THE TRANSLATION OF REALIA AND IRREALIA IN GAME LOCALIZATION: CULTURE-SPECIFICITY BETWEEN REALISM AND FICTIONALITY

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In the past decade or so, video game research has allowed for greater interdisciplinarity, and researchers started exploring the specific issues which game localization encompasses. Monographs by M. O'Hagan and C. Mangiron[1] and M. Á. Bernal-Merino[2] served as the necessary stepping-stones that game researchers needed to investigate individual spheres pertaining to game localization, and freed them from having to defend the place of game localization research within translation and interpreting studies. Papers published in *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization,* published since 2009 or *Game Studies*, published since 2001, indicate the vast research potential the sphere of game localization provides with every new issue. Besides the localization viewpoint, recent monographs researching video games from the ludo-narrative[3] or design and production perspective[4] testify to the variety of video game recesses worth academic attention. In her monograph *The Translation of Realia and Irrealia in Game Localization,* S. Pettini focuses on the so far thoroughly untouched area of localization – realia and irrealia.

Before the publication of the book under review, realism and fictionality in the language and texts of video games have never been studied in game localization studies with complexity. Previous studies might have mentioned localization strategies, but no monograph has explored these in such detail as S. Pettini's. With the example of the three video games sharing military themes and genre specifics (*Medal of Honor: Warfighter*[5], *Battlefield 4*[6] and *Mass Effect 3*[7]) and their Italian and Spanish localizations, S. Pettini proposes useful models for categorizing game realia and irrealia and explores translation tendencies adopted in each localization. Her monograph consists of six chapters.

The first chapter briefly introduces the rationale behind the monograph. S. Pettini purposely selected her corpus to demonstrate "the relationship between the real world and the virtual game world" which she sees as "the potential single most variable which may influence translators' approach to the translation of game texts" (p. 6). This correlation she takes as the major hypothesis for her work. Referring to the works of F. Dietz[8]

1   See: O´HAGAN, M., MANGIRON, C.: *Game Localization: Translating for the Global Digital Entertainment Industry*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia, PA : John Benjamins, 2013.
2   For more information, see: BERNAL-MERINO, M. Á.: *Translation and Localisation in Video Games: Making Entertainment Software Global*. London, New York, NY : Routledge, 2015.
3   See also: NAE, A.: *Immersion, Narrative, and Gender Crisis in Survival Horror Video Games*. London, New York, NY : Routledge, 2022.
4   For example, see: CHANDLER, H. M.: *The Game Production Toolbox*. Boca Raton, FL : Taylor Francis Group, 2020.
5   DANGER CLOSE GAMES: *Medal of Honor: Warfighter.* [digital game]. Redwood City, CA : Electronic Arts, 2012.
6   DICE: *Battlefield 4*. [digital game]. Redwood City, CA : Electronic Arts, 2013.
7   BIOWARE: *Mass Effect 3*. [digital game]. Redwood City, CA : Electronic Arts, 2012.
8   For more information, see: DIETZ, F.: Issues in Localizing Computer Games. In DUNNE, K. J. (ed.): *Perspectives on Localization*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia, PA : John Benjamins, 2006, p. 121-134.

or M. Loponen,[9] S. Pettini elaborates on the theory of realia and irrealia and applies it to video games. She also points out the popularity of video games in Italian and Spanish locales. The second chapter of the book introduces the issue of game localization and translation, and – besides providing an overview of the countless works on game localization since the first phase of its research[10] – it contains a resumé of information game researchers are well familiar with. However, it can be a welcome overview for those for whom game localization is a new area of interest.

The third chapter of the monograph offers essential information on culture-specificity in video games, introducing F. Dietz' realism-fictionalism spectrum axis[11] as well as the reasoning behind the choice of video games included in the corpus. The author's decision to compare Spanish and Italian localizations of the three selected video games is valuable since it offers a comparative point of view, but the method might have had a bearing on the fact that only 40% of each video game was analysed. We may only assume how the results would change should the author decide to analyse the selected video games in full, focusing on either Italian or Spanish (or even both). However, analysis of video game texts is a time-consuming process, and this fact significantly influences the size of the corpus researchers select for investigation. S. Pettini's research is based on the author's dissertation and as such was limited by the time and space she had at her disposal. The third chapter of *The Translation of Realia and Irrealia in Game Localization* also elaborates on the cultural issues of each analysed video game, as well as the realia and irrealia present in the given video games. Taxonomy of realia and irrealia in section 3.6.1, as well as translation strategies for realia and irrealia in section 3.6.2, are key and the most important contributions of S. Pettini's monograph, and have the greatest potential to inspire researchers in the future.

The fourth chapter specifies the realia and irrealia, and strategies of their translation are introduced in the third chapter and highlighted in the analysed corpus. Even though Italian and Spanish are mutually intelligible languages that share certain lexical characteristics and belong to the same language family, S. Pettini's analysis clearly shows the artistic specificities of each localization and differences between the adopted translation strategies for the given realia and irrealia. The fifth and penultimate chapter is a foundational chapter from a terminological viewpoint focused on military language in video games and translation of military terminology. A thorough analysis of the military language contained in the analysed video games as well as the presentation of used translation strategies serves as a promising model for the future research of similar video games and their localization and translation. The last chapter of the monograph offers concluding remarks for each analysed category of realia and irrealia as well as the military language, and confirms that different degrees of realism or fictionality have an impact on the translatable assets video games possess and on the adopted translation strategies.

S. Pettini's monograph *The Translation of Realia and Irrealia in Game Localization* is a welcome publication proving that game localization has become an established field of study. It also shows that researchers can at last stop feeling pressured to justify its position within Translation and Interpreting Studies. S. Pettini showed excellent orientation in game localization, translation and interpreting studies research, and the rather unnecessary elaboration of game localization history and its research is balanced by a foundational

9   See also: LOPONEN, M.: Translating Irrealia: Creating a Semiotic Framework for the Translation of Fictional Cultures. In *Chinese Semiotic Studies*, 2009, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 165-175.

10   MANGIRON, C.: Research in Game Localisation: An Overview. In *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization*, 2017, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 74-90.

11   DIETZ, F.: Issues in Localizing Computer Games. In DUNNE, K. J. (ed.): *Perspectives on Localization*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia, PA : John Benjamins, 2006, p. 122-124.

introduction of realia and irrealia taxonomy and useful models for future researchers. On the example of war-themed video games, S. Pettini's analysis of translated realia and irrealia in Medal of Honor: Warfighter, Battlefield 4 and Mass Effect 3 offers an important source of information for the research of realia and irrealia in video games, as well as translation and localization of military language. S. Pettini's monograph is an important book much needed by game localization research.

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