

A Comparative Study between English Version of Facebook and its Sinhalese Translated Version: Suggestions for Improvement

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Facebook has become one of the most prominent social media applications in the world. At present, it has opened up the translation application to every user in order to translate Facebook into every major language on earth and the users can contribute to the translation of their particular native language. This is an attempt to be more user-friendly by offering Facebook in the users respective native languages. Consequently, Facebook has been translated into Sinhalese, which is helpful to the users who are not competent in English. Thus, this study intends to compare the English version of Facebook with the Sinhalese translation to measure the quality of translation and to suggest further improvements. The first forty common phrases appear in Facebook were chosen and compared with their Sinhalese translation with specific focus on word-for-word translations and transliteration. Later they were categorized under unidiomatic translations and meaningful translations. In addition, 40 users were chosen from University of Kelaniya to record their language preference when using Facebook. The analysis indicated that 95% of Facebook terms are word-for-word translations, for instance “home” is translated as *නිවහන* which is the direct equivalent for ‘Home’ in Sinhalese. 5% are transliterations, for instance “Cookies” is translated into Sinhalese as *කුකීස්*. Among the selected samples, 50% are unidiomatic translations, for example “pages feed” has been translated as *පිටුවලෝඡනය* and 50% are meaningful translations, for instance “details about you” has been translated into Sinhalese as *ඔබ ගැන විස්තර*. In addition, it was identified that gender difference is not shown in the Sinhalese translated sentences. Meanwhile, user preferences indicated that 77% does not require Sinhalese translated version, 18% had attempted to use it but stopped because the Sinhalese version was unfamiliar, and only 5% are using the Sinhalese translated version. In conclusion, having Facebook in Sinhalese is an opportunity to establish Sri Lankan identity in social media; however, it is vital to increase the usage of the Sinhalese version. Thus, it is essential to revise the Sinhalese version of Facebook to develop a more natural and familiar translated version that will automatically increase the number of users having Facebook in Sinhalese.

Keywords: Comparison, English, Facebook, Sinhalese, Translation