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Bernal-Merino, Miguel Á. (2015). *Translation and Localisation in Video Games. Making Entertainment Software Global*. New York/London: Routledge, pp. 302, £95.00. ISBN: 978-1-13-880553-8.

We often hear that behind a bad translation there is an inexperienced translator or someone who professes to be bilingual and fully conversant in two languages, but in reality, they are not, and therefore, any errors encountered in the text can be attributed to their lack of translation skills. This does not seem to be case in game localisation, where Bernal-Merino informs us that it is usually “inexperienced game developers and publishers [who] overlook the complexity of [a game’s] script and the grammatical diversity of foreign languages” (198), thus treating localisation as a type of word-for-word translation and ignoring any contextual, co-textual and referential information in the text. Such a relief!

Translation and Localisation in Video Games is a comprehensive and brilliantly structured monograph dealing with a variety of aspects relating to this relatively new field of studies, and the author provides an insightful picture of recent developments in this industry by tackling both its commercial side and offering a systematic approach to its other ramifications.

Chapter 1 introduces readers to the field of video games, mentioning their transition from a ‘button mashing’ experience (1) to the complex, multifaceted and multisemiotic area of studies they are today. From the onset, Bernal-Merino highlights the skills required by translators in this field, which include not only the handling of different file formats and software packages, but also versatility with a variety of text genres (technical, legal, creative, literary, etc.).

In Chapter 2, a detailed and pioneering taxonomy of the different types of games and their relevant markets is provided for our benefit; here we learn that MIES (Multimedia Interactive Entertainment Software) is the author’s preferred term to describe video games as it sums up their peculiar characteristics, i.e. multimediality, interactivity, entertainment factor and software nature, combining film, literature, 3-D design and computer programming (36). What makes games stand out compared to other translation practices is their interactive nature and the possibility for gamers to create brand new scenarios with each play. This element of playability, which contributes to the ‘suspension of reality’ for players, is a fundamental aspect in the translation of games, and its linguistic dimension requires optimal levels of localisation in order for gamers not to feel let down by the whole experience.

Chapter 3, 'The Translation of Multichannel Texts', deals with the multisemiotic nature of texts/products and their associated challenges for translators. Here Bernal-Merino provides relevant examples from a variety of sources (children's books, comics, silent films) to illustrate the strategies employed in adapting, deleting, adding, reformulating or simply translating content for the target audience's benefit, so that it is completely immersed in the alternative world created by the product (book, video, performance, etc.). It 'warms up' the readers before introducing them, in the ensuing chapters, to specific aspects of video games translation, such as the translation of user interfaces, system messages, subtitles and the adaptation of game characters to national/cultural standards and expectations. An important aspect of the translation process here is the fragmentation of interactive text (141): in order to make gamers' experiences customisable, texts must adapt and be fragmented in order to respond to users' choices in terms of plot development. This means that texts cannot be created or translated in a linear manner, and text strings may contain several variables based on the level of interaction. As previously highlighted, this fragmented approach to translation is allegedly one of the causes of poor quality in this field, but it is hardly the translators' fault especially when they are being asked to translate with very little textual or visual context at dramatic speed to meet the *sim-ship* (simultaneous shipping) deadline for all products. This model (*sim-ship*), which aims to provide all language versions of the same game to users at the same time, capitalises on the game's brief life span and is followed predominantly to avoid piracy. It is therefore understandable why basic document translation is no longer acceptable or preferable as a translation option and, given the steep price of these products, now users expect high-quality video games with no disruption (linguistic, cultural, semantic) to their experience. That is why 'deep' or full localisation is the recommended practice in this instance, so that culture-specific features are embedded in the game, thus making players feel at home and, at the same time, effectively creating a version of the game which can be considered as brand new.

The last section of the book is dedicated to training in this field and provides an overview of relevant courses in Europe. Being a trainer himself, the author outlines the current challenges encountered at university level when teaching localisation courses (and video games ones in particular), which many other trainers around the world will no doubt sympathise with.

The monograph will sit well next to other recent localisation publications (Jiménez-Crespo, 2013; O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2013) which aim to guide scholars and newbies alike through this ever-evolving and fascinating discipline. Learners and more seasoned localisation aficionados will also appreciate the very practical slant of this book and will derive great

benefit and tips for their own localisation work (including software and website localisation). A highly recommended publication.

Bibliography

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