

Extended Abstract

Video game's intermediality and localization practices

Pierre-Yves Houlmont

ABSTRACT

Nol

This paper aims to highlight the challenges of media mix (Steinberg, 2012) in the field of video game translation, and more specifically, the implications of the use of fictional newspapers and magazines for translational strategies.

Video game's trans- and intermediality no longer require demonstration. Indeed, video games often resort to remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 2000) and directly implement other media such as newspapers, television channels, magazines or books into their core assets. Fictional newspapers and magazines are used recurrently so as to contextualize games' events or enrich the games' lores, as in the series *Deus Ex* (Square Enix), *The Elder Scrolls* (Bethesda Softworks) or *Ni No Kuni* (Level-5). They can also be part and parcel of the very gameplay, such as in *Papers Please* (Lucas Pope, 2013), *Orwell* (Osmotic Studios, 2016) or *The Westport Independent* (Double Zero One Zero, 2016).

Globalization made video games very mobile across frontiers, thus requiring theirs being translated and localized into many languages. Nowadays, the volume of video game texts translated daily is enormous (Chandler & Deeming, 2012). Notwithstanding the identification of several translation strategies and challenges that are partly specific to the video game localization field (Bernal-Merino, 2007; Costales, 2012), still too little attention is paid to this research area at an academic level, most likely because of the youngness of both the traductology and game studies areas (Houlmont, 2017). As highlighted in some scientific papers and books, video game translations require the translators to show greater polyvalence. Indeed, video games contain texts of various kinds, such as legal, redactional, narrative or advertising texts, all of which call for specific translational strategies (Chandler & Deeming, 2012; Costales, 2007).

Video game's transmediality strengthens this tendency to genre plurality. As mentioned hereabove, it is not uncommon to use newspapers or magazines within a game. Translating press articles requires journalistic expertise and specific strategies, especially when it comes to titles or information recontextualizations (Meertens, 2009; Anjúcar, 2006). Titles are often translated very freely in order to be compatible with target culture's editorial modalities and journalists-translators tend to explicit a numerous cultural references to make them intelligible for the target public (Anjúcar, 2006). This paper aims at establishing whether this tendency to use newspapers within video games implies resorting to particular journalistic strategies or not.

Our hypotheses are the following: concerning fictional press articles whose objective is to contextualize games' events, it is highly probable that translators have

Proceedings of DiGRA 2019

© 2019 Authors & Digital Games Research Association DiGRA. Personal and educational classroom use of this paper is allowed, commercial use requires specific permission from the author.

substantial freedom regarding the way they translate fictional titles as well as how they recontextualize pieces of information. But in the case of games that leverage fictional press articles as actual gameplay elements and whose gameplay mechanics are based on linguistic variations (see *Orwell, Papers Please*, or *The Westport Independent*), translators have to stick to the texts' original paradigmatic term selections and syntagmatic structures, while avoiding excessive freedom when translating them. Indeed, in these games, the purpose of those textual elements is not to inform the player but to express ideological biases so as to influence their choice. The stakes and objectives surrounding those gameplay elements are different from media used as pieces of context. Indeed, since those mechanics are essential to the player's progression, mistranslations could eventually impeach the player's enjoyment of the game (Houlmont, 2017).

The trend of intermediality has stronger implications for localization practices than one might think at first glance. The direct effect of media mix is an increased need for polyvalence and further diversifies the strategies video game translators must implement, while still paying attention to video game translation's specificities in terms of textual components (2017).

Keywords

Traductology, video game localization, translation studies, game studies, media translation, plurisemiotics

BIBLIOGRAPHY

3909 LLC. 2013. *Papers Please*. PC game. 3909 LLC.

Andújar G. 2006. "La traduction français-espagnol des titres journalistiques du Monde Diplomatique : un exemple de tension entre adéquation et acceptabilité." Online, *Translation Journal*, vol.10, no. 3.

Bernal-Merino, M. 2007. « Challenges in the Translation of Video Games », in *revista tradumàtica*, no 5. Online.
URL : <http://www.fti.uab.es/tradumatica/revista/num5/articles/02/02art.htm>

Bethesda Game Studios. NA. *The Elder Scrolls series*. PC game. Bethesda Softworks.

Bolter D. & Grusin R. 2000. *Remediation. Understanding New Media*, Cambridge, MIT Press [en ligne]. Online :
https://monoskop.org/images/a/ae/Bolter_Jay_David_Grusin_Richard_Remediation_Understanding_New_Media_low_quality.pdf

Chandler, H & Deming, S. 2012. *The Game Localization Handbook*. Canada : Jones & Barlett Learning.

Costales, F. 2012. « Exploring Translation Strategies in Video Game Localization », in *Mon TI 4*, pp. 385 – 408. Online : <http://rua.ua.es/dspace/handle/10045/26956>

Double Zero One Zero. 2016. *The Westport Independent*. PC game. Coffee Stain Studios.

Eidos Montreal. NA. *Deus Ex series*. PC game. Square Enix.

Houlmont, P.-Y. 2017. *Traduction vidéoludique : approche microtextuelle d'un media plurisémiotique*. Liège. Université de Liège

Level-5. NA. *Ni No Kuni series*. PS4 game. Bandai Namco Entertainment.

Meertens R. 2009. "La traduction des textes journalistiques". [Foreignword.com](http://foreignword.com).

Osmotic. 2016. *Orwell*. PC game. Osmotic.

Steinberg, M. 2012. *Anime's Media Mix: Francising Toys and Characters in Japan*.
Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press