THE TRANSLATION OF REALIA AND IRREALIA IN GAME LOCALIZATION

CULTURE-SPECIFICITY BETWEEN REALISM AND FICTIONALITY

Silvia Pettini
This book explores the impact of a video game’s degree of realism or fictionality on its linguistic dimensions, investigating the challenges and strategies for translating realia and irrealia, the interface of the real world and the game world where culture-specificity manifests itself.

The volume outlines the key elements in the translation of video games, such as textual non-linearity, multitextuality, and playability, and introduces the theoretical framework used to determine a game’s respective degree of realism or fictionality. Pettini applies an interdisciplinary approach drawing on video game research and Descriptive Translation Studies to the linguistic and translational analysis of in-game dialogs in English-Italian and English-Spanish language pairs from a corpus of three war video games. This approach allows for an in-depth look at the localization challenges posed by the varying degree of realism and fictionality across video games and the different strategies translators employ in response to these challenges. A final chapter offers a comparative analysis of the three games and subsequently avenues for further research on the role of culture-specificity in game localization.

This book is key reading for students and scholars interested in game localization, audiovisual translation studies, and video game research.

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Culture-Specificity between Realism and Fictionality

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AEVI  Asociación Española de Videojuegos [Spanish Video Game Association]
AVT  Audiovisual Translation
BF  Battlefield
BF4  Battlefield 4
DTS  Descriptive Translation Studies
ESA  Entertainment Software Association
FIGS  French, Italian, German, Spanish
FPS  First Person Shooter
GILT  Globalization, Internationalization, Localization, Translation
GL  Game Localization
IDEA  Italian Interactive Digital Entertainment Association
LISA  Localization Industry Standards Association
ME  Mass Effect
ME3  Mass Effect 3
MMOG  Massively Multiplayer Online Game
MOH  Medal of Honor
MOHW  Medal of Honor Warfighter
QA  Quality Assurance
RPG  Role-Playing Game
ST  Source Text
TS  Translation Studies
TT  Target Text
UI  User Interface
VO  Voice Over
My gratitude goes to all the people who have supported this project, both consciously and unconsciously. First, I would like to thank Professor Stefania Nuccorini and Professor Serenella Zanotti for their generous contributions of time, ideas, and suggestions. I thank them for sharing their knowledge and for having accompanied me during the research process in their distinctive, special manner: both caring and authoritative, an extremely rare combination. The joy and enthusiasm they show for their work were contagious and motivational to me, even during tough times.

My grateful thanks go to Professor Miguel Bernal Merino and Professor Carmen Mangiron, for their time, interest, and insightful comments on my research, as well as for their kind support during my research stays in London and Barcelona. Their pioneering works aroused my interest in game localization and their great expertise contributed to the study presented in this book.

I would also like to thank Electronic Arts, and especially Anneta Mitsopoulou, for their open-minded and far-sighted approach and for their constant willingness to answer my questions.

My sincere thanks go to the publisher and the editors Elysse Preposi, Helena Parkinson, and Ruth Berry for being very supportive. I would also like to thank both the anonymous reviewers for their insights and suggestions, and my friend reviewers Anna Connealy, Joanna Fallon, and Anna Rita Gerardi for improving the quality of my manuscript.

And last but not least, my deepest gratitude goes to all my beloved families: my parents and sister, my partner, and my friends, for their understanding, patience, and encouragement during all the stages of this project. Thank you very much.
1 Introduction

1.1 Translation and Globalization: The Case of Video Games

The multimedia interactive entertainment software, which is commonly referred to as video game, first became popular in the USA and Japan in the 1970s and rapidly evolved into the global mass consumption product we all know today. The history of video games is therefore rather short when compared with other leisure artifacts, such as plays, poetry, novels, cinema, etc. Nevertheless, their non-stop progression has made video games into the most lucrative entertainment industry ahead of books, music, and films (Bernal-Merino 2011a). According to NewZoo (2020a), in 2020 the global games market generated revenues of $159.3 billion, representing an increase of +9.3% year on year, with more than 2.7 billion gamers across the world.

More relevantly, the “success story [of video games] was fully dependent, and is inextricably linked to the success story of the game localization profession that had to be created from scratch in order to cover the unprecedented demands of multimedia interactive products” (Bernal-Merino 2011a, 11). The field of game localization arose exactly from the industry’s unique needs: allowing video games to go beyond cultural and linguistic borders in order to reach players in different territories, each representing a “locale”, which is “a specific combination of region, language and character encoding” (Esselink 2000, 1).

At the global level, as NewZoo (2020a) reports, the most significant area is the Asia Pacific region, accounting for 49% of the global total revenue, with China confirming itself as the most important single-country market, notwithstanding the fast growth of emerging areas such as South East Asia and India. North America is the second-largest region by game revenues ($40 billion, 25%), while Europe represents 19% of the total global games market. However, as both producers and consumers, the leading countries are China, the USA, and Japan, which come in at number one, two, and three, respectively, on the Top 10 Countries/Markets by Game Revenues ranking (NewZoo 2020b). Consequently, despite the hybrid and multicultural nature of the game industry (Consalvo 2006), it is possible to speculate that the main source languages of video games are Chinese,
2 Introduction

Japanese, and particularly English, the latter as either native and/or working language.

In order to grasp the worldwide spread of video gaming, the US Entertainment Software Association (ESA) yearly statistics give an insight as to how it has evolved since the early beginning and has become pervasive in today’s society. For the purposes of this book, since US English is the source language of the video games in the corpus used for this research, it seems interesting to briefly outline the impact of video games on US society.

According to the 2020 Essential Facts about the Computer and Video Game Industry (ESA 2020, 3), as “the leading form of entertainment” video games are an integral part of American culture: the US players represent a diverse cross section of the American population spanning every age, gender, and ethnicity. In detail, as the report suggests (ibid., 4–5), 75% of Americans have at least one video game player in their household, with a total of 214.4 million US game players, of which 79% are aged 18 or older. Gamers are 59% male and 41% female, with an average age range of 35–44 years. Moreover, video games are a strong engine for economic growth, which has generated $35.4 billion in revenue in 2019.

As regards Europe, the continent has alone over 40 different countries and languages, but the biggest game markets are Germany, the UK, and France (NewZoo 2020b). These three European nations come in at number five, six, and seven, respectively, on the ranking, behind China, the USA, Japan, and the Republic of Korea on a global scale. The list then comprises Canada at number eight and, finally, Italy and Spain coming in at number nine and ten, respectively (ibid.).

Accordingly, it comes as no surprise to learn that the standard set of target European languages for video games is commonly referred to as “FIGS” (French, Italian, German, and Spanish), an acronym which was coined in the 1980s and still represents “the minimum default group of languages that most games are translated to” (Bernal-Merino 2011a, 14–15). However, the number of target languages for major games now routinely exceeds ten, including both European and Asian languages (Hasegawa cit. in O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013, 60).

Although considered as secondary markets at the global level, Italy and Spain are rapidly growing game consumption areas where full localizations (see Chapter 2) are becoming more and more common (Maxwell-Chandler and O’Malley-Deming 2012, 45). Publishers usually opt for either partial or full localization on the basis of the target locale significance and the possible return on investment. The inclusion of Italian and Spanish into the FIGS group from the beginning of the industry’s consolidation, and recent favorable trends, testify to the importance of these target locales, as shown by the data provided by national associations such as the Italian Interactive Digital Entertainment Association (IDEA) and the Spanish Video Game Association (AEVI).
According to IDEA (2021a), 16.7 million Italians played video games in 2020, accounting for 38% of the population aged between 6 and 64. As regards gender, 56% of Italian gamers are male and 44% are female and as concerns the most significant age groups, 24% of players are aged between 15 and 24, 22% between 45 and 64, and 19% between 25 and 34. Moreover, in 2020, the Italian game market recorded €2.179 million in revenue, with a 21.9% increase compared to 2019, and 82% were generated by purchases of software, of which 43% is digital content and includes console and PC games. As to genres, the bestselling video games for console platforms belong to action (27%), sport games (16%), adventure (12%), shooter (11%), and role-playing (10%), whereas the most successful genres for PC are action (23%), strategy (17%), adventure (16%), shooter (15%), and role-playing (14%). Moreover, as the IDEA census (2021b) reports, in Italy there are also about 160 game development companies and informal teams, with over 1,600 people employed in the industry. The geographic dimension of these companies covers most regions, but the areas with more concentration include Lombardy, Lazio, Emilia Romagna and Sicily.

As regards Spain, according to AEVI (2021), the number of players in 2020 totaled 15.9 million, representing 42% of the population aged between 6 and 64, of which 54% are male and 46% are female. As concerns the major age groups, in Spain 25% of players are aged between 25 and 34, 23% between 15 and 24, and 15% between 35 and 44. In terms of revenues, in 2020 the Spanish game market amounted to €1,747 million, of which 55% was generated by purchases of online software. As to genres, the most popular video games for console and PC belong to action and adventure (34%), sport games (13%), and role-playing (12%). Furthermore, about 9,000 people are employed in the industry in Spain and although game studios are mostly based in the areas of Madrid and Catalonia, the number of companies is constantly increasing across the country.

These data confirm that Italy and Spain are historically more consumer countries than producing ones, although it is clear that the video game landscape is evolving day by day. In the future, this might also affect localization practice and research as far as Italian and Spanish could be both source and target languages and this seems to paint extremely interesting scenarios for both scholars and professionals.

1.2 Aims, Scope, and Structure of the Book

As O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013, 26) point out “game localization introduces dimensions that challenge some of the current assumptions about translation, thus raising epistemic issues for the discipline” and it also “involves dealing with a new medium whose characteristics may not be fully accounted for in the current theoretical framework available in Translation Studies” (ibid., 40). The professional practice of game localization “could
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conceivably result in a change in the perception of translation in the 21st century with regards to traditional views on equivalence, creativity, authorship” (Bernal-Merino 2015, 2–3) and “in certain aspects, may challenge to traditional theoretical models in translation because of the implications of their [video games’] interactivity and the international simultaneous shipment model the game industry employs” (ibid., 11).

In this light, the main objective of this book is to contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate on game localization and translation by outlining corpus-assisted theoretical guidelines for researchers and professionals in the field. The focal point is therefore that of conceptualizing this new domain from the perspective of Descriptive Translation Studies, as originally developed in 1995 and later revised by Toury (2012). Indeed, this study aims to describe the strategies adopted by game translators in the linguistic and cultural localization of video games, from English into Italian, and to a lesser extent, into Spanish. More specifically, this research aims to detect the tendencies or regularities, if any, in game translators’ decision-making process from a descriptive viewpoint.

The aim to sustain a descriptive work theoretically should not be interpreted as the intent to explain everything that occurs in game translation. This study value, then, should be considered in its own measure and with precautions. Since a more detailed overview of the debate surrounding the descriptive approach in Translation Studies (TS) is peripheral for the purposes of this book, it seems more beneficial to discuss the ideas and premises which have influenced this research, and which show how the emergent field of game localization can be interpreted in the light of TS theoretical ground. For this reason, an explanation about these methodological aspects, which clarifies the reach of the analysis contained in this book, will be provided in Chapter 3.

In order to achieve the aims of this work, my examination has been conducted on a purposefully selected corpus of three video games, namely Medal of Honor Warfighter (Electronic Arts 2012), Battlefield 4 (Electronic Arts 2013), and Mass Effect 3 (Electronic Arts 2012). The purposeful selection of the corpus means that, since it was compiled to be sufficiently large and also homogeneous in terms of genre, main theme, target audience, and audience reception, it was possible to isolate the degree of realism or fictionality of the game worlds, i.e. the relationship between the real world and the virtual game world, as the potential single most important variable which may influence translators’ approach to the translation of game texts, which is the major research hypothesis of this book. While the notion of “real world” as the world we all know, the actual world, the way things are, without going into philosophical details, is quite self-evident, it seems worth briefly pointing out that here “game world” is “an imaginary world”, “an artificial universe, an imaginary place where the events of the game occur. When the player enters the magic circle and pretends to be somewhere else, the game world is the place where” s/he pretends to be (Adams 2014, 137).
The magic circle here refers to a much-cited notion developed by Johan Huizinga, a Dutch scholar who pioneeringly published a homage to the importance of play in culture titled *Homo Ludens* ([1938] 2000), Latin for Man the Player, and observed that games construct a magic circle which separates the game from the outside real world. Accordingly, in Huizinga’s view, playing a game implies setting oneself apart from the outside world, and submitting to a formally defined system or experience that has no effect on anything which lies beyond the circle, with rules which make sense in themselves and are only important within their particular game context. Thus, video game players enter into the magic circle of another imaginary world, interpreted as “all the surroundings and places experienced by a fictional character […] that together constitute a unified sense of place which is ontologically different from the actual, material, and so-called ‘real’ world” (Wolf 2014, 461). So, in this sense, “game world” means an interactive and experiential realm.

However, the idea of games as a completely separate sphere of human existence must be challenged. Although the experience within a game, or specifically a video game, does not usually extend directly into other parts of real life, games do have real-world consequences, games interact continuously and manifoldly with the real world and, since the ways in which the worlds inside games and the world outside are connected are crucial in this book, this interrelationship deserves more in-depth discussion in Chapter 3.

The focus of my analysis is on the translation of *realia* and *irrealia*, as defined in Chapter 3, because they represent the main borders between the two worlds, and they pose interesting culture-related translational phenomena from an academic perspective. To my knowledge, this subject is still unexplored in game localization, although, with reference to slightly different concepts with different terminology, due to its culture-specificity, it has widely been recognized by TS scholars as one of the most challenging translation issues, not only in the cognate area of Audiovisual Translation (see Pedersen 2011 and Ranzato 2015, among others) but also, for example, in literary translation (see Leppihalme 1997, 2001, 2011).

The transfer of *realia* and *irrealia* into other languages and cultures seems to be particularly interesting in the case of video games as this kind of software and audiovisual products usually contain a great number of culture-related elements, be they non-fictional or fictional. Their role in the text can be varied and the specific function they fulfill in the games included in the corpus is analyzed in the following chapters. Generally speaking, such elements are used by game developers and writers to give substance to the scripts of the imaginary worlds they create, to provide the text with features which are often intimately embedded in the culture(s) represented, be they real or fictional, and to which the audience, or parts of the audience, can relate. *Realia* and *irrealia* in video games may stimulate mnemonic associations and, at the same time, appeal directly to people’s knowledge and
emotions as they can evoke images and feelings that are familiar to the audience.

As O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013, 103) point out, in video games “cultural issues both at micro and macro levels loom large, especially for major titles, as the industry seeks finely tuned cultural adaptation to appeal to target users”. This delicate negotiation can in turn call for translators’ creativity and their agency may be so highlighted and celebrated that they are often allowed a freedom almost unseen with other types of translation (ibid.). And it’s not by chance that the “founding father” of the publications about game localization, probably the most cited one in the scholarly literature at the international level, focuses exactly on the unprecedented freedom game translators can enjoy for the sake of fun, the *skopos* of video games globally (Mangiron and O’Hagan 2006).

More specifically, video games offer interactive fun and interactivity is arguably the most accurate defining characteristic of gaming. The “reader” of the videoludic text, namely the player, is not a passive user but rather a co-author. “Players co-author games by playing them, since if the player doesn’t interact with the game and make choices about what will happen, nothing will happen” (Gee 2007, 8). In this sense, it is easy to understand how detrimental a translation that misdirects the player and interferes in his/her gameplay and, thus, with his/her fun can be. For example, a rendition which is unclear, or which does not replicate the original function can have severe consequences in video games and these consequences, e.g. denied access to further content, or abrupt and frustrating end of players’ engagement, seem bigger and more dangerous in games than in other media.

Culture-specificity between realism and fictionality may be especially challenging in game translation, and inappropriate renditions may be disruptive in players’ immersion into the game experience. After all, “modern video games are technically complex cultural artefacts designed to engross the end user, where the nature of engagement is more than merely functional and encroaches into the affective dimensions” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013, 103).

As already mentioned, the main hypothesis of this book is that the relationship between the fictional game world and the real word, i.e. the degree of realism or fictionality of game contents, may influence translators’ approach to the linguistic and cultural localization of video games. Accordingly, this study aims to map out the strategies activated by translators in response to cultural constraints within a realism-fictionalism’s spectrum of video games (Dietz 2006), and to detect the tendencies and patterns, if any, that are prevalent in the case of game translation from English into Italian and Spanish.

The specific lens through which the translational analysis is carried out is that of *realia* and *irrealia*: *realia* refer to real entities existing in the real world in contrast to “irrealia” (Loponen 2009, 167) which are “non-existing realsia” tied to a fictional setting, whose effect is to define and determine
the fictional cultural, geographical and historical settings” (original emphasis). Therefore, since realia is a problematic term when applied to fictional texts which describe fictional worlds (Leppihalme 2011, 126), in this study it is reinterpreted in opposition to irrealia to indicate all references to the actual world.

In Translation Studies, realia represent items which have been referred to with a vast array of terms by scholars, but all of them agree upon their cultural specificity. As Palumbo (2009, 33) suggests, they are “expressions referring to elements or concepts that are closely associated with a certain language and culture” and, one might add, with a certain reality. Consequently, in this study, realia represent references to real cultures while irrealia represent references to fictional cultures, although the very concept of culture related to video games is extremely complex, as will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, from the perspectives of game localization and of game translation research, respectively.

In conclusion, the theoretical foundation of this book is primarily Game Localization (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013, Bernal-Merino 2015), which has been referred to as “the periphery” of Audiovisual Translation Studies (Bogucki 2013, 30), while subscribing to the broader descriptive framework. The primacy given to Game Localization (GL hereafter) as theoretical background is based on the belief that, by adapting Romero-Fresco’s claim (2012, 183) concerning Audiovisual Translation (AVT), “the most fruitful studies on” GL should “include or assume to some extent two basic notions: the independence of” GL “as an autonomous discipline and its dependence on other related disciplines”. “Although apparently contradictory, these notions are perfectly compatible. The first one may be regarded as a starting point. As an autonomous discipline within Translation Studies”, GL “is an entity in its own right, rather than a subgroup or a lesser manifestation of” AVT and software localization (ibid.). In my opinion, scholars should not only “resort to extended versions of” TS models, but create, if and whenever possible, GL “own models focusing on the specificity of this area. And here is where the second notion comes in, given that an important part of this specificity lies in its interdisciplinary nature. In this sense, if the autonomy of” GL “is the starting point for research, its interdisciplinarity is the way forward [...] as it is drawing on other disciplines that” GL “finds new and fruitful avenues of research” (ibid.).

Going into the overall structure of this book, Chapters 2 and 3 describe the theoretical and methodological framework of the research, respectively, while Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to the linguistic and translational analysis. The three games representing the realism-fictionalism spectrum of video games that the corpus of this study aims to simulate are examined on the basis of the degree of realism and fictionality of their game worlds, which has been assessed according to the set of criteria described in Chapter 3. The analysis of the translation of realia and irrealia found in game dialogs – the
latter is the text type this research focuses on – is supported by the discussion of the games’ most relevant features as representational and narrative media from a cultural perspective. Given these preliminary clarifications, this book will be structured as follows:

Chapter 2 details the theoretical context in which the study is situated. It illustrates and provides an overview of the contemporary debates around fundamental background notions like translation, localization, internationalization, and culturalization. Moreover, the chapter is intended to equip readers with a basic grounding in the issues and key aspects which distinctively characterize the translation of video games, i.e. textual non-linearity, multitextuality, and playability, since they inform the subsequent linguistic analysis.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodological stand of the study. It outlines the research questions, the theoretical model of the realism-fictionalism spectrum which serves as the background to the research hypothesis, it describes the corpus which has been purposefully created, the analytical procedure followed, the objects under examination, namely realia and irrealia, and the working taxonomies used to perform the analysis reported in the following chapters.

Chapter 4 presents the linguistic and translation analysis of the research. The realia and irrealia found in the three games are explored in light of the classifications described in the previous chapter. Data are quantitatively and qualitatively examined in order to illustrate the nature and role of realia and irrealia in the corpus and to discuss the strategies translators used in the two localizations.

Chapter 5 focuses on a special phenomenon within realia, namely military language in war-themed videogames. After an introductory discussion concerning the nature of this complex language for specific purposes, the wide range of phenomena it includes are defined, i.e. military titles, clock code, phonetic alphabet, etc., and investigated in the corpus.

Lastly, Chapter 6 illustrates the most relevant conclusions of the study and suggests future directions for research. The main findings of the analysis are summarized and critically discussed, the variety of realia and irrealia is examined and the consequent diversity of translational approaches is thematically interpreted, on the basis of the areas of interface between reality and fictionality of the game worlds’ dimensions. This chapter also includes comparative evaluations of the three games in respect of the different categories realia and irrealia fall into, in order to highlight similarities and differences and finally evince regularities. Despite the limitations of this work, which are also outlined in this chapter, the reading of quantitative and qualitative data presents the theoretical and practical implications of the research and puts forward several possible avenues for more in-depth studies which might better describe the role of culture-specificity in game localization.
1.3 Summary

This chapter has presented the rationale behind this book research. First, it has offered an overview of the commercial and cultural status of video games to foreground the role localization and translation play in the international success of the multimedia interactive entertainment industry. The global games market has been briefly outlined in order to show the impact of gaming in today’s society, with special attention to the leading US market and to the Italian and Spanish target locales. Moreover, this chapter explains the aims and scope of this book research, which descriptively investigates the translation of culture-specificity and, particularly, of realia and irrealia in a corpus of three war video games, namely Medal of Honor Warfighter (Electronic Arts 2012), Battlefield 4 (Electronic Arts 2013), and Mass Effect 3 (Electronic Arts 2012), purposefully selected to represent a realism-fictionalism spectrum and to explore whether and to what extent the relationship between the real world and the game world may influence the linguistic and cultural dimension of video games, and consequently their localization and translation.

Notes

1 Fictionalism is meant only as a high degree of fictionality and represents a working term which relates to realism, the other end of a continuum, with no reference to philosophical notions of the same name, and together with realism it represents one of the two sides of the same coin, namely the game world, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.
2 See, for example, Ranzato’s literature review (2015, 53–59).
2 Game Localization and Translation

2.1 Introduction

The study of video games has seen a surge of interdisciplinary academic interest since the late 1990s and the areas involved are many and diverse. Nowadays, the “new medium” and the related cultural, social, and economic phenomenon identified as gaming are self-sustained research topics in Game Studies, “an interdisciplinary domain, with scholars analyzing games from diverse perspectives, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, narratology, semiotics, cultural studies, genre studies, media studies, and computer studies, to name but a few” (Mangiron 2017, 76). Fundamental readings in this sense are, for example, the works by Aarseth (1997, 2001), Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2016), Jenkins (2006a, 2006b), Juul (2005), Kerr (2006), Newman (2008, 2013), Rutter and Bryce (2006), Wolf (2001, 2008, 2012), and Wolf and Perron (2009a, 2014). Video games and gaming are also explored with a focus on language in disciplines like Education and Language Learning in particular (see Gee 2003, 2004, 2007, Gee and Hayes 2011, Lombardi 2013, Peterson 2013, Prensky 2001, 2006, Reinders 2012, Thomas 2011), and Linguistics (see Ensslin 2012, 2014, Ensslin and Balteiro 2019, Iaia 2016a), among others.

As regards Translation Studies, the game localization practice went mainly unobserved until the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the first papers on this new phenomenon were published by professionals working in the field. In the last decade, as Mangiron (2017) demonstrates, research on game localization has gained impetus and the number of books, journal articles, book chapters, undergraduate, masters, and doctoral dissertations aiming to shed light on this relatively young area of study has increased considerably.

The following paragraphs mention only some of the many authors who have published their works on game localization and contributed to consolidating it as an established research domain. However, it seems important to underline that the following list may hardly be considered as truly representative of the existing and/or potentially available literature.
on game translation and localization, due to a number of reasons: first, the difficulty in accessing unpublished works, like conference presentations, undergraduate, masters, and even doctoral theses (see, for example, O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013, 26–39); secondly, the limitations in reading works written in languages other than English, Spanish, and Italian, i.e. this book author’s working languages; the awareness that research might be, but possibly will never be, published due to the obstacles in accessing materials and information on localization practice in general. As pointed out by Bernal-Merino (2008b, 2015), Muñoz-Sánchez (2011), Mangiron (2017), and O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013), most localization vendors and most mainstream game developers and publishers are unwilling or unable to provide scholars with access to authentic game texts or localization-related data, which are necessary in Translation Studies. This means that researchers must resort to other very time-consuming, and somehow limited activities to study video games. In this sense, as Mangiron advocates (2017, 86), “academia-industry partnerships would be beneficial to overcome this hurdle” and, more importantly, would be advantageous to both.

Going back into the existing literature on the topic, first, special attention must be paid to three comprehensive and ground-breaking books, which have paved the way to systematic research within what might be labeled as Game Localization Studies: Maxwell-Chandler and O’Malley-Deming’s *The Game Localization Handbook* (2012), written by two professionals who adopt an industry-oriented perspective; O’Hagan and Mangiron’s *Game Localization: Translating for the Global Digital Entertainment Industry* (2013) and Bernal-Merino’s *Translation and Localization in Video Games: Making Entertainment Software Global* (2015), which conceptualize the subject as a translational phenomenon. Moreover, there are other recent monographs which contribute to enrich the landscape, since they offer a more language-specific approach to the subject, as happens with publications in Spanish like *Localización de videojuegos: Fundamentos traductológicos innovadores para nuevas prácticas profesionales* by Méndez-González (2015a), *Localización de videojuegos* by Muñoz-Sánchez (2017), and *La traducción de videojuegos* by Granell, Mangiron, and Vidal (2017), or because they explore the phenomenon from or in connection with another scientific perspective, as in the case of *Video Game Translation and Cognitive Semantics* by Sajna (2016).

However, before discussing the literature in detail, it is worth highlighting that many sources can be found online, because game localization is a young and dynamic field that is driven by technology, led by market forces, and influenced by popular discourses on video games and the Internet continuously offers fresh evidence of the lively interest surrounding games as translatable content for global entertainment. On the contrary, academia has been slow in giving due attention to translational issues concerning
While there has been a lack of interest in theoretical arguments about translation in the localization industry, it is also true that Translation Studies as a whole has not been fully engaged with the localization phenomenon to the extent of integrating it wholeheartedly into the main conceptualization of the discipline.

Broadly speaking, this has probably been due to the lack of respectability that video games have always suffered from, because of a number of factors such as the general perception of games as entertainment of little or no importance, or the debate about their presumed detrimental impact. As Newman (2013, 5) explains:

First, video games are (still) very often seen as being a children’s medium. This means that they are easily and readily denigrated as trivial – something that will be “grown out of” – and demanding no investigation. Second, video games have been considered as mere trifles – low art – carrying none of the weight, gravitas, or credibility of more traditional media.

2.2 Definition and Terminological Issues

In emergent fields of study, especially when driven by technology and susceptible to popular discourses, terminological issues arise when concepts need definitions, thus resulting in predictable heterogeneity. In Game Studies, there is a variety of terms and spellings referring to the object under investigation: computer games, video games, videogames, digital games, and others. The same happens when dealing with game genres and subgenres since classifications may considerably vary. Moreover, the industry shows an increasing tendency to combine elements belonging to different genres within the same title, thus creating the so-called “mixed genre games” (Scholand 2002, 2) and this inevitably affects research.

As regards game translation, the very definition of this domain has been debated with reference to its belonging to Translation Studies: game localization, game translation, linguistic and cultural game localization, among others. The argument concerns the relationship between localization and translation, and this goes beyond terminology, because the boundary seems debatable and so far, unclear (see Cronin 2003, Pym 2004, 2010). Moreover, the tension may stem from the somewhat reductionist view of translation prevalent in the localization industry, on the one hand, and the lack of full recognition of localization as a phenomenon of epistemic significance within the academic community on the other (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013, 103).

The ambiguity is manifest in many respects. For example, the game industry professionals Maxwell-Chandler and O’Malley-Deming (2012, 8) define...