that the CTAs found can be divided into two main groups:

- **Navigation-oriented CTAs:** buttons and links that the user is prompted to click on or names of fields the user is prompted to complete that correspond to the navigation of the digital medium.

- **Marketing-oriented CTAs:** call to action in headings and informative texts, such as “Compare and book cheap flights from anywhere to everywhere” (Skyscanner), where the action implied is rather marketing-oriented and promotes one of the unique selling points of the platform at hand.

---

<sup>1</sup> Airline-specific websites excluded.

The excerpted CTAs can be systematised as follows:

- eSky<sup>2</sup> – 23 in total, divided into 13 navigation-oriented and 10 marketing-oriented ones;
- Skyscanner<sup>3</sup> – 23 in total, divided into 13 navigation-oriented and 10 marketing-oriented ones;
- Kiwi<sup>4</sup> – 30 in total, divided into 16 navigation-oriented and 14 marketing-oriented ones.

Due to their pragmatic function, CTAs in English always contain a verb in the imperative mood. Our research showed, however, that its Bulgarian equivalent might not necessarily be a verb, and even when it is, further translation decisions have to be made for an equivalent to be identified. We will discuss each platform's solutions individually, trying to identify conventions, patterns or inconsistencies and compare or contrast them with the solutions in the other platforms where possible. In one of the cases, a further comparison is made to the conventions observed in top Bulgarian-original websites.

### eSky

In eSky, the prevalent solution (83% of all) in both types of CTAs is a verb in the imperative where all verbs are in the singular, implying an individual addressee, i.e. the specific user accessing the homepage. For instance, "Continue with Google" is rendered as "Продължи с Google", and "Register" as "Регистрирай се". This choice speaks of a unified approach focusing on familiarity with the platform's users. An argument can be made here about the platform shortening the distance too hastily and risking a tone of voice that can come out as intrusive and rude, yet eSky is the most visited platform in Bulgaria out of the three analysed<sup>5</sup>, its ranking showing that no harm has been done to its popularity in terms of competition.

Three exceptions (17%) to the consistently used equivalent were identified – all translated as nouns, as follows:

- "Log in" – a navigation-oriented CTA translated as „Вход“;
- "Check details" – a navigation-oriented CTA translated as „Детайли“;
- "Depart" and "Arrive" – navigation-oriented CTAs translated as „Отиване“ and „Връщане“.

In the case of "Log in" – a CTA present at any account-based platform, the inconsistency is possibly due to an existing convention. Although, out of the 3 platforms analysed only 2 opt for „Вход“ as opposed to "Влизане" that Skyscanner chooses, a comparative check of the 40 top-ranking non-localized but Bulgarian-

---

<sup>2</sup> www.esky.bg, accessed 11 March 2023

<sup>3</sup> www.skyscanner.net, accessed 11 March 2023

<sup>4</sup> www.kiwi.com/bg/, accessed 11 March 2023

<sup>5</sup> Data from <https://www.similarweb.com/> for August 2021

original websites on SimilarWeb, shows that 80% use „Вход“ and 10% use „Влез“, 7.5% use a combination of both „Вход“ and „Влез“, and 2.5% use „Влезте“ (only *dnevnik.bg* uses this CTA). What is more, a terminology search for the phrase “log in” within the Microsoft products included in the Microsoft localization termbase shows a prevalent preference for „Влизане“ as a single CTA (i.e. a button), but also an inconsistency between „Влизане“ and „Влезте“ in longer-phrased CTAs<sup>6</sup>. The observations made so far can be summarized as follows:

- Although a universal convention for the “Log in” CTA cannot be singled out across the localized and Bulgarian-original websites observed, the „Вход“ equivalent is the most common within top-ranking Bulgarian-original websites. Their higher visibility and reach are prerequisites for the establishing of „Вход“ as an equivalent of preference, hence, its use in eSky and Kiwi.

- Nevertheless, one of the most prominent global digital product owners, Microsoft, opts for the verbal noun „Влизане“ in the same context. As a tech giant, Microsoft can be considered a trend/convention-setter in localization – it not only offers a terminology database for any of the languages it offers its product in, but also provides open access to its localization style guides for these languages – resources no Bulgarian institutional body provides.

- Apart from the two nouns discussed above, there are two verb solutions that are less frequently observed: „Влезте“ in Microsoft’s database and in one of the top-ranking Bulgarian websites, and „Влез“ in seven of the Bulgarian-original top-ranking websites. Once again, we encounter the juxtaposition of singular/plural or formal/informal. In this context, a nominal solution can be further justified as one that overcomes this duality, maintaining a neutral approach. Yet, the nominal solution removes the “call” from the “call to action”, the text remaining a descriptive signifier rather than a prompt to action.

These observations demonstrate a lack of universality in CTA conventions – in localization from English to Bulgarian, but also in Bulgarian-original products. Such a lack can be due to the several linguistic asymmetries between English and Bulgarian, namely the paradigm of inflections in Bulgarian imperative verbs as opposed to the non-inflected English one, which further extends to the asymmetry in relation to the category of number and the choice of register, or tone of voice as put in marketing terms.

The second inconsistent solution „Детайли“ might have another, technical rather than linguistic explanation. Limited character space due to inflexible design is one of the main challenges in localization into Bulgarian (Todorova 2022) and if we look at the CTA design in this case, we will see that the button the text belongs to is not flexible – it does not decrease or increase in size proportionally to the text

---

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/language/Search?&searchTerm=log%20in&langID=93&Source=true&productid=0>

it contains. Testing some alternative phrasings shows how „Детайли“ can have indeed been chosen due to visual considerations. (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. The eSky “Check details” CTA in English and Bulgarian; and alternatives

The third inconsistent solution is rather standard as the CTAs are not actual links or buttons, but headings to date fields. As such, an alternative in line with the prevalent solution observed in the homepage would have required the use of a preposition, which might be the reason it was avoided (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Third inconsistent translation pair and alternatives

## Skyscanner

In Skyscanner, the prevalent solution (100%) in marketing-oriented CTAs is also a verb in the imperative, however, here all verbs are in the plural, implying either the general audience as an addressee or an individual user addressed in a polite tone. In the case of navigation-oriented CTAs, however, there does not seem to be a consistent approach. 46% of the CTAs in this category have been translated as the CTAs from the first category and 54% have been translated as nouns (Table 1).

**Table 1. Navigation-oriented CTAs in Skyscanner.net’s homepage**

PLURAL IMPERATIVE		NOUN	
Explore everywhere	Пътувайте навсякъде	Log in	Вли...(Влизане)
Add date	Добавете дата	Continue with email	Продължаване с имейл
Find out more	Научете повече	Search	Търсене
Explore flight deals	Разгледайте оферти за евтини самолетни билети	Compare cheap hotels	Сравняване на евтини хотели
Work with us	Работете с нас	Compare cheap car hire	Сравняване на евтини автомобили под наем
Advertise with us	Рекламирайте при нас	Explore	Разглеждане
		Save	Запис

It is difficult to identify any consistent pattern in these translation solutions. The only solution that seems consistent is that CTAs consisting of a verb only are always translated as nouns. However, their number (4) is hardly sufficient to draw this as a conclusion for the overall strategy adopted in the website.

Moreover, when the CTAs expand to include objects or adjuncts, no pattern can be identified as we can see such instances in both nominal and plural imperative solutions. Three of the CTAs are even part of the same modal (Fig. 3) and follow the same syntactic structure, yet, they have been translated inconsistently – i.e. they have been considered as individual translation units rather than part of a bigger coherent whole.

Разгледайте оферти за евтини самолетни билети →  
 Сравняване на евтини хотели →  
 Сравняване на евтини автомобили под наем →

*Fig. 3. A set of navigation-oriented CTAs in Skyscanner.net*

Yet another example portraying the lack of stricter quality assurance is the “Log in” CTA. The equivalent „Влизане“, Microsoft’s term of choice, is used. However, the design limitations have not been taken into consideration as the text does not show fully leaving the user to rely on the icons for navigation and context (Fig.

4). An alternative solution such as „Вход“ might have been the better, functional choice here.



Fig. 4. Skyscanner.net's homepage top banner in Bulgarian

## Kiwi

In Kiwi, although the prevalent solution for marketing-oriented CTAs is a verb in the imperative, as in the rest of the platforms, and in the plural (or in the formal register), as in Skyscanner, two exceptions are found, where nouns have been used: “Download boarding passes” translated as „Изтегляне на бордните карти“ and “Get exclusive offers and prices” translated as „Получаване на информация за специални предложения и цени“. Those inconsistencies are part of a bulleted section listing the advantages of the platform’s app, where the rest of the items are all nouns (Fig. 5), so a strive for consistency can be the rationale behind opting for an equivalent that does not follow the strategy adopted in the other CTAs – as opposed to what was observed earlier in Skyscanner.

### Възползвайте се максимално от услугите на Kiwi.com с нашето мобилно приложение

С приложението на Kiwi.com ще намерите следващото си приключение само с едно докосване. С мобилното приложение на Kiwi.com ще получите достъп до скрити функционалности и специални предложения.

- ✓ Изтегляне на бордните карти
- ✓ Резервации с едно щракване
- ✓ Получаване на информация за специални предложения и цени
- ✓ Известията за пътувания



Fig. 5. App features modal in Kiwi.com's Bulgarian homepage

In regard to navigation-oriented CTAs, however, Kiwi demonstrates even greater inconsistency than Skyscanner, rendering 44% with a noun, 31% with a plural imperative, 19% with a singular imperative (Table 2), and 6% (1 CTA) left untranslated which will not be included in the analysis.

**Table 2. Navigation-oriented CTAs in Kiwi.com’s homepage**

	PLURAL IMPERATIVE		NOUN		SINGULAR IMPERATIVE
Continue to your account	Продължете към своя профил	Sign in	Вход	Continue	Продължи
Sign in or register with your email	Влезте или се регистрирайте със своя имейл адрес	Create an account	Създаване на профил	Show more	Покажи повече
Discover	Разгледайте	Subscribe to newsletter	Абониране за бюлетина	Continue with one of these:	Продължи по един от следните начини
Explore deals	Вижте офертите	Explore	Разглеждане		
Find out more	Научете повече	Check accommodation with Booking.com	Проверка на настаняването чрез Booking.com		
		Manage my booking	Управление на моите резервации		
		Log in/ Register	Влизане/ Регистриране		

Once again, no strict structural pattern can be identified in the excerpted translation solutions, neither can any patterns based on extralinguistic factors. On the contrary, the verbs “Discover” and “Explore” whose CTA modals seem to perform similar functionalities have been translated as a verb („Разгледайте“) and a noun („Разглеждане“) based on the same root. Yet, “Explore deals” has been translated with a verb with a different root: „Вижте офертите“, where if any factor played part, it must have been the character-length limitation of the design (Fig. 6) which would not have allowed for alternatives such as „Разгледайте офертите“ or „Разглеждане на офертите“.

Want to fly for even less?

Search our best deals, price drops, and travel hacks.

Explore deals

Желаете ли да летите още по-евтино?

Разгледайте нашите специални предложения, намаления и хакове за пътуване.

Вижте офертите

*Fig. 6. Deals modal in Kiwi.com’s English and Bulgarian websites*

A further inconsistency in Kiwi's homepage are the three CTAs translated in the singular imperative. In the case of "Show more" translated as „Покажи повече“, it could be argued that the original call-to-action differs from the rest to begin with, as, despite being a button, it does not really address the user, but rather represents a means for the user to address the platform itself. With this inanimate addressee implied, an inconsistent singular solution provides for differentiation of addressee and functional directionality. The question arises, however, if such an approach can (and should) be adopted for CTAs that are not explicitly addressing the platform or the user. For instance, "Search" and "Save" which we encountered in Skyscanner can rather be actions performed by the platform and not the user.

The second and third singular translation solutions, "Continue" rendered as „Продължи“ and "Continue with one of these" rendered as „Продължи по един от следните начини“, however, cannot be rationalized in the same terms and are rather a matter of inconsistency. If we analyse their contextual superstructures (Fig. 7), we see that they are in apparent incongruity with the rest of the CTAs therein. What is more, the factors potentially leading to inconsistent solutions, such as character limitations or the platform being the intended individual addressee, cannot be applied here – a longer solution such as „Продължете“ would have worked and even if the platform could be perceived as an addressee to "Continue", this idea stands in contrast with the rest of the CTAs in terms of cohesion.

## Продължете към своя профил

Получавайте по-добри предложения, запаметявайте данните си за лесно резервиране и преглеждайте всичките си пътувания на едно място.

Продължи по един от следните начини:

✉ Имейл >

f Facebook >

G Google >

🍏 Apple >

Резервирали сте с грешен имейл адрес?

## Продължете към своя профил

Влезте или се регистрирайте със своя имейл адрес

напр. vash@email.com

Продължи

Fig. 7. Inconsistent and incohesive CTAs in Kiwi.com's Bulgarian homepage

## Conclusions

The analysis showed that marketing-oriented CTAs, with some exceptions, are translated consistently with a verb in the imperative. This verb can either be singular or plural and this solution seems to depend on the overall brand approach of the platform at hand. The plural form can also be interpreted as a polite form of address, especially in the case of Kiwi.com, where some of the CTAs contained the respective formal pronouns (such as „Ви“ and „Вие“).

When it comes to navigation-oriented CTAs, more factors seem to be at play and therefore more inconsistency and variability in solutions is seen. Again, there were two main delineations based on plurality or formality, but there was also a third type which completely abandons the verb phrase in favour of a nominal solution.

Several factors that can affect the choice of functional equivalent to a CTA in translation from English into Bulgarian were identified:

- Preferred tone of voice – this would depend on the platform’s market positioning, target audience and intended brand image.
- Space limitations due to design inflexibility – the translation might have to conform to a particular character limit.
- Superstructural context – if the CTA is part of a bigger structure that includes other CTAs, it is important to keep those consistent and preserve cohesion.
- Intended addressee – if the platform could be perceived as the intended addressee of a CTA, this can lead to differentiation between 2 types of addresses and therefore two translation strategies used.
- Functionality – it is important to consider whether the translation solution would preserve or damage the functionality behind the original CTA, e.g. whether a noun would be enough of a prompt to the user.

With the level of inconsistency encountered in the solutions analysed, it is difficult to speak of conventionality in this text type. There seem to be some solutions that are more common than others, especially when it comes to standard CTAs that exist in most digital domains, but even in those, various solutions can still be found across commonly visited platforms.

Due to the lack of conventionality, it is impossible to set a clear universal standard for the translation of CTAs in localization from English into Bulgarian. One main conclusion can be drawn as a guideline, however, and it is related to the importance of consistency and functionality. It is crucial for translators to be acquainted with the factors that can affect the functionality of their solutions so that they can provide translations of higher quality, functionality and consistence. Being aware of all the factors at play and of common solutions for this text type will help them make more informed choices and if necessary adopt different strategies for different contexts.

The lack of conventionality found highlights the need for research into localization-specific translation problems in the English-Bulgarian language pair, which

would be valuable in the creation in translation training materials and in the potential establishing of more unified standards for texts in digital media.

## Bibliography

- Ardelean, C. (2014), *Localisation: The New Challenge for Translators*, Editura Conspress, Bucharest.
- Biel, L. (2018), Genre analysis and translation, in Malmkjoer, K. (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 151–164.
- Esselink, B. (2000), *A Practical Guide to Localization*, John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam/Philadelphia.
- Folaron, D. (2006), Putting the cart behind the horse: Rethinking localization quality management, in Dunne, K. J. (ed.), *Perspectives on Localization*, John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 95–117.
- Kenton, W. (2022), What a Call to Action (CTA) s and How It Works, available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/call-action-cta.asp> (accessed 10 March 2023)
- Jimenez-Crespo, M. A. (2009), The evaluation of pragmatic and functionalist aspects in localization: towards a holistic approach to Quality Assurance, in *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization*, Volume 1, Issue 1, John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 60–93.
- Postolea, S. (2016), Translating in a Specialised Context: Challenges and Risks, in *Buletinul Institutului Politehnic din Iasi* (Bulletin of the Polytechnic Institute of Iasi), LXII(LXVI), f.1, TUIASI, Iasi, pp. 51–66.
- Todorova, M. (2022), Translation Problems in Localization from English into Bulgarian: the case of ferryhopper.com (case study), in *Paisiy Hilendarsky University of Plovdiv – Bulgaria Research Papers – Languages and Literature*, vol. 59, University of Plovdiv, Plovdiv, pp. 321–331.

**Maria Todorova, PhD**

mivanovat@uni-sofia.bg

ORCID ID:0000-0002-8167-4757

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

15 Tzar Osvoboditel Blvd., Sofia 1504

Bulgaria

**Мария Тодорова, д-р**

mivanovat@uni-sofia.bg

ORCID ID:0000-0002-8167-4757

Софийски университет „Св. Климент Охридски“

бул. „Цар Освободител“ 15, София 1504

България