

## On the Translation of Video Games

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### ABSTRACT

Since the development by the MIT of the very first video game called *Spacewar* in 1962, the video games industry has evolved dramatically to become a worldwide phenomenon worth billions. Although most games are developed in English and Japanese, the new global market and the great investment required have pushed developers and publishers to translate their games into many other languages. This has brought about a new field of specialisation in translation, commonly known in the industry as 'game localisation'. Without much debate on the topic, terminology has spread in all directions, with new terms being coined, and old terms being appropriated by the industry to convey new realities. The aim of this article is precisely to explore the terminology and clarify terms to help future research in this area of translation studies.

### KEYWORDS

localisation, localization, video game, entertainment software, game

### BIOGRAPHY

Miguel Bernal was born in Spain in 1971. He has been involved in education and translation since 1995. He is now a Lecturer in Audiovisual Translation for the University of Surrey and Roehampton University in the UK. He is currently writing his thesis on 'The Translation of Video Games' in Roehampton University. Miguel Bernal has a BA in English Studies (Universidad de Alicante), an MA in Hispanic Literature (University of Rhode Island), and an MPhil in Audiovisual Translation (Universidad de Alicante). Miguel Bernal is a member of TILP, LRC and ESIST. He has recently created L4G, a meeting place for people involved in the translation of video games (<http://groups.msn.com/L4G>).

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## 1. Introduction

The twentieth century saw the emergence and popularisation of a new branch within the leisure industry: the electronic and interactive entertainment. Great technological improvements have taken us from the early pinball machines in the late 1920s, to today's third generation consoles. The simple off-hour recreations of computer engineers in the 1960s have now developed into a very complex and lucrative industry. ESA, the Entertainment Software Association in the US, states in its consumer survey published in May 2006 many interesting results, for example: sales were over 7 billion dollars, the average game player age is 33, and 38% of players are female. This is a very different image to the stereotypical image of the teenage male gamer. Video gaming is now a global phenomenon capable of producing as much revenue and anticipation as the film industry. Translation has played a key part in the exponential revenue increase, so much so that, according to McArthy (2005: 146):

the localization process, which has historically been a simple matter of tacking on a few quick text translations at the end of the development

process, has become an integral part of the development cycle, and so needs to be addressed from the outset.

Entertainment software is designed nowadays to accommodate different languages and cultures, allowing, on the one hand, the simultaneous release of titles, and on the other, the interaction in real-time of thousands of online gamers.

Globalisation has influenced all economic sectors and has increased the demand for translation services like never before. Globalised industries seem to require a variety of different services from translators, which is opening up new specialisations within language transfer itself. We hear terms like 'localisation' (Chandler, 2005) and 'transcreation' (Mangiron and O'Hagan, 2006) associated with the translation of utility and entertainment software. The terms are not actually new but they have been revamped by economy and marketing professionals due to the new nature of our globalised market. The adoption of these terms by translation vendors points at two important issues: the need for a review of translation studies terminology, and, perhaps, a shift in the role that some translators and translated products are expected to play within a globalised 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

This article will try to analyse and clarify some of the terms used in the industry with a view to locating the translation of video games within translation studies.

## **2. A bit of history**

The first game to be partly electronic was the pinball machine which became what it is today in 1931 (BMIgaming), but purely electronic games did not appear until the late 1960s. In fact, the history of video games is closely linked to the history of computers themselves (Graham, 1982:36), since the same electronic computers that were made in the 1940s in order to crack enemy codes and track the position of planes from radar reports in WW-II were also used to program the very first games.

After Steve Russell created *Spacewar* in 1961 on a PDP-1 minicomputer, the potential of this technology sparked many people's imaginations. Nutting Associates released Bushnell's *Computer Space*, the first video arcade game in 1971, and, a year later, Atari released *Pong*, the first TV game. In 1976, Mattel made the first hand-held electronic game with its own electronic display (Graham, 1982:37). The foundations of modern gaming had been laid.

Although video games were originally developed and consumed by the US and Japan, these video games would sometimes reach other countries in their American English or Japanese versions. However, it was not until the mid 1990s that entertainment software companies started to consider the

possibilities of making fully translated versions for other countries. This multilingual effort has taken the benefits of the entertainment software industry into the billions.

### 3. About interactive entertainment software

Entertainment software comprehends a wide variety of products: from the games of solitaire in our PCs to the ones in gambling sites; from the harmless *Pac Man* to adult-only games and from the educational to the purely recreational. I will concentrate specifically on those products widely available for the general public we normally call 'video games'. I shall begin with the definition of the term, and proceed to explain the most common terms from more generic to more specific.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states that the term 'video game' can be used in a generic sense to refer to "electronic games, computer games, and video games". In fact, they are so widespread that many people nowadays use the hypernym 'game' to refer to 'video game'. What is more, the Entertainment Software Industry is often referred to as the Game Industry. However, all these terms refer to different realities, and I am of the opinion that some clarification of the terminology would be beneficial.

#### 3.1. Game

The term 'game' is the hypernym, the most generic within the realm of recreational activities. 'Games' are universal, they may involve one or many players and, although there is normally an element of rivalry, the main objective is the amusement of the people participating actively by playing, or passively by watching those playing. There are many types of games, for example: poker, football, billiards, charades, marbles, I spy, etc. each involving different rules and props. Many of them have probably been with humankind for many centuries. In fact, it is often argued that games are a way, if not 'the' way, of learning skills for life in a safe environment (UNICEF). Some of the most international and enduring examples could be play catch or chess.

Due to their ever increasing popularity and the great media exposure that video games have gained over the past ten years, the term 'game' is often used within the entertainment software industry and the press to refer to 'video games'. We have magazines (*GameDevelopers*), TV channels (*Game Network*), cable TV programmes (*GamerTV*), websites (*Gamespot*), and companies (*Gameloc*), to mention but a few.

#### 3.2. Electronic game

This is probably the most generic term within twentieth century technology, although the first pinball machines were actually electro-

mechanic, since there were no computer chips inside. Strictly speaking, any interactive game operated by silicon-chip computer circuitry is an 'electronic game'. However, not all 'electronic games' are 'video games', since the 'video' part of the term refers to the primary feedback device, a TV set or a monitor. So, for example, the fruit and darts machines we find in many pubs are not 'video games' but 'electronic games'.

### 3.3. *Video arcade games*

The term was originally used to embrace all those computer games that could be found in amusement arcades. The game, the monitor, the speakers, and the controllers were built-in to a big wooden box decorated with artistic representations of the game in order to attract clients. The first video arcade game was *Computer Space* (1971). Arcades were very popular throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and they contributed to the development of today's entertainment software industry. Nowadays, people use the term 'arcade games' to refer to those first 'video games' that marked the beginning of a new era of entertainment, for example *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders*, etc. These video games are still popular amongst retro fans and technology has developed so fast that we can play several of these games on our mobile phones.

### 3.4 *Computer game*

The term 'computer game' refers to the nature of the actual machine required to create and play the game. In this sense, almost all of today's 'video games' are also 'computer games'. The term, however, seems to have shifted slightly, and now it is often used to refer to the type of platform utilised to play the games. Therefore, people will refer to 'computer' games as oppose to 'console' games, 'hand-held' games, and 'mobile' games. 'Computer games' are 'video games' where specifications have been adjusted to suit computer hardware. Due to their extensive keyboards, computers are ideal for tactical, strategic, or simulation games, whereas consoles are normally geared towards action games.

### 3.5. *Console game*

'Consoles' are game-dedicated computers. When they are portable they are normally called 'hand-held consoles'. Very often, the same 'video game' is released in a variety of formats, but it is slightly different depending on the platform it has been designed for, the hardware capabilities, and the branding requirements. The first hand-held electronic games appeared in 1976 (Graham, 1982:37) and came preinstalled, so that people could only play one game. Most game developers design their products for the main gaming platforms (PlayStation, GameCube, Xbox, and PC) and they almost always aim at doing an international simultaneous release in French, Italian, German, and Spanish, often abbreviated as FIGS.

### 3.6. Mobile game

Some mobile phones can play most 'arcade games'. In fact, the average handset comes with at least three games preinstalled. In the technological race to gain more clients, mobile phone engineers are starting to show that mobile phones can also be a convenient gaming device. The Gadget Show programme (broadcasted on 03/04/06 on Channel Five) went to CeBIT 2006, the German technology fair, where Samsung presented one of its new mobiles. This handset can play games that are comparable in quality to the first PlayStation console games. Games for mobile phones have traditionally been rather simple and action based, but this is now changing and there are also other genres like arcades, strategy, role playing games, etc.

### 3.7. Video game

The term itself seems to suffer some orthographical instability. We can find it written as a single word 'videogame', as a hyphenated word 'video-game', or as two words 'video game'. I agree with the OED in preferring the two-word term which is more consistent with other similar terms in English like 'card game', 'football game', or 'board game'. When it comes to a definition, most sources seem to agree on the basics, for example:

- The *OED* defines video game as "a game played by electronically manipulating images displayed on a television screen".
- The *Wikipedia* specifies that a video game "is a computer game where a video display such as a monitor or television is the primary feedback device".

However, these definitions, although technically correct, are too broad to illustrate the variety and complexity of video games. In my opinion, video games are an interactive multimedia form of entertainment, powered by computer electronics, controlled by a keyboard or a mouse (or other peripherals like game controllers or steering wheels), and displayed on some kind of screen. Ludology, the discipline that studies games, uses terms like 'cyberdrama' to highlight the digital nature of the medium and the conflict that needs the gamer's intervention (Murray, 2004). Mateas prefers the term 'interactive drama' because video games are stories that require the player's unique reaction to unravel (Wardrip-Fruin, 2004:19). There are so many different games that a comprehensive definition is difficult to present. There are games for all age groups. The subject matter is as broad as human activity itself: some are more recreational, and others are more educational. According to the ESA report of 2005 published in their website, only 15% of the games sold in 2005 were rated 'Mature' (or 18+). Most games involve: sports, strategy, problem solving, teamwork, racing, building, role-playing, etc.

In my opinion, video game technology and development is still in its adolescence. We are only starting to realise now what the potential is. Computers are so versatile that video games can combine within one creation techniques that were developed for very different disciplines:

- a- Literature and linguistics: narration, dialogue.
- b- Architecture and sculpture: 3D modelling to recreate realistic scenery.
- c- Music and special effects: dynamic atmospheric music and sounds adjust to player actions.
- d- Maths and physics: environment simulation allows graphics to react to players' movements.
- e- Cinema and camera work: positioning the camera to enhance drama in the story.
- f- Telecommunication: fans playing together the same multiplayer games from home.
- g- Voice recognition technology: the game responds to verbal instructions.

Indeed, ISFE (Interactive Software Federation of Europe) stated in its report for 2004, that video games may well be "on their way to earn themselves the status of the eighth art". The fact is that more and more people around the world play some kind of electronic game. According to the report published in the aDeSe website (Spanish Association of Distributors and Editors of Entertainment Software), Europeans spent more than €4,800 millions in entertainment software in 2005. In the UK there are more than 55 million units of consoles and PCs. Trends point towards a steady and continuous increase.

One thing to remember is that a video game is a 'product designed for mass consumption' and an 'artistic team creation' at the same time. This characteristic will play a key role when analysing its adaptation for different international markets. The game has to be developed in such a way that the programming code can accommodate the requirements of each country, with its language, culture, legal system, etc. This process is called the 'internationalisation' (or i18n for short, the number '18' indicates the number of letters between 'i' and 'n') of a product. Some people may think that what is enjoyable in one country will be equally agreeable in another, but this is not necessarily the case. Starr Long (producer of NCsoft and one of the heads behind *Ultima Online*, a immensely popular online game) said in an interview (quoted in Chandler, 2005:236) that very often the development "team believes that just because something works in their territory it can work just as successfully in another territory". Should that be the case, all countries would be

playing the same type of games in the same way, which is clearly not true or quite that simple. There are other parameters to take into account: the music that goes in the game (*PGR 1* featured radio stations with the local DJs); the characters (a driving game like *Formula 1* will feature more Spanish teams and drivers for the Spanish market than for the US one); the commentator (sports games require a commentator that is known and respected by the local audience). Developers will also have to change part of the content of the video game to adjust to the age ratings (McCarthy, 2005:138), so some games may display blood, abusive language, and sexual storylines in the US, but not in Germany (where the depiction of blood and Nazi symbols is completely forbidden), or Japan (where *Tomb Raider* had to undergo a major overhaul to make it acceptable to Japanese sensibilities, so the grisly sudden-death sequences featured in the western version disappeared).

I think it is essential to differentiate between an artefact and a product in order to understand better the nature of video games. An artefact (like a painting by Picasso) is unique, it needs no justification, and it serves the creator, and, maybe, the maecenas. The only justification of a product (like a car) is to generate revenue by serving its users, the buyers, us. The development of any video game will be mainly constrained by the allocated budget, sponsorships, and market expectations, apart from everything else, like platform's specs (Xbox, PlayStation, GameCube), branding, time, etc. However, we could probably say something similar about part of the TV, film industry, and the DVD market. Hence, the duality artefact/product is not enough to differentiate video games from other audiovisual entertainment goods. The third characteristic that may set these creations apart is their accent on personalised entertainment, the tailoring of the product around what the client wants. What this means is that a basic game design will allow for transformations that will adapt the product to the local taste and expectations of the territory of release. The game does not have a traditional author, like a film director or a writer, but a 'shared authorship' because the only relevant issue is the product itself and how it woos the users by adapting to them. Therefore, everything in a video game is open to particular changes for specific territories, if it would mean a potential increase in sales. In other words, games may play and look different depending on the country where we purchase them. So, how does all this influence their translation?

#### **4. About language transfer**

It is generally acknowledged that translation hovers between two poles: source and target culture, foreignisation and domestication, literal word-for-word translation and free adaptation, adequacy and acceptability. We cannot escape this fact because it is inherent in the very nature of communication between two cultural polysystems. Umberto Eco (2003:100) phrased this conflict very accurately in *Mouse or Rat?* where he explains: "To choose a target- or source-oriented direction is, once

again, a matter of negotiation to be decided at every sentence". This process takes place in the translator's mind, consciously or unconsciously sometimes, favouring either the author or the audience. This negotiation tends to tilt towards the receiving culture in the case of video games. The reason is the need for the customisation of the product. No other audiovisual creation aims at adapting itself to the customer as much as video games. Liesl Leary from the Enlaso Group, gave a very good example in an interview for Chandler's book (2005:96): "We did an online game into Chinese which had a cowboy speaking with a Texas accent. We ask them to remove it".

As it has been pointed out, a video game is a product conceived for tailored entertainment: players can create a character, adjust the level difficulty, choose their own music, play solo or multiplayer, etc. Adapting a video game to different markets is a creative exercise, and translators, as cultural mediators, play an important role by highlighting features, characters, music, or story lines that might not work at all with their receiving cultures. This is really nothing new in itself. The need for translation has been with our civilization from the beginning of times. We find early evidence of its importance in Egypt, with the bilingual Rosetta Stone (three alphabets but only two languages), dated around 200 BC. Consumers are so used to translated products that they have stopped thinking about it. Many of the texts people read or hear everyday come from a language different from their mother tongue, and yet, no-one stops to think: "These are not the 'actual' words". What this means is that translation is a reality, and that translated texts function as originals in their own right.

The translation of software products is generally referred to as 'localisation'. Linguistically speaking, software products are multi-textual, i.e. they contain different types of texts: technical, pedagogical, and specific (to the purpose of the application). When talking about video games the third type divides into what the industry calls different 'assets': in-game texts (books, letters, documents, etc.), art assets (in-game linguistic graphic art), dubbing and voice over (scripts for the dubbing studio), and subtitling (text for the subtitles option). This combination of texts within the same product could be one of the characteristics that sets the translation of interactive entertainment software apart from other audiovisual products. Video games have to be designed in a modular way so that they can easily accommodate any number of languages, cultures, styles of play, etc. Being a multimedia creation the assets to be translated multiply exponentially (manuals, dubbing, subtitles, menus, graphics, on-line help, etc.) and they require a great level of customisation. It is the first time that one single product requires all types of language transfer specialisations.

With the incredible growth of international markets and the demand for interactive entertainment software, the translational activity seems to

have taken a new form, and a new approach might be needed to analyse it. But, is it enough to coin a new term? And, if it is, is 'localisation' the appropriate term for it?

#### *4.1. Localisation*

I would like first to clarify the issue of the spelling with 's' or with 'z'. According to the *OED* the noun 'localization' comes from the noun 'locale' (adopted from the French noun 'local' in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century). The suffix '-ize' has been in use in English since the 16th century, and, although it is used mainly in American English, it is not an Americanism. Alternatively, the British English spelling has developed into '-ise' due to the influence of the French language. I shall conform to the British usage, spelling, and grammar to maintain consistency.

The term 'localisation' is used nowadays in different disciplines such as geography or economics, but it seems to have been appropriated by the software translation industry as its own to designate the process of "taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold" (Esselink, 2000:3). The term is by no means new and instances of the word 'localization' can be found as early as 1813 (according to the *OED*). The first multi-language vendors were only formed in the mid 1980s, so how did this term come to be identified with the translation of software? And, more importantly, is it terminologically accurate?

Many software developers and publishers realised in the mid 1980s they could not cope with the development of applications and the preparation of their multilingual products for the international market. The quick development and depreciation of computer technology lead to a rapid growth in hardware and software demand from many countries around the world. The in-house translation departments and outsourced freelance translators that used to prepare the international releases could not possibly undertake such a complex and technically demanding task anymore, and so the localisation industry was born.

For LISA (the Localisation Industry Standards Association, founded in 1990), the term 'localisation' goes hand in hand with 'globalisation', both these terms originally used within business strategy and global economics debates. The economist Cooke (1992:212-13) talks about the pressure in the late 1970s for leading-edge firms in the Triad markets (i.e. US, Europe and Japan) to move towards 'global localisation' when he writes: "as competition intensifies the nuances of market culture make it more and more difficult to satisfy the more discerning user without having the capacity to tailor a generic product to the finest degree possible to meet local demand".

The opening of international markets in the 1970s brought the possibility for companies to go global, i.e. to free trade beyond national frontiers. It also highlighted the need to design products that could easily accommodate the requisites and tastes of the potential importing countries. This is the process of 'internationalisation', and it can be applied to all types of products, from cars to burgers. Once the product has been 'internationalised', it can be adapted legally, technically, and culturally to each of the receiving countries, i.e. it can be 'localised'.

The term 'localisation' seems too broad a process involving several non-linguistic activities to be used in Translation Studies. In fact, Esselink's definition does not say anything that we could not apply to the term 'translation'. It is true, nevertheless, that there is a change in the emphasis of this translational activity: we are talking about a product (not an artefact), and we are not obliged to maintain the source culture identity. On the contrary, we must favour the target culture. The acceptance of the product by the receiving culture is more important than its nationality. So, if 'localisation' is a target-oriented translation plus many other adaptations, is it an appropriate term within Translation Studies? It does not seem to clarify anything and, as Hatim and Munday observe (2004:321), "the localization process models used by commercial companies may contain up to fourteen steps (Esselink, 2000:17-8) and translation is just one of those". I would define the term 'localisation' used in commercial translation as the process of making a product linguistically and culturally, but also technically and legally, appropriate to the target country and language.

It is interesting to note, though, that the term 'localisation' had already been used in translation before, in the field of children's literature. It was Klingberg (1986:15) who recuperated the term from a Swedish translation of the German *Kinderleben oder Karl und Marie*, by E. Averdieck (1856), referring to a specific translating technique required in cultural context adaptation that involves, among other things, renaming characters and reallocating places to suit the target culture. The principle is a very similar one. The translator had a piece of didactic writing aimed at children, and she wanted them to focus on the learning without their attention being diverted with foreign spelt names and places. Similarly, video games put the accent on entertainment, and anything that might interfere negatively with the player's enjoyment of the product is either changed or deleted.

In my opinion, the term 'localisation' would be more appropriate within the industrial context, but, since the term has already been established, we can specify between the all-comprehensive 'product' localisation, and the 'linguistic' localisation.

Due to the characteristics of the texts involved, we must differentiate three areas within linguistic localisation, each of which builds on the richness of the previous one:

- professional utility software, that requires a highly technical but practical translation;
- web pages, where an edgy journalistic approach is added to the technical layer;
- entertainment software, which opens an extra linguistic layer and calls for a creative translation, facilitating gamers' immersion in order to enhance the player's experience. I will focus on this last one which is the least studied area and the one that, in my opinion, has more complex characteristics.

#### 4.2. Game localisation

We have a similar terminological problem with the current term for the translation of video games. Chandler (2005:12) describes 'game localisation' as "the process of translating the game into other languages". However, Chandler herself also talks about game localisation as involving many activities apart from the translation of text, audio and video files. Indeed, changes may occur at any level. For example, Atari, one of the leading developers, reckons to have increased sales in Japan of one of its driving games by 20% as a result of switching the soundtrack from dance (in the US) to rock (McCarthy, 2005:149). Heimburg (2003:1), one of the computer engineers behind the popular game *Asheron's Call 2*, writes about the localisation of online games that it "is just a catchphrase for a long list of smaller tasks". It appears to be an acknowledged fact that translation is only a part of the process of adapting an entertainment software product to a new culture and language. It would be inaccurate, therefore, to use the term 'game localisation' within Translation Studies, since it also refers to non-translational activities. Although 'game localisation' may be appropriate for the industry, it is too broad a term to be used in TS. If we must use it, we should always specify using the term 'linguistic localisation' to avoid confusion with other stages of the localisation process.

#### 4.3 Transcreation

Another term that we hear more and more is 'transcreation'. It is being increasingly used by a new wave of companies seeking to distance themselves from traditional translation firms. These new firms offer translation-like services that include not only translation but also creativity (Yunker, 2005:1). But creativity has always been a skill developed by translators to avoid the robotic word-for-word approach. For example, *Pedro Picapiedra* ['Peter Chipstone'] is the Spanish name for 'Fred Flintstone'. Translators maintained the semiotic references and the alliteration, obtaining a playful and meaningful name. Is this an instance of translation or transcreation?

Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 20) also defend the idea of 'transcreation' to describe what takes place in game localisation rather than just translation, because "localisers are granted *quasi* absolute freedom to modify, omit, and even add any elements which they deem necessary to bring the game closer to the players and to convey the original feel of gameplay".

They offer the example of Yitán, a character in the Japanese video game *Final Fantasy*. The original English transliteration would have been 'Zidane', but they wanted to avoid the resonance with footballer Cinedine Zidane. This translational license is very similar to the one used by the Spanish translators of Tolkien's novel *The Lord of the Rings*, who conveyed Bilbo Baggins as *Bilbo Bolsón* [Bilbo Bigbag], which was validated by the author himself.

As usually happens with terminology, the term 'transcreation' had been used earlier with a similar meaning. Lal (1964:1) writes that a lot of scholars checked his translation of some Indian plays "in order to establish the 'neutral' tone of transcreation which I felt was called for if the plays where to mean anything significant to the three kinds of readers I kept in mind when on the job: American, English and Indian". The same could be said about other terms like 'domestication', 'localisation', 'target-oriented translation'. If TS are going to accept 'transcreation' it is necessary to define its characteristics and prove its validity by contrast to other similar TS terms. This has not been done yet.

Shrivastava (2004) wrote in *The Asian Times* that there has been a very recent development in the comic book industry that could prove to be a landmark at the beginning of a new era in the industry. Spiderman, a superhero from New York's Queens, who was already known in India, has been 'transcreated' as a young Indian boy. Peter Parker is now *Pavitr Prabhakar*, lives in Mumbai, wears white baggy trousers, and fights the Indian version of the 'Green Goblin', *Rakshasa*, a demon in the Indian mythology. They do not seem to be translating anything but creating a new character with the successful features of a previous one. We can find plenty of examples of this throughout history. If it were not for the fact that these creators own the copyright, we would probably call it plagiarism.

We could even say that all translations are transcreations since they require a certain degree of creativity on the translators' part, although they are not creating anything from scratch but from a very clear source. Tony Van (quoted in Chandler, 2005:56) tells us about the problem with the translation of *Monkey Island* (a very popular Lucas Art video game), where they had to reinvent a whole puzzle dealing with card catalogues. The puzzle was based on the English initials of several items, and each name had a little funny word-play. This is a good example of what happens in many video games, but it is by no means unique, since we also find it in literature and audiovisual translation.

'Transcreation' might be a good term in the sense that it acknowledges the fact that it is consciously replacing text and references deemed too culturally specific. It is a translation that completely tilts the balance towards the target audience but claims to be the same product, despite those differences. From the developers' point of view, they are maximizing their investment in the form of one basic design and multiple different finishes depending on the local taste. It is the same basic principle that companies apply to cars, computers, or magazines. So, could Translation Studies accommodate 'transcreation'? It seems to me that there is a lack of consistency. I do not think we can establish a clear definition or that, indeed, Translation Studies would gain anything by embracing this term.

So, what is it that makes the translation of video games distinctive? It cannot be the complexity of the dialogues, the creativity, or the playfulness involved, since we can find these same characteristics in many other types of texts, like literature, films, and comic books. We have to go back to what was said earlier about customisation and shared authorship. The new business model for developing video games is one that makes the creative department work almost simultaneously with the localisation department. This is what I mean by shared authorship. It is a bigger coordination challenge, but it is an improvement over the previous model, where translations could only start when the game was completely finished and published, and it grants better control and consistency over the final product in all languages. I define video games as a multi-textual interactive entertainment product for mass consumption with shared authorship that is customised to attract audiences in a variety of countries. From the translational point of view, this is the only product in which the linguistic transfer is part of the development process and can, therefore, affect the actual creation of the video game.

The degree of customisation will have to agree with the 'gameplay'. The 'gameplay' is determined by the interaction among all the elements of a game, i.e. script, music, graphics, learning curve, environment response to player's actions, player's control, etc. 'Gameplay' is, ultimately, what distinguishes games from other comparable media (Iuppa, 2001:37). Entertainment software takes the interactivity factor and brings it to the foreground. Other types of entertainment products count with the reader or spectator to be a more or less passive receiver of information, video games require the player to act. Indeed, if the player does not do anything there will be no adventure, no story, no entertainment at all. The story evolves as the player starts choosing his/her way within the virtual world, and every single time the player's experience will be slightly different, not only because s/he will notice more things, as when reading a book for the second time, but because his/her interaction with the virtual world will be different. Our translation has to enrich that experience, sometimes even regardless of what the original creators thought of for their target audience in their countries.

## 5. Conclusion

The terms 'game localisation' and 'transcreation' do not seem accurate enough to be used in Translation Studies, since 'localisation' is an industry-used term and includes non-linguistic activities, and we do not have a clear definition of 'transcreation'. TS do not seem to gain anything from their acceptance. In my opinion, 'translation' is still the most adequate term to refer to any type of language transfer, but if 'localisation' is to be used it should always be preceded by 'linguistic' or 'cultural'.

The influence of the translations in the development of a video game, together with the variety of different texts found in them requiring all the techniques utilised for other translation specialities at the same time, is what makes the translation of video games different from any other translational activity.

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