UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

Corso di Laurea Triennale Interclasse in Lingue, Letterature e Mediazione culturale (LTLLM)
Classe LT-12
Tesina di Laurea

Translation strategies in video game localization: study of the Italian version of Undertale

Relatrice

Prof.ssa Fiona Clare Dalziel

Laureanda
Elettra Manfrin
n° matr. 2069524 / LTLLM

Anno accademico 2024 / 2025

ABSTRACT

In this paper I am going to analyze the translation strategies used in video game localization, taking care to underline the importance of transcreation and audiovisual translation in the localization process. The video game *Undertale* (2015), by Toby Fox, will be the subject of my study because of its multitude of complex characters and their unique dialogues. Their core personalities and their impact on how they express themselves will be analyzed, in order to better explain the strategies needed for the localization of their dialogues. I will focus on the intricacies of translating informal language and cultural references, taking the Italian version of the game and comparing it with the original. In conclusion, I will provide solid research on the Italian translation and, particularly, on the challenges of translating it, making sure to add any appropriate changes or improvements.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my best friend Alice, who always helped me both mentally and by giving me great tips to use on my dissertation. She is my number one supporter.

I am also truly grateful to my family for supporting me through everything and encouraging me to always give my best. I am thankful for their patience and understanding and I hope to make them proud.

Special thanks to my university friends with whom I shared many happy moments and complaining sessions, as well as support during exam season.

Lastly, I would like to show my genuine gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Fiona Clare Dalziel, for her careful guidance, patience and insightful feedback.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The world of translation is a vast and diverse one, from its history over the years to the studies on the actual process of translating from a language to another. The discipline that concerns this subject, Translation studies, is still a relatively new one and so more research is paramount to expand the knowledge on these topics. Likewise, research on the translation process is needed to cover as many different exceptions and new techniques as possible. This is caused primarily by the nature of language, a dynamic concept, which evolves and changes at the same time as society and its people do. Translating often demands that the translator knows the context of the interested text to translate and the culture it may reference. This initial preparation, or gathering of information, can separate a basic translation from a great one.

As such, in this paper I will define and underline the main translation strategies that practice this method: transcreation, localization and audiovisual translation. A special focus will be given to these strategies when through the in depth analysis of examples of text taken from the video game Undertale (2015), by Toby Fox, and its localized Italian version, by Spaghetti Project. I will endeavor to provide relevant explanations and additional examples to the translations extracted, citing previous research done on the subject to validate them. Specifically, in the first chapter I will give a general review on the studies, currently present, that concern Translation studies. I will endeavor to explore what has been studied and what gained both importance and relevance during the years of new research on the topic, from authors like Baker and Venuti.

Particular focus will be put on describing the most used and suitable translation strategies, namely transcreation, localization and audiovisual translation. These strategies are often used in the field of translation and, specifically for this paper research, in game adaptation. It is commonly known that a translation word-for-word may not deliver the same message or emotions as the source material indicates. Therefore, I will demonstrate how following transcreation norms results to be the best method to avoid misunderstandings. In addition, I will expand on the localization process a video game goes through and how audiovisual translation correlates with it,

taking care of explaining the impact of visuals like images and text designs. Research from authors like Colina, Baker and Fernandéz will be taken into account for my study. With every piece of text in need of translation there will also be challenges and problems that may arise. Following this logic, it is necessary to unveil and understand what these issues may be and how to overcome them. In other words, I will list the main translation challenges that are likely to be encountered while translating or localizing. These include informal language, humor (wordplays, idioms), cultural references, context specific terms, paralinguistic features (visual cues).

I will explore and explain the research done on the subject by a variety of reliable authors to better understand the context of subsequent chapters. All such styles of writing create the foundation for the personalities of the characters in-game. A concept that will see Undertale as the prime example. In the second chapter I will elaborate the research done by different authors like O'Hagan and Mangiron to explain the concept of game localization, its uses and common issues. Firstly, an introduction on what a video game is will be presented. Specifically the focus will be on the main parts affected by localization, including game situations. I will try to define and differentiate the concepts of localization and translation, although they are closely intertwined and often used interchangeably, more so in a case study that regards a video game known globally.

As such, it will be useful to lay out the foundation to understanding the specifics of the localization process. To analyse accurately, the parts that compose the localization process will be listed and explained, divided into pre-localization, translation and post-localization. Each section will expand on its functions and translation problems, in order to present a full accurate examination. In the third chapter each and every one of the translation strategies and challenges cited before will be studied in a more concrete manner by taking as an example the video game Undertale (2015). Different extracts from the game will be provided, both the English and Italian versions, to be compared, explained and, in some points, modified. The notions of the authors previously referenced and my own knowledge will be used to analyze the contents of the extracts, in order to find their peculiarities and problems. The main goal of this study is to examine the creative process found in game localization, going in depth to identify the

use of translation strategies that preserve and transfer the original meaning of the source text into the target language. The video game Undertale poses as a great example for such purposes, particularly because of its richness in dialogues and well-rounded characters. This translates into texts characterised by different styles, registers and visuals.

The third chapter will collect clever use of informal language and idiomatic expressions, but also a rampant love for humor that poses the problem of untranslatable puns and wordplays. This paper will try to find a link between translation strategies, like transcreation, and the challenges found in the process of localizing a game. I will highlight the importance of using creative thinking and understanding the source's culture to create the best translation, in this case going from English to Italian. The Italian version of the game that will be analyzed, is a fan made work created by Spaghetti Project. This unofficial translation will give us many ideas on how such a project should or should not be done, and how utilizing translation strategies like transcreation and audiovisual translation can help refine the localization in a more clear and polished way. In these chapters I will try to illustrate and discuss these points in detail by giving high importance to the clearness of the analyzed research contents.

CHAPTER 1 TRANSLATION STUDIES: DEFINITION, TYPES AND CHALLENGES

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the discipline called 'Translation Studies'. The word 'translation' will be defined and explained in a way that tries to summarize the research done by different authors on the subject. Moreover, this discipline is vast and difficult to relay in its entirety without losing sight of the original objective. Therefore, in the next sections the focus will be on the types of translation and their challenges.

1.1 Introduction to translation and translation studies

The study of translation, interpreting and related phenomena is called 'Translation Studies'. Such was the name proposed by André Lefevere in 1978 to describe the discipline that deals with "the problems raised by the production and description of translations" (Bassnett-McGuire 1991: 12). The acknowledgment of this field of research happened quite recently because the subject had previously been rarely studied for its own sake, but at first it was seen as only a part of foreign language teaching (Colina 2015; Bassnett-McGuire 1991). With the passing of years, the subject of translation has seen a constant increase in interest from scholars, more so following the Second World War (Holmes 2004). Translation studies is an empirical discipline and Holmes (2004: 176) describes it as having two main objectives: to describe the phenomena of translating found in the realm of our experiences; and to set general principles so that these phenomena can be understandable and predictable.

The concept of translation has had numerous definitions, which vary from broad descriptions of the subject to specific viewpoints on how it should or should not be carried out. Generally speaking translating refers to the activity or process that produces the translation(s), a transfer or mediation of a written text from one human language to another. It regards written text specifically, because if the medium is oral than the term to adopt becomes interpreting or interpretation (Colina 2015). In translating, the language from the original text is called source language (SL), while the language in

which the text is translated into is known as target language (TL). Likewise the original text can be referred to as the source text (ST) and the translated text as the target text (TT).

It is necessary to underline that a process of comparisons between texts will always involve the theory of equivalence, that is the idea that the TT must be the equivalent of the ST in another language. Colina (2015) and Bassnett-McGuire (1991) raise the problem that equivalence in itself is not always possible or easily determinable. For example the translation of idioms and puns from one language to another often poses quite a few issues. In particular linguistic equivalence is related to homogeneity on the linguistic level, i.e. word for word.
Translated literally, the phrase
I will bathe in a shower of kisses.[1]
becomes
Mi farò il bagno in una doccia di baci.

The image evoked is unclear and does not quite communicate what the original sentence meant to convey. It ultimately loses its meaning and falls flat. For this reason translating for the sake of linguistic equivalence is not always the best course of action, seeing as it can lead to confusion. In the case of the translation of English or Italian idioms it is recommended to use stylistic equivalence, where an idiom in the SL can be substituted with another of similar meaning in the TL. In her research, Baker (2018) expands on the subject of idiom translation by listing the translation strategies best suited to translate one such phenomena. These include using an idiom of similar meaning and form, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, translation by paraphrase, translation by omission, and translation by compensation. Of similar views is Delabastita (1996) with her studies on wordplay and pun translation.

The language a person speaks is not a prison with clear walls and limitations. On the contrary, language is by definition flexible and always changing, as such a translator should be able to make use of its inherent creativity to adapt content and, more

[1] Taken from the video game *Undertale* 2015

importantly, experience (House 2009). House (2009) affirms that this expressibility principle, which is true for any language, implies that any experience is also translatable from one language to another, through the notion of equivalence. Many different types of equivalence are explored in her research, often sorted in a hierarchy order, however above all, House (2009) believes that the TT and the ST should be functionally equivalent whenever possible.

In the next chapters I will expand on the translation strategies that can be applied to video games, specifically the video game *Undertale* of 2015 by Toby Fox. The process of translation can differ from text to text and, as we will see, may harbor numerous challenges, from the linguistic side to the extralinguistic one. It is up to the translator to understand the ST and SL well enough to translate adequately.

1.2 Types of translation

There are numerous different types of translation that have been studied and applied to different contexts and situations. Translation is a dynamic discipline that needs constant updating. Moreover translators have to take into consideration matters of context, culture, genre, readership, purpose of translation and so on (Almanna and House 2023). In this paper I will focus on the three types of translation strategies most common and important for video game translation: transcreation, localization and audiovisual translation.

1.2.1 Transcreation

The type of translation known as transcreation is often applied to video games, as a way to give freedom of creativity to the translator and ensure an enjoyable gaming experience.

The word transcreation is in itself a fusion of the words translation and creation, meant to highlight the importance of preserving the idea and original sense of the ST without being limited to a translation word for word (Fernández 2014 and Venuti 1995). Fernández (2014: 9) also clarifies that transcreation does not entail a complete revolution of the ST, where a translator rewrites the whole product. On the contrary, it enables the translator to choose a palatable alternative better suited to maintaining or

improving the original gaming experience. The importance of “storytelling” in modern games is highlighted by O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013), explaining how a game without a story may lack a dimension of concreteness. A translator's ability to creatively convey the intended message of the story is paramount and can also be influenced by the game’s target audience. This last point is determined by a combination of factors, like the age ratings or target culture.

Transcreation finds particular use in those types of games that involve well-developed plots or an extensive use of narrative techniques, like role-playing, action and adventure games. *Undertale* is an example of a role-playing video game (RPG), where the player controls a child throughout a long adventure, filled with difficult choices and interesting characters. Much of the plot is focused around these characters and the world-building, with countless dialogues and special events especially made to flesh out the non-playable characters (NPC) and the world around them. Such a game, where understanding people's motivations, likes and dislikes is so important, needs a careful adaptation, concerning linguistic and cultural expressions, idioms, humorous writing and tone.

1.2.2 Audiovisual translation

Audiovisual translation (AVT) is a specialized field within translation studies that concerns the transfer of multimodal and multimedia texts into another language and/or culture (Baker 2019). It is used to adapt films, television programs, and video games, taking them across languages and cultures. This type of translation relies on a number of factors where Baker highlights, other than the language itself, the importance of images, music, color and perspective. In fact, the interactive aspect of video games and the goal of translation to make an adequate game experience possible, requires all these modes (Kaindl 2013). Video games are extremely complex audiovisual mediums (Mejías-Climent 2017), that usually need an input from an external source, the player. The translation of video game text differs from that of a book, as it can be enhanced with visual imagery, music or else. But it is necessary to underline that a video game does not have the same aspects a movie does. It has, in fact, the determining influence of the user’s participation (Mejías-Climent 2017).

Following the same idea, Thibault and Baldry (2017) propose a similar approach focusing on a multimodal transcription that encompasses the visuals, actions and music. By breaking down a text into these components, the translator is able to discern the full meaning of the ST and, therefore, adapt it for the intended audience (Valdeón 2024).

As we said, audiovisual translation deals with multiple modes of communication simultaneously, making multimodality one of its core characteristics. However, it also has to adapt content from different sign systems, namely from written to spoken language or vice versa. The audiovisual translation practices include dubbing, subtitling, surtitling, respeaking, audiosubtitling, voice-over and partial dubbing, simultaneous interpreting in film festivals, free-commentary, subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing, audio description for the blind and visually-impaired, fansubbing and fandubbing (Chaume 2018). The large reach that audiovisual media has today has strongly contributed to the creation of a new scenario where equivalence gains a new meaning, not purely related to the typical forms of formal equivalence or dynamic equivalence (Chaume 2018). Where formal equivalence stands to perfectly mirror the structure and grammar of the ST, and dynamic equivalence opts to prioritize meaning over the original text's format. Chaume (2018: 86) gives as an example the word Om-rice (omelette with rice) that, through the use of transcreation, was turned into pancakes or, in the Spanish version, into pie. The same way as chopsticks became forks to try and bridge the gap between different cultures.

1.2.3 Localization

Localization has become a well-established practice, needed for the successful globalization of products in electronic form, but the connection between "localization" and "translation" still lacks attentive research (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). The process of localization is especially important when we talk about game localization. In fact, more often than not a video game can have culture-specific aspects that are at risk of being lost in the process of translation. O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) call for a different approach when dealing with such issues, so that the unique characteristics of the original product are not eliminated but are elevated instead. This aligns with the

ideas of Venuti (1995), who aims to communicate linguistic and cultural differences instead of removing them. Specifically, Venuti (1995) differentiates between domestication and foreignization, two translation strategies with opposite goals. Domestication emphasizes fluency and naturalness in the target language, but it can also lead to the dominance of the TL over the SL. In an attempt to translate something as if it was written in the TL, the text's original culture risks complete annihilation. On the other hand there is foreignization, which Venuti (1995) advocates for, a strategy that seeks to preserve the linguistic and cultural features of the ST. In Venuti's opinion (1995: 42), this would prevent both the homogenization of the language culture and the erasure of its linguistic diversity, both of which characterize the translation of today.

Baker (2019: 157) defines localization as "the linguistic and cultural adaptation of digital content to the requirements and locale of a foreign market". In the video game industry almost every publisher needs to sell video games in more languages at the same time, because they have to reach as many potential customers as possible. Adapting to the target market is a necessary step to guaranteeing the success of a product, making it closely connected with internationalization (Panena 2018). The term 'internationalization' stands for the process that strips away any culturally-specific elements from the ST, such as colloquialisms typical of informal language and cultural references. Following this, what is left is a more neutral-sounding text that's easier for the translators to adapt for the localization process. Moreover, the cultural and linguistic elements isolated during the process have the chance of being re-added in the later stages of localization. Panena (2018) describes how transcreation is also tightly intertwined with the process of localization, where its core is highlighted by the creativity of the translator for two reasons: the translator has the creativity to decide whether to adapt the original text to the needs of the user (domestication), or to maintain some characteristics of the ST culture in the localized version (foreignization).

Game localization is a major area of research that could benefit from applying a multimodal approach (Valdeón 2024). Multimodality is a process that uses several semiotic methods in the design of a semiotic product and is most seen in cultural products and venues. In fact, a message can be better conveyed by using not only

words, but visual, acoustic or kinetic modes. To sum up, game localization is a collection of strategies and ideas to express a message from a language to another. The pillars of the process reside in the translator's concept of adaptation, be it using the concept of internationalization, keeping cultural and linguistic references or making use of multimodality.

1.3 Challenges in translating

Translating is a complex process full of challenges that need to be overcome. Not only does the process involve a precise linguistic approach, but it is also comprised of extra-linguistic elements (Bassnett-McGuire 1991). In video games, particularly in my case study surrounding the video game *Undertale*, there are some central issues that can pose a challenge for a translator. I summarized them into four categories: informal register (idiomatic expressions and slang); creativity and humor e.g. puns; cultural references or context specific words; tone.

1.3.1 Informal register and idiomatic expressions

One of the most common challenges in translating comes from the use of an informal register. Also known as casual register, it is a style of language used in relaxed, everyday conversations. Its casual nature begets the common existence of features like slang, contractions, incomplete sentences, and a less structured approach to grammar and punctuation. For this reason, it is usually reserved for conversation with family and friends. Halliday's register theory considers register as a "functional variant of language", a semantic phenomenon resulting from the change of situational context. It is divided into three core parts: field, tenor and mode.

Video games can have their own fair share of informal dialogue, simply because they might have dialogues between characters with friendly or familial relationships, either between a character and the player or between the characters themselves. The video game *Undertale* stands out for its dialogue-heavy narrative, carried out by its extensive list of interesting characters, including the user. It is characterized by the use of many different expressions and registers, which is why the game was chosen as the prime example to be studied in Chapter 3. Idioms and fixed expressions are expressive

components of informal language, known to show aspects of a society's collective ideas, beliefs, humor and history. Just translating one such expression word for word is not enough to convey their real meaning, on the contrary, they pose the challenge of interpretation between cultural and contextual obstacles (Baker 2018).

When facing idiomatic expressions, a translator will need to make use of their own interpretation in order to effectively express the correct meaning into the TL (Bassnett-McGuire 1991). Some expressions might not even have a specific ready-to-go equivalent in the TL. Therefore in the process of interlingual translation one idiom is substituted for another that serves the same purpose. For this reason, the translation may involve discarding the basic linguistic elements of the SL text so as to achieve the goal of 'expressive identity' between the SL and TL texts. For example, the expression "break a leg!", which literally means "rompi una gamba!" but actually stands for "good luck!", can be translated in Italian as "in bocca al lupo!". Both versions mean the same thing (to wish somebody good luck), but they achieve this in two completely different ways.

To summarize, informal register can pose quite a few challenges in the process of translation. Idiomatic expressions often do not have a direct equivalent due to cultural specificity, and result difficult to translate literally. Moreover, finding the correct equivalent of an idiom in the TL is not always easy or possible, as not all languages share idiomatic expressions of similar meaning and purpose. The same thing can be said about fixed expressions, which rarely change without affecting the original meaning.

1.3.2 Creativity and humor

The translation of humor is one area of interlinguistic communication where translation shifts into adaptation (Colina 2015). In fact, the primary objective of a comic strip is to make the reader laugh and that applies to video games too. Moreover, they may bring together images and written text, as such their meaning derives from the interaction between the two (Baker 2019). In Delabastita's own words (1996: 128) a wordplay is "the general name for the various *textual* phenomena in which *structural features* of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about a *communicatively significant*

confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with *more or less similar forms* and *more or less different meanings*". A type of wordplay is the so-called *pun*, defined by the online Oxford's English dictionary as a joke exploiting the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are words which sound alike but have different meanings. To create a pun, a combination between different meanings and formal similarity must be searched for (Delabastita 1996). These include homonymy (words with identical sounds and spelling), homophony (identical sounds but different spelling), homography (different sounds but identical spelling) and paronymy (with slight differences in both aspects). In the translating process, it is often impossible to find a direct translation of the joke precisely because of this. Therefore a translator has to take into the question the concept of adaptation, by which to find an alternative in the TL with a similar meaning or overall vibe to the one in the ST.
An example of wordplay can be found in the sentence

Hey, take it easy. I've gotten a ton of work done today. a skele-ton.[2]

has to be carefully adapted into Italian, while preferably keeping an analogy with skeletons or bones.

From this we obtain

Ehi, rilassati. Ti stai preoccupando fin troppo… Fin scheletroppo.

It is usually claimed that significant wordplay in the original text has to be preserved rather than eliminated, but this objective is never easy to accomplish (Delabastita 1996). These two versions differ slightly in meaning, but the most important part, preserving the game experience and the humor of the dialogue, was maintained.

Chiaro (2010) adds that, specifically, when dealing with humor translation the best solution lies in Nida's (1964) concept of functional equivalence. In other words, as long as the ST entertaining function is achieved or made up for then the translation can be considered accomplished, even if the original text was completely rewritten. In addition, Chiaro (2010: 10) brings to attention the possibility of there being "a kind of *linguistic and cultural give and take*", where the ST gets an entirely new form in the TT. This is

[2] Taken from the video game *Undertale* 2015

rooted in the culture and history of the languages involved, making it nigh impossible to train to translate and adapt humor.

1.3.3 Cultural references or context specific words

In the field of cultural translation, Baker (2019) explains how conveying a culture from one language to another poses numerous technical issues, ranging from literary allusions and dialects to culturally specific items like food. There has been plenty of research on the subject, specifically on the most effective ways to render such cultural differences. Some lean more toward naturalization, or domestication, while others lean more toward exoticization, or foreignization. Either way the translation process will always be influenced by culture (Colina 2015).

From the perspective of Bassnett-McGuire (1991: 31), when a translator encounters one such a situation they must:

(1) Accept the untranslatability of the SL phrase in the TL on the linguistic level.

(2) Accept the lack of a similar cultural convention in the TL.

(3) Consider the range of TL phrases available, having regard to the presentation of class, status, age, sex of the speaker, his relationship to the listeners and the context of their meeting in the SL.

(4) Consider the significance of the phrase in its particular context, i.e. as a moment of high tension in the dramatic text.

(5) Replace in the TL the invariant core of the SL phrase in its two referential systems (the particular system of the text and the system of culture out of which the text has sprung).

Almanna and House (2023) expand on the (4) point by analyzing the concept of pragmatics, or the study of ‘contextual meaning’. In pragmatics the researcher focuses on people’s intended meanings, their assumptions, purposes and actions. In sum, both culture and context are vital to the accuracy and efficacy of a translation. Cultural references need to be adapted from the SL to the TL, taking care of transferring the core meaning of the original text. Likewise words can have very diverse translations based

on the specific context they are involved in.

Another way to approach the translation of cultural references or context specific words can be the strategy of “chunking”, which Katan analyzes in his book *Translating cultures* (2021). The chunking strategy helps translators and interpreters to move from a local to a more global perspective when translating. In fact, translators often have a tendency of delivering word-for-word translations that fail to take into account the global context and culture (Katan 2021). In simple words, chunking refers to breaking down text into smaller, meaningful units, called chunks, for easier comprehension and translation. Katan (2021) differentiates between three specific types of chunking, namely chunking up (generalization), chunking down (componential analysis) and chunking laterally (re-anchoring text in another context of culture). These strategies help translators in different ways: they enable a better understanding of complex sentences; they help identify meaningful structural units; they are useful to preserve the original meaning and flow in the TL.

In the end, a translation that does not take into account the cultural context of the source material will feel lacking. Translators need to be proficient in cross-cultural communication, in order to be able to understand how cultural differences can affect meaning (Katan 2021). In fact, every individual's values and behavior is shaped by their cultural background which, in turn, impacts the language structure.

1.3.4 Paralinguistic features

Paralinguistic features are non-verbal cues used to add meaning and emotion to spoken language and they are used in communication almost unconsciously. These include voice modulation, facial expressions, gestures, and body language. They show the “inner voice” of a conversation, by which it is possible to grasp hidden meanings and feelings. The way in which a dialogue is carried out can evoke different feelings, bringing a sense of ‘it wasn’t *what* they said, but *how* they said it’.

In the context of a video game with no voice-over the concept of ‘paralinguistic features’ finds a whole new meaning. In fact, there will be no vocal cues available, as

the characters do not speak, instead there can be visual cues to be exploited. For example, in the video game *Undertale*, the NPC known as Papyrus is immediately enriched with a series of characteristics aimed at making the player understand his way of thinking/dealing with the world.

Papyrus: *I WILL BE THE ONE! I MUST BE THE ONE!*

I WILL CAPTURE A HUMAN!

THEN, I, THE GREAT PAPYRUS... WILL GET ALL THE THINGS I UTTERLY DESERVE![3]

In this extract Papyrus clearly evokes a sense of self-assurance and excitement, highlighted by the use of capital letters and exclamation points. Researchers like Baker (2018), Colina (2015) and Bassnett-McGuire (1991) denote the great value of preserving original meaning and intention into the TL and a similar case can be made with tone. In fact, a simple translation of equivalent words from one language to another may interfere with the original vibe of the text and ruin an immersive and complete gaming experience. Leaving behind the excessive use of punctuation, of a single catch-phrase or of capital letters may give the target audience a different idea of the original character.

[3] Taken from the video game *Undertale* 2015

CHAPTER 2 VIDEO GAMES AND LOCALIZATION

Having explained the various challenges and strategies tied to translation I will now define the key aspects of video games and their localization process.

2.1 Definition and features of a video game

The online Cambridge dictionary defines a video game as “a game in which the player controls moving pictures on a screen by pressing buttons”. It is differentiated from computer games, explained as “a game that is played on a computer, in which the pictures that appear on the screen are controlled by pressing keys or moving a joystick”. This distinction is analyzed by O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013), explaining that video games do not require a “microprocessor” while computer games do not require any “visuals”. Even so this separation is becoming more and more blurred as computers evolve and improve. People commonly use these two terms interchangeably since they can be both classified as “electronic or digital games”. Thus we can give a broader and more exhaustive definition of the term “video game”. Video games are a combination of written text and graphics, often accompanied by audio and full motion pictures. As software programs they are closely connected with localization. In a general perspective they can also be differentiated from “game platforms”, meaning the devices they are played on. These can be game consoles, PCs, handheld devices or arcade games (Mejías-Climent 2017). Different devices mean different players and specific characteristics. In addition they can be separated into single-player or multi-player games.

In recent years video games have gained more and more attention from the public, both from new players, like children, and old nostalgic players attached to a specific brand name. Moreover, the pandemic brought a new wave of needs: the desire to connect, talk and play with other people. Video games are first and foremost entertainment media, made to be enjoyed like a good book, but they often encourage social interactions between players. Even if the game itself is not meant to be multi-player, people will still create communities to talk about their experiences and thoughts. It is the case for the single-player video game *Undertale*, by Toby Fox. This popular game caught the internet by storm with its storytelling, unforgettable characters and deep message. There

emerged a community that is so determined to make this game accessible to the entire world that they decided to start a project to create a localized version of the game in Italian, the so-called “Spaghetti Project” which I will be analyzing in greater depth in Chapter 3.

Recently video games have also started implementing more the use of cut-scenes for their usefulness in showing certain parts of the story without the player’s interference (Fernández 2014). They are narrative techniques that enrich a game’s story, making it feel more movie-like. Like movies, they present the same localization challenges, such as lip-syncing and careful subtitling within the time limits of a scene. One example can be found in the video game *Genshin Impact* (2020), an international success with four different dubbing options and 13 subtitling options. The game makes good use of cut-scenes in many different scenarios, showing great care in the handling of localization in different languages.

It is also worth making a distinction between types of players, based on their attitude towards “gaming”. O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) talk about “player engagement” when tackling this subject, intended as the level of commitment a player is willing to give a game, such as a casual player or a hardcore player. Player categories can help a developer, and sometimes translator, to stir a video game concept into the right direction. A casual player-oriented video game might find it preferable to opt for a simple interface and easy-to-understand mechanics, coupled with easy translations without too much specific game terminology. According to the statistics researched by Fernández (2014), there are more than 200 million users of online casual games, signaling a high interest towards the game industry. Similarly the improvement and promotion of online gaming has been beneficial for the success of hardcore games. In the next section I will focus on the different types of games, or game genres, which is necessary to understand what a video game is.

2.2 Game genres

Nowadays there is a large variety of games and, as such, there exist many different genres (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). Even a single genre can be divided into two or

more particular branches. The game industry uses these categories to help classify video games, but they are not universally chosen and standardized. In fact, O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) found that West gamers identify eight genre categories while Japanese gamers acknowledge up to 26 of them. However, more and more games are crossing the fine line between game genres, so much so that the line itself has become blurred, becoming known as "mixed genre games" (Fernández 2014: 6). It is paramount to know and understand the audience a video game is supposed to appeal to, and for this reason starting from the game's genre can help the translation and localization process.

Gamespot, an American video gaming website that provides news, reviews, downloads and more things game-related, categorizes games into action games, adventure games, driving games, puzzle games, role playing games (RPGs), simulations, sports games and strategy games (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). Each and every one of these is unique and needs a specific set of rules to follow, in order to deliver an enjoyable experience to the user. As can be gleaned from their names, a driving game will usually seek to achieve authenticity and realism through accurate verbal representation and terminology. For example, utilizing technical terms related to the world of cars, motors and racing. At the same time, a puzzle game will take great care in translating a text accurately from the ST to the TT. Even the most insignificant error could change the meaning of an entire riddle and ruin the game experience. Based on the purpose of the video game, specific skill sets and knowledge of key terminology are required in translators.

The game industry is, however, continuously changing and evolving and with it the borders of possibility. Genre conventions are challenged every day and mixed genre games are increasing rapidly (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013 and Mejías-Climent 2017). The video game *Undertale* (2015) is considered an RPG, but it also presents aspects typical of action games, adventure games, puzzle games and strategy games. Identifying the genre of a game can be useful to organize the translation process, but it must not be limited or stunted by these. Every game has a personal tailored vocabulary, but they also share key terminology related to the game industry in its entirety. In the next section I will explore the game situations that make up the base of a video game.

2.3 Key terminology and game situations

While playing a video game the user will experience a series of events, triggered by their input, that will alternate throughout the entire game. This type of media is different from a movie or TV show, where the events do not need any external action to start and develop. A game, by definition, is interactive and those different forms of interaction (or absence of it) are called *game situations* (Mejías-Climent 2017). They relate to a specific context within the game world and are defined by the questions "who", "what" and "where". Mejías-Climent (2017) identifies four types of game situations: tasks (instructions for the player); game action (where the player has full control of the activity); dialogues (written or oral exchanges between characters); and cinematics (cut-scenes where the player cannot act).

These game situations are triggered with the input of the player. Specifically the player has to set in motion a given set of circumstances to trigger a scene. For example, a dialogue could start when the player interacts with a non-playable character, called NPC, where the main character may be given an objective or task to achieve. This shows how a video game structure is never linear or the same for everybody (Mejías-Climent 2017). Each user will trigger events based on their actions in the game, meaning that every gameplay will be unique, as the only fixed game situations are represented by the game mechanics or rules on which the game bases itself. From this point of view the players can be seen as masters of their own destiny (Panena 2018), capable of shaping their game experience through their own creativity and personality.

Video games are an object of research and present a wide variety of context specific terms. From a localization perspective, a video game is made of a number of assets that require such a procedure, such as in-game text, art assets, audio and cinematic assets, and printed materials (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). Game localization might be involved in other components but I will focus on the ones mentioned above. In-game text (or "onscreen text") refers to all the text present in the user interface (UI): this means everything from menus, tutorials and system messages to written dialogues with NPCs or descriptive texts. As the space in which such information is stored is limited, it

is the translator's job to fit all relevant information (such as statistics or objects' names) into the UI without it appearing messy and difficult to understand (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). Being able to manage these spaces effectively is one of the most important things needed for the development of a video game. In fact, the UI can be considered its heart and also the first thing the user will interact with. Some translated terms might occupy more space than their original counterparts and could, at worst, end up needing truncations or excessive abbreviations, which players might find confusing.

Art assets include all the images and graphics that may be implemented in a game, in other words, maps, signs, letters, text applied on the environment, all assets that may need a redesign in order to fit the necessary text from the ST to the TT. Some video games can undergo an entire redesigning process by extrapolating the relevant information from the images and translating it as a separate text. This way the original graphics remain unchanged, and the meaning behind them can be easily understood from the separate translation. Audio and cinematic assets, and printed materials are ways to make a game feel richer and livelier, for example with the addition of cut-scenes or an instruction manual. Translating them accordingly is necessary to ensure a pleasant game experience and, in the case of cut-scenes, audiovisual translation (Mejías-Climent 2017) can help smooth out the process.

2.4 Video game localization

Video game localization refers to the process of translating a video game from one language to another, thanks to which players from all over the world can enjoy the same type of content in their own language (Panena 2018). The most important thing to consider during this process is the game experience, which has to maintain the original flavor no matter what the TL is. In the next sections I will expand on the subject, focusing on the features of preservation of the original meaning. The difference between translation and localization will be explored, providing useful examples.

2.4.1 Translation vs localization

Firstly, to understand the importance of localization, it is necessary to dive into its primary characteristics and compare them with those of standard translation methods.

As explained by O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013), translation and localization are terms that have been often confused or erroneously understood, when in reality they are different processes with different aims and ways of reaching such goals. It is difficult to give a clear definition of “localization”, as even in the related industry the terms are often used interchangeably. The discipline of translation studies, seen in Chapter 1, is vast and relatively new. The research conducted on the topic is limited, even more so on the branch of game localization (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). So, it is generally established that localization is a superordinate concept of translation, something that can be regarded as a “specialized translation” (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013).

However it can also be argued that the term “localization” involves more than the simple act of translating contents. The whole process and tools needed to translate the language, meaning, images, models, cultural references and overall game experience are just as important as the final product. A localization team might need to alter character models based on the local laws and regulations, or even change entire scenarios by the same principles (Panena 2018). The core function of localization can be summarized with the word “adaptation”. A simple word to encompass a wider meaning. A localizer’s job involves the research and use of a more comprehensive approach to adapt a product for a specific market. In fact, thinking of localization as a way to make a product “international” or “global” might lead to erroneous and incomplete views of the subject (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013).

The term “localization” is derived from the word “local”, which can both mean a small area or vicinity, and a specific mix of language, geographical area and culture. The same thing is pointed out by Baker (2019: 157), where she defines localization as “the linguistic and cultural adaptation of digital content to the requirements and locale of a foreign market, and the provision of services and technologies for the management of multilingualism across the digital global information flow”. Baker (2019) offers a more complete and broad definition that encompasses everything tied with the localization process and the tools or services required to apply it.

2.4.2 The localization process

The localization process incorporates all the stages that go from the research on the product commissioned to be localized, to its distribution to the market. While each localization project has its own given set of parameters to follow, we can outline a number of standard tasks and stages that they all have in common, as shown by Baker (2019) and analyzed thoroughly by O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013): an initial phase of analysis and preparation (pre-localization); the central phase featuring translation and editing; a last phase of testing and reviewing (post-localization). When the final project is approved it can be sent to production and subsequent distribution.

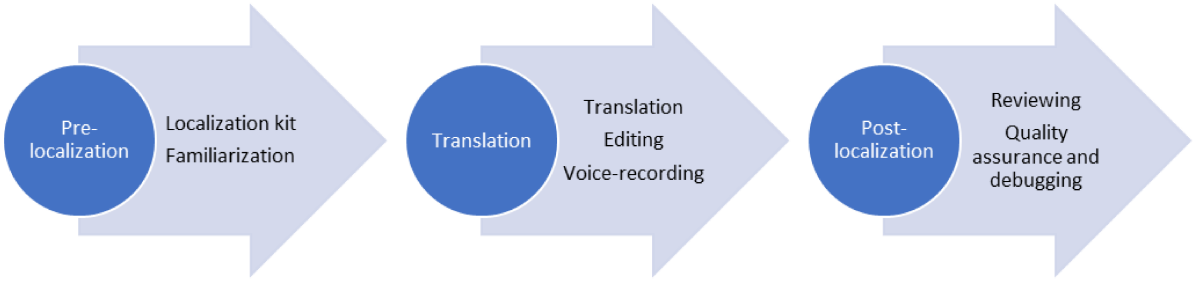

Figure 1. Main stages in the video game localization process (graph created using the theory of O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013)

Pre-localization starts with the creation of a localization kit, a container full of all the relevant information about the project, which the translators will need to familiarize themselves with in order to prepare for the next task. In the case of video games, the original version must be studied and understood perfectly (Panena 2018). These include: cultural references, context specific expressions or words, character designs, and cut-scenes value. All this is relevant to paint a general but complete picture of the game in question. This first step also helps with the selection of the most suitable translators, required to carry the right set of skills and knowledge: for example, if the game involves firearms it will need a specific vocabulary, with words such as *trigger*, *recoil*, and *rifle*. The key element in this process is represented by the actual translation. The translator works to translate the ST into the TL accurately, making sure to transfer

all the relevant information and preserve the game experience. At this stage, the translation strategies explored previously in Chapter 1, such as transcreation, come into use. At the discretion of the localizer, the translated piece is edited to fit the needs of the local market for which it is destined, without completely erasing the foreign culture underneath.

The next step comprises the translation and recording of any voice-overs present. The recording process, as specified by O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013), can be challenging to work through because translators are not often familiar with the context behind the lines they are translating. In fact, voiceover dialogue may be presented in a non-linear fashion, making it harder to translate or voice to its best. On the topic of dubbing in video games, Mejías-Climent (2017) explains the process of synchronization, or more specifically the way in which the target language translation is made to match with body and articulatory movements of the screen actors. Mejías-Climent (2017) also explains how actual videos are rarely available when translating the text: in this way that the translators have to take as their main reference the audio files recorded in the SL. This particular restraint can cause confusion, and some elements risk being lost in translation. Mejías-Climent (2017) and O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) divide audio recordings into five different types: wild, time-constrained, sound-synch, and lip-synch.

Post-localization, the last phase, is made up of all those tasks that are necessary to finalize the game, such as editing, debugging, reviewing and quality assurance (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013, Panena 2018). This stage is important to find and rectify any bug or inaccuracy made in the translation process. The final version might take several rewrites to be functional (from a software perspective) and correct (from the linguistic perspective). The proofread version will be ready to go through the last stage of the localization process. However, such an ambitious and time-consuming process is bound to pose numerous challenges and exposed to a large variety of constraints and limits. In the next section I will categorize and explore the most prominent problems of the localization process in relation to video games and, in particular, *Undertale*.

2.4.3 Localization challenges

As already seen in the previous sections, localizing a video game is not only about translating the text, but it is tightly connected to the whole product, from the character designs to the user interface and space management. Valdeón (2024) summarizes how game localization needs to take care of linguistic, cultural and technical components of the game, as well as the legal aspects. Video games often have characteristics found in audiovisual mediums, so they suffer from the same type of problems and common errors. Things like typos may appear harmless, but are also capable of breaking the immersion of the narrative.

In the process of transferring a text from one language to another, we must take into consideration a number of challenges, more or less difficult to tackle. From the perspective of preserving vibes or feels, the most glaring problem is related to culture-bound references. A word or expression in English may not necessarily convey the same meaning if translated literally in Italian. For example in the video game *Undertale*, there is the expression “You slippery snail!”, which translated literally in Italian as “Tu lumaca scivolosa!” does not evoke the same idea as it does in English. In English it refers to someone who is difficult to catch, agile, but also sneaky and crafty. The Italian version translated the phrase with “Sei agile come una volpe!”, a clever way to mix both meanings together. In fact, the animal that best represents cunning cleverness is the fox, in addition to also being considered agile and fast. In simple terms, transcreation is used, by rewriting the original text and consciously choosing the best terms to represent it (Panena 2018).

However, just finding the best translation is not always enough to guarantee good localization. More often than not, a series of obstacles can make it more difficult to reconcile the original version to its localized counterpart. For example, O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) talk about “space constraints” as an extremely challenging problem to overcome in game localization. It is more prominent when translating from languages such as Japanese or Chinese, that represent concepts in a single character, to Romance languages, which need more space for in-game text. To overcome space constraints it is preferable to design text boxes, menus and lists to permit some form of extra space

(O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). Otherwise it is acceptable to substitute words with symbols of equal meaning and visual impact (such as the icon of a drop of water to signify thirst). For the Italian version of the video game *Undertale* this problem is less severe, as the difference in length between English and Italian is not particularly noticeable. It is a different story for the Japanese version (Figure 2): here the layout of the dialogue was changed accordingly to suit Japanese standard phrase structure, going as far as to put the stylized image of the character Papyrus on the opposite side of the dialogue screen.

Figure 2. Screenshots taken from the video game *Undertale* (2015) showing the Japanese version and English one side by side (dialogue by Papyrus)

Since game localization has translation as one of its key components, it will naturally be afflicted by the problems any translation process has. These include the challenges in adapting humor, word plays and puns, finding equivalents of idioms or rendering cultural references (Chapter 1). In the structure of a video game, all of these issues must be resolved in a certain way in order to keep a cohesive and coherent script (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013). For example, in the recent mobile game *Pokémon TCG Pocket* (2024) the expansion set *Extradimensional Crisis* contains cards depicting the so-called Ultrabeasts. In English these special Pokémon, all have an attacking move tied to the world of music, such as “grindcore”, “electronica” or “beat punk”. All of these moves are kept the exact same in Italian, attesting to the will of the translators to maintain a coherent theme across languages.

In conclusion, localization goes hand in hand with translation. The challenges in the localization process are multiple but possible to overcome with an appropriate use of translation strategies, such as transcreation. In the next chapter I will analyse these strategies and problems in relation to the video game *Undertale*.

CHAPTER 3 CASE STUDY: *UNDERTALE*

Undertale is a role-playing video game (RPG) created by Toby Fox, an American independent developer, published in September 2015. The game has sold more than five million copies (sourced from *Video Game Insights*), attracting buyers because of its musical score, originality, story, dialogue, combat system and characters. It has been nominated for multiple awards and magazines like *Vice* call it "one of the most remarkable video games ever made". This project was almost entirely devised by a single man, except for the artwork and character designs, which were created by Temmie Chang. The popularity of the game encouraged a small Japanese fan community to make an unofficial fan localization. This led Toby Fox to consult several different companies to create a Japanese version of the game, eventually settling with 8-4, a Japanese localizer. At present there are no other official localizations of the game, but only fan translations, such as the Italian version produced by Spaghetti Project, which I will explain more later in the Chapter. In the next section I will analyse the structure and multiple aspects of the game, such as the genre, story and characters.

3.1 Game genre and story

A role-playing game (RPG) is a game in which the player assumes control of the main character (or characters) and acts out the role to their liking, within the narrative. The actions of the player have the ability to shape the character development of their character and, in some cases, determine how the story will play out. All of this is achievable through a set of pre-determined rules that constitute the framework of the game (like predefined dialogue options or a specific number of reachable endings).

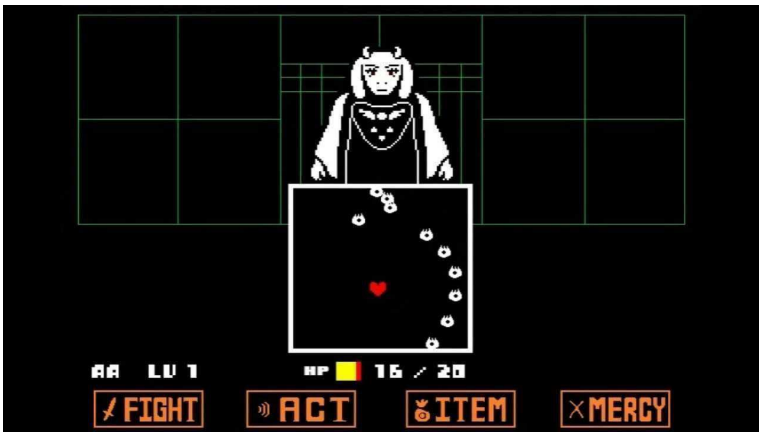

Figure 1. Screenshot of the video game *Undertale* showing the user interface when in combat

In *Undertale* there are multiple endings, all achievable in a certain way. The two most memorable ones are nicknamed “Pacifist route” and “Genocide route”. The former is the so-called “true ending”, where at the end of the game everyone has a happy ending and the bad character is defeated, while the latter is a form of bad ending where the bad character becomes the player himself, who, as the name suggests, goes on a mad rampage to kill everything and everyone. This indicates how the game places great importance on the notion of storytelling. In fact, its characters weave a compelling story that has captured millions of users in its web. Every action, every dialogue option chosen helps flesh out the characters, which are one of the core parts of *Undertale*.

Figure 2. Screenshot taken from the video game *Undertale* showing the dialogue box that appears when conversing with non-playable characters in the overworld

Regarding the plot of the story itself, the formula is a simple one: a human child falls into a hole and finds himself stranded in a foreign world, the Underground, filled with monsters. His goal is to find a way to go back home as soon as possible and so the user’s adventure begins. It is necessary to specify that the monsters living in the Underground are not mindless beasts, but can be interpreted as a race similar to the human one. In fact, most of them are capable of speech and share human traits like compassion, love and fear. The protagonist will spend his journey trying to reach the

royal castle, where the only one capable of helping him, the King Asgore, resides. Yet while the player has this goal to reach, so does the King. He needs seven human souls to break the barrier between the monster and human world, and the main character is actually the seventh soul. So, the story is not only a journey to a destination, but also a way to understand the plights and reasons of the monsters. Depending on how the player acts during his playthrough, there will be different endings, in favor or not of the monsters.

Figure 3. Screenshot taken from the video game *Undertale* showing the last scene of the Pacifist route

3.2 Characters

In a story driven by the storytelling so much, such as *Undertale*, there are bound to be likable and well-rounded characters able to carry the narrative and world building. First of all, there is the main character, canonically going by the name Frisk, which the player will take control of during the course of the game. He is a simple human, stranded in a strange world of monsters, known as the "Underground", and trying desperately to return home. As in many other games, Frisk does not interact with non-playable characters (NPCs) through normal dialogue boxes. When NPCs ask the player a question it is implicit that the character will answer, but it is not visually shown on-screen with a dialogue box. Other characters simply acknowledge the implicit answer and move on with the plot. The only instances in which Frisk will actually talk with others is when the player has to choose a dialogue option to answer with. We can

see an example of similar structure in the series of *The Legend of Zelda*, with its protagonist Link. This perceived muteness on the part of the protagonist helps the users connect to their journey.

Figure 4. Character sprites from the video game *Undertale,* in order from left to right: Frisk, Flowey, Napstablook, Toriel, Sans, Papyrus, Undyne, Alphys and Asgore

An iconic character of the game is, without a doubt, Papyrus, a friendly skeleton that loves puzzles and dreams of becoming a royal guard. The player meets him early on in their adventure, after the prologue that mostly serves as a tutorial section. With him there also comes Sans, his seemingly aloof brother, who actually likes making skeleton puns and lazing around. Papyrus always speaks in caps lock to emphasize his exuberant nature, making generous use of question and exclamation marks. Instead Sans is his complete opposite, never using caps lock or abusing punctuation marks. As previously said in Chapter 1, this technique is useful to give personality to pixelated characters that do not have any voice over. It is a simple and easy way to convey character traits that should, otherwise, be explicitly stated or gradually understood after spending time knowing said character. It also gives a general idea of how to interpret what they say, helping to find a suitable term in the translation process.

Another enigmatic character is Flowey the flower, a seemingly innocent and wide-eyed fellow that soon shows his true colors as a psychopathic killer living by the motto “kill or be killed”. His starting dialogues are full of fake cheer and friendliness (also using exclamations such as “golly”) but after his real self emerges, he becomes more cynical and sinister. His way of talking is interesting to understand how changing a character’s register or choice of words can mutate your entire view of them. Undyne is another character that at first glance appears in a certain way, but deep inside they have a very different personality. In the case of Undyne, she first appears as tough and unfeeling,

and acts as an obstacle to the completion of the player's journey, blocking the user's way and threatening to kill them. Her speech emphasizes the solemness of her mission and it also gives great weight (more so in the genocide route) to her unshakable determination. In her dialogues we can clearly see her fits of anger, highlighted by using caps lock, interspersed with her more serious words. Finally we have the so-called "monster kid", who, as his name might suggest, speaks using contractions and informal language (like slang). Being an awkward kid, he punctuates his sentences with many dots and "um", signifying hesitance and giving a general feel of insecurity and shyness to the character.

As I have mentioned, every character has their unique set of traits and quirks, some of which can be conveyed in different ways: through the visuals of the dialogue, the punctuation, the use of specific terms (informal or formal language), the use of contractions or abbreviations. In the next section I will analyze the most significant examples of these, and how the translators handled their adaptations into Italian.

3.3 The Italian version: the Spaghetti Project

As *Undertale* became increasingly popular, many communities around the world started to grow. In particular, the Italian fanbase craved for a translation of the video game into Italian and ultimately decided to create one with its own hands. The Spaghetti Project was therefore born; it was an ambitious idea to translate and adapt the entirety of the original game into Italian (the first version of the translation was released in 2017). This project is entirely fan-made, available for download on the website dedicated to the project, and would appear to be a high-quality translation. In fact, as I will explore below, the translators responsible appear to have made good use of relevant translation strategies such as transcreation, overcoming the more common challenges that can be encountered during a localization process.

3.3.1 Formal and informal language

Source language English	Target language Italian
Monster Kid: Man! I knew it! … well, I	Monster Kid: Caspita! Lo sapevo! Beh,

know it now, I mean... But I kinda stink at that, haha. Yo, what? So I have to do it? Here goes nothing… Yo, I… hate your guts. Man, I… I'm such a turd.	lo so adesso, voglio dire... Ma non sono bravo ad esserlo, haha. Yo, cosa? Quindi devo pensarci io? O la va o la spacca… Yo, tu... mi fai schifissimo. Caspita, sono... sono davvero una carogna.

In this dialogue the player is interacting with Monster Kid, a shy and earnest teen that is befriended during the adventure. In his lines of dialogue there are multiple instances of colloquial expressions, namely terms to give emphasis like "Man" and "Yo" or informal ones like "kinda" and "here goes nothing". The Italian translation tries to convey the childish way in which Monster Kid expresses himself using superlatives such as "schifissimo", in order to represent an exaggeration that borders on the ridiculous. The sentence "well, I know it now, I mean" has been translated effectively, but I would find it more appropriate to translate it with "beh, lo so adesso, intendo", in order to make it sound less stiff and literal.

The idiom "here goes nothing" is particularly tricky to translate and it goes without saying that translating it literally would not make sense in the given context. The phrase is a common expression used to indicate that somebody is going to attempt something, without being sure if the result will be positive or not. It is an idiom usually found in an informal register and poses the challenge of finding a suitable equivalent in the TL (Colina 2015 and Bassnett-McGuire 1991). To adapt it, the translator chose the Italian expression "o la va o la spacca", which conveys a similar idea and does a good job at reaffirming the informal context and the childish behavior of the character (Monster Kid). Moreover, Monster Kid uses the term "turd", a vulgar way to address someone mean, which does not have a perfect equivalent in Italian. In fact, it stands between two possible translations: "merda" which is too vulgar and harsh and "cacca" which is too light. As *Undertale* is a PEGI 12-rated game, it does not use much outright foul language but just a fair amount of mild swearing and insults. Therefore, the word cannot be translated literally, meaning that the localization process needs to adapt the text to the

standards of the TL, seeking a balance between excessively rude and unnecessarily childish (Valdeón 2024 and Panena 2018). For this reason, the translator used the substitute of similar meaning “carogna”, which is acceptable to convey the negativity of the statement without sounding overly explicit. Another option that relates with the theory of transcreation (Fernández 2014) would be to rewrite the expression as “sono proprio tremendo”.

Source language English	Target language Italian
Sans: sup, bro? Papyrus: YOU KNOW WHAT "SUP," BROTHER!	Sans: come butta, fratello? Papyrus: LO SAI BENISSIMO COME “BUTTA”, FRATELLO!

This dialogue is between the brothers Sans and Papyrus. It is quickly discernible how they are friendly with each other, going as far as teasing (Sans) or scolding (Papyrus) the other. Here we can see an example of contraction “sup”, a colloquial expression that stands for “what’s up”. The Italian language does not have a direct equivalent (there is no contracted form of the greeting “come va”), so the translator decided to use “come butta” as a way to connect the level of informality with the closeness of the two characters interacting. This type of adaptation uses transcreation norms, which allow a level of creativity not restricted to formal equivalence (Bassnett-McGuire 1991 and Chaume 2018).

Source language English	Target language Italian
P: I WILL BATHE IN A SHOWER OF KISSES EVERY MORNING. S: hmm... maybe this lamp will help you. P: SANS!! YOU ARE NOT HELPING!! YOU LAZYBONES!! ALL YOU DO IS SIT AND	P: VERRÒ RICOPERTO DI BACI DA MATTINA A SERA. S: Hmm… Forse questa lampada ti può dare una mano. P: SANS!! NON SEI PER NIENTE D’AIUTO!! SMIDOLLATO!! NON FAI ALTRO CHE STAR SEDUTO

BOONDOGGLE!	A BIGHELLONARE!

In another dialogue between the two brothers, we can find some examples of idioms and clever wordplays. Firstly, the dialogue starts with the sentence (first referenced in Chapter 1) “I will bathe in a shower of kisses every morning”, which is an English idiom that does not really find any memorable equivalent in the TL. However, TT and ST should still remain as functionally equivalent as possible when translating (House 2009). As such, the translated version was simplified in order to prioritize clarity of meaning, using a different wording to transfer the idea of “being constantly kissed all day”. A very peculiar problem we can find when trying to translate the noun “lazybones”. More often than not the two brothers will make skeleton puns, seen as they are both skeletons and jokers, and this instance is no different. “Lazybones” acts as a well-thought joke on skeletons (it has the word “bones” in it), while also referring to the typical laziness of Sans. Naturally, it is untranslatable into Italian, not without losing the intended pun underneath. Here lies the problem that a translator comes to when translating humor (Delabastita 1996 and Chiaro 2010), and the best approach consists of following functional equivalence (Nida 1964). In this case the translator chose to preserve the joke, rather than the actual meaning, opting for the noun “smidollato”. This specific word has an element that can be traced back to skeletons (“midollo” meaning “marrow”), but it loses the idea of laziness. Instead, it means someone lacking will and energy or that is too “soft”.

In the last phrase the term “boondoggle” can be quite challenging to translate, as it is an informal word that can have different meanings. A “boondoggle” is a project that is considered a waste of time and money, so the verb form means “wasting time doing something useless”. The verb it was translated with is “bighellonare”, which is acceptable as it maintains an informal quality and gives the idea of “wasting time”. Another good translation could be “non fai altro che star seduto a trastullarti!”, where “trastullarsi” underlines the idea of being lazy, amusing oneself with trivial activities.

Source language English	Target language Italian

S: wow, sounds like you're really working yourself... down to the bone. P: UGH!!! I WILL ATTEND TO MY PUZZLES... AS FOR YOUR WORK? PUT A LITTLE MORE, "BACKBONE" INTO IT!!!!	S: wow, vedo che ti stai impegnando… Fino all'osso. P: UGH!! IO VADO AD OCCUPARMI DEI MIEI PUZZLE… PER QUANTO RIGUARDA IL TUO LAVORO… DOVRESTI PROPRIO… FARTI LE OSSA!!!

In this dialogue, still with Sans and Papyrus, there are some examples of untranslatability, specifically puns regarding skeletons. As we saw in Delabastita's research (1996) in Chapter 1, this particular type of wordplay is almost always impossible to translate directly from the SL to the TL, mostly because certain words have different meanings and connotations limited to their original language and not others. Taking the expression "working yourself down to the bone", it is an idiom that stands for "working extremely hard, possibly for a long time" that in Italian would be translated with "ammazzarsi di lavoro" or "lavorare come un pazzo". However both of these solutions would lose their primary objective, which is making a pun. In previous sections, research by Valdeón et al. (2024) emphasized how game localization needs to take care of linguistic, cultural and technical components of the game. This applies to humor translation too, in the sense that the game experience has to be preserved whenever possible and in the best possible way (Delabastita 1996). If the translator decided to erase the aforementioned joke then the next lines of dialogue would need to be rewritten too, otherwise it would look like Papyrus was angry with Sans for no reason. In order to avoid this, the translated version used an Italian expression ("fino all'osso") to convey a similar meaning and keep the connection with skeletons. It is not a perfect translation because the expression is not usually paired with the verb "impegnarsi" but it is acceptable in context. This thought process and problem solving is possible thanks to transcreation (Fernández 2014 and Venuti 1995), which leaves space for the translator's creativity to shine.

A second pun is placed in the last line of dialogue “put a little more ‘backbone’ into it” and displays the same problems as well as the same translation strategies as before. The expression itself is intended to describe when someone exerts a strong effort toward doing something. In the game context it is meant as an exhortation to Sans to take his work more seriously and actually do it with some effort. The backbone is also part of the skeleton, making it the perfect addition to continue the trend about bone puns. In Italian, there are a few expressions that use bones and the like as visual images to illustrate different concepts, like the previously seen “fino all’osso”. The translator chose “dovresti proprio farti le ossa”, which conveys a close enough overall sense (it means “to gain experience or practice”) and uses the word “ossa” to reiterate the wordplay aspect.

Source language English	Target language Italian
S: well, that went well. don't sweat it, kid. i'll keep an eye socket out for ya.	S: beh, direi che è andata benone. Non preoccuparti. Ti terrò d’orbita.

Continuing on the subject of puns and untranslatability, here we have another example taken from Sans’ dialogue. This time the words “eye socket” was used to create the joke, as a substitute for “eye” in the common idiomatic expression “to keep an eye out for someone”, namely “to pay close attention to someone”. In this case it is intended positively, Sans will make sure the protagonist does not get himself into any trouble by keeping watch on us. There is a similar expression in Italian “tenere d’occhio qualcuno” which is great for this context. As such, the translator chose to put “orbita” instead of “occhio” to point out the implicit joke. By using the method of functional equivalence (Chiaro 2010 and Nida 1964) the entertaining function is achieved, without even needing a complete rewrite of the original sentence.

In the multiple examples of dialogue I analyzed, there was a great deal of effort put into the localization of difficult things like humor and informal language in the video game, all challenges explored and reported previously by O'Hagan and Mangiron et al. (2013). Each sentence was carefully thought out and translated to preserve the initial intended

goal, understandable by the source text. The text translated did not have particular problems with space constraints.

3.3.2 Cultural references and context specific terms

Source language English	Target language Italian
P: IN MY OPINION... JUNIOR JUMBLE IS EASILY THE HARDEST.	P: SECONDO ME… GLI ANAGRAMMI SONO SENZA DUBBIO I PIÙ DIFFICILI.

When approaching translation challenges such as cultural references the translator has to either try to adapt it with an equivalent in the TL or change it completely to have it make sense in the translated version. We saw previously how Venuti (1995) compared these two types of approach to cultural references, namely foreignization and domestication. In this dialogue the term “junior jumble” is used: this does not have a direct translation into Italian (Google translate translates it as “guazzabuglio giovanile” and it is not a recognized term in the standard English dictionaries), without giving the word in context. In fact, taken by itself, a Jumble is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as “an untidy and confused mixture of things, feelings, or ideas”, which is not relevant here. Wikipedia’s community explains it as “a word puzzle with a clue, a drawing illustrating the clue, and a set of words, each of which is “jumbled” by scrambling letters”. The same concept in Italian is close to what is called “anagramma”, but it is not strictly meant as a game of word puzzles. Moreover, the translator is not able to completely convey the addition of “junior”, which intended a game of Jumble leaning on the easy side for young players.

The final translation is less impactful than the original, even though the overall meaning was correctly transferred. An arguably better variant could be obtained by using the expression “parole scomposte”. It alludes to a puzzle similar to junior jumble, including the easiness factor, because the unscrambled letters are used to form a single word (contrary to “anagramma”, which uses a set of letters to create multiple different words). This translation would better convey the cultural connotations found in the

original expressions, pointing to the simplicity of the game and subsequent childish disposition of Papyrus.

Source language English	Target language Italian
P: BEHOLD! THE GAUNTLET OF DEADLY TERROR!	P: OSSERVA! ECCO A TE IL PONTE DEL TERRORE!

Similarly to the previous example, the use of the word “gauntlet” also stems from the culture of a language. Taken by itself the term “gauntlet” literally means “medieval glove”, but it is commonly translated with “guanto di sfida”, however in the context of the dialogue neither would make sense (the player is standing on a bridge while various weapons are ready to destroy any who dare pass on both sides). While combining it with specific verbs like take or throw the meaning takes on a figurative quality, in other words it goes to stand for “accepting a challenge” or “challenging someone”. Another interesting version is “running the gauntlet” which was a military punishment in medieval times consisting in passing between two rows of soldiers attacking. Specifically in video game culture, when the term comes up, it most often refers to a difficult sequence of trials or battles that the player has to overcome in a single sitting to reach a goal, connecting with the idea of a challenge. In the context of this scene, the term probably refers to all of these particular meanings with varying degrees (it is a series of challenges thrown to the player and it consists of two rows of deadly weapons).

This mix of concepts could be adapted into Italian as “passare per le bacchette”, therefore rewriting the phrase as “passerai per le mortali bacchette del terrore” using transcreation (Fernández 2014). In the fansub, the translator chose to outright simplify the message and substitute “gauntlet” with “bridge”, a visual clue on what can be seen on-screen. Such a localization prioritizes the game experience, taking care not to confuse the player, but loses the deeper meaning, the idea of continuous difficult challenges ahead, that could be found in the original. As per audiovisual translation (Mejías-Climent 2017), opting to connect visual imagery with the dialogue helps the

player both focus better on what is going on on-screen and understand that the bridge is associated with danger.

Source language English	Target language Italian
P: YOU SEE THESE TILES !?	P: LI VEDI QUESTI PANNELLI!?

In this table we can see an example of context-specific words. The scene shows the main characters observing a floor made of square tiles of various colors, situated outside on the grass. In the ST, the term “tiles” is used to indicate flooring, which, when stepped on, can give different effects to the player. The most common translation of the word would be “piastrelle”, but the localizer creatively decided to forgo literal translation to find a better suited alternative. Even if this translation is not wrong per se, when talking about “piastrelle” one might think about an indoor location and something on the walls rather than underfoot (which, in the context of this dialogue is not relevant). A fundamental part of audiovisual translation lies in its ability to connect visuals, actions and music (Thibault and Baldry 2017 et al.). So, using the synonym “pannelli” helps the player connect what they are seeing in-game with what they are reading.

Source language English	Target language Italian
P: GREEN TILES ARE ALARM TILES! IF YOU STEP ON THEM… YOU WILL HAVE TO FIGHT A MONSTER!! […] BLUE TILES ARE WATER TILES.	P: I PANNELLI VERDI SONO PANNELLI-ESCA! SE CI CAMMINERAI SOPRA… DOVRAI AFFRONTARE UN MOSTRO!! […] I PANNELLI BLU SONO PIENI D'ACQUA.

In this subsequent dialogue, English and Italian again opt for different terms, “alarm tiles” as opposed to “pannelli-esca”. Here the choice of the translator is more

ambiguous, as there is no real reason to change the noun (both an alarm and a bait can work to attract a monster context-wise). Probably the Italian translator found it more appropriate to use the word “esca”, as it implies the involvement of an animal (and monsters in this game often do not look humanoid and/or have animal traits). It could also take inspiration from the famous video game *Pokémon*, where in a specific location called Safari zone it is possible to throw lures in order to catch the iconic pocket monsters. This creative way of thinking is what characterizes transcreation and, by adding contextual clues, the storytelling was improved too (its importance was underlined by O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013). In the last sentence we find an example where the context is necessary for the clarity of a translation. The ST defines these tiles as simple “water tiles”, but in Italian it is preferable to add more details in order to make the phrase easily understandable. The translator, in order to do that, had to be privy of the context of the scene (as the visuals in-game do not give many details other than a blue square), which is not always guaranteed in the localization industry (Mejías-Climent 2017 and O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013), and understand that the tile itself was not made of water, but it was filled with it. Therefore, to convey this message clearly and undoubtedly the expression “sono pieni d’acqua” was used.

Every extract analyzed gave an example of translation challenges, from the informal language and humor to cultural references and idioms, all explained in previous chapters. This research shows how the creativity and freedom of the translator can help shape a more accurate translation, in particular, making it more understandable and meaningful, taking into consideration the specific context. In other words, transcreation often was the best solution to these challenges and should be used consistently, not only in the video game industry. Similarly, using norms of audiovisual translation often made more easily understandable dialogue sections that were otherwise prone to misunderstandings. We saw how visual input helped the localization process when choosing the most suitable translation by also avoiding ambiguity. Video games specifically should always find a connection between what is seen on-screen and what can be read through dialogues or menus.

3.3.3 Characterization through written dialogue

As mentioned above, in a video game with no voice over or good enough graphics to allow facial expression changes (*Undertale* is a video game made with pixel art), the characterization of a character falls almost entirely on how they speak and behave. There are different ways to show a character's traits and quirks through written dialogue, one of which we already saw before: capitalization. The character known as Papyrus has dialogues composed entirely of capitalized letters, even if his mood when he is talking is not always euphoric. This stylistic choice, continuing on what was said in Chapter 1, helps the player identify and remember a character. The most famous characters in the game industry are, after all, the most memorable. However, decisions based on how a dialogue should look are not the only options available to better frame a character's personality: how a character actually talks, what register they use, what specific words they say. Even the sound track can clue the player in on what he is dealing with.

Source language English	Target language Italian
Flowey: Howdy! I'm FLOWEY. FLOWEY the FLOWER! Hmmm... You're new to the UNDERGROUND, aren'tcha? Golly, you must be so confused. Someone ought to teach you how things work around here! I guess little old me will have to do. Ready? Here we go!	Flowey: Buondì! Io sono Flowey. Flowey il fiorellino! Hmm… è la tua prima volta nel sottosuolo, non è vero? Woah, hai un'aria confusa. Qualcuno ti dovrà insegnare come vanno le cose qui! Nessun problema, ci pensa il piccolo Flowey! Pronti? Via!

The protagonist of this dialogue is Flowey the flower, the first important character the player meets. His speech is made so that he appears jovial and friendly, with numerous exclamation expressions of very informal nature like "howdy" or "golly". The translator has to give the same feeling of friendliness and trust in the Italian version, which is not an easy feat. As House (2009) believes, the TT and the ST should be functionally

equivalent whenever possible. In this case, the two terms involved sound very old-fashioned. “Howdy” is an informal way to greet someone and it stems from the 16th century phrase “how d’ye do”, while “golly” is an exclamation of mild surprise derived from the 19th century alteration of the word “god”. Seeing as the TL does not have a specific equivalent to either words, it is necessary to use creativity to accomplish a similar feeling. To translate “howdy” the word “buondì” was used, which is acceptable, but loses the informal inflection that it was aiming for in the original. However, it keeps the “dated” inflection, as the word is not so commonly used nowadays. Similarly, translating it as “salve” could also bring the point across. Another option would be focusing on the informal nature of the original word, translating it into a simple “ciao” or “ehilà” to better express a jovial and open personality. The same thing can be said about “golly” and its counterpart “woah”. Here the original term was adapted through domestication, eliminating any old-fashioned inflection to preserve, most of all, the clarity of the game experience (Panena 2018 et al.). It could also be translated as “accidenti” or “perbacco”, the latter sporting a more dated quality to it.

In the last phrases Flowey refers to himself as “little old me”, downplaying his existence and manipulating the player (and main character) into thinking he is harmless. Online dictionary *UsingEnglish* translates this idiom as “a way of referring to yourself that is meant to be modest or self-deprecatory, though often fake”. This perfectly aligns with Flowey’s intentions to later kill the player through deception and false niceties. There were clearly challenges in translating these utterances into Italian because the idiomatic expressions “little old me” and “I will have to do” do not have a direct equivalent in the TL. The translator can, therefore, decide to either forsake the original implicit meaning and focus on simply getting the basic sense of the expression across, or rewriting in a way capable of delivering as accurate a translation as possible. The fansub opted for a change in the structure of the entire sentence, using “il piccolo Flowey” to substitute “little old me” and accentuate the idea that he is insignificant. While this translation is not wrong per se, it is not the best either because it translates an idiom almost completely literally. A great deal is lost between languages, which can be avoided by using transcreation that focuses on preserving the original vibe found in the ST (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013 et al.). I would advocate for a translation more centered

around the feeling the character gives the player in that moment, meaning a degree of rewriting is necessary. Something like “suppongo ti dovrai accontentare di questo povero fiorellino” to accentuate Flowey’s intention to appear humble and charitable.

Source language English	Target language Italian
Flowey: Howdy, [player’s name]! You finally made it home. Remember when we used to play here? Hee hee hee... Boy! Today's gonna be just as fun.	Flowey: Buondì [nome giocatore]! Finalmente a casa. Ti ricordi quando giocavamo qui? Hi hi hi… Oh, Ragazzi! Oggi sarà altrettanto divertente.

This dialogue is from the same character, but later into the game, when his evil nature has already been revealed. His way of speaking doesn't outrightly change, but the way the player perceives it does. In fact, it starts with the same greeting “howdy”, only this time it feels like he is mocking the player with his carefree manner. To underline how unsettling this speech is, the onomatopoeia of an eerie laugh was used “hee hee hee”. In Italian there are different ways to express a laugh in written form: for example the onomatopoeia “muhaha” describes an evil laugh and “ha… ha… ha” has a sarcastic inflection. The laugh “hi hi hi” is what could be called a giggle or snicker, nothing that screams “evil” but something more sinister and mocking. Flowey possesses all these traits and so the localizer decided to assign him this specific laugh. This is not a simple matter of translation, but of adaptation of interlinguistic communication instead (Colina 2015). In addition, during the dialogue, there will be moments where Flowey will have his face twisted into a cruel and eerie smile. This method of audiovisual translation takes advantage of visuals to further unsettle the player, as well as the music (Mejías-Climent 2017 et al.).

Source language English	Target language Italian
Undyne: Seven. Seven human souls, and	Undyne: Sette. Sette anime umane, e Re

King ASGORE will become a god. Six. That's how many we have collected thus far. Understand? Through your seventh and final soul, this world will be transformed. First, however, as is customary for those who make it this far... I shall tell you the tragic tale of our people. It all started, long ago... No, you know what? SCREW IT! WHY SHOULD I TELL THAT STORY WHEN YOU'RE ABOUT TO DIE!?	ASGORE diventerà un dio. Sei. È quante ne abbiamo acquisite finora. Capisci? Con la tua settima e ultima anima, questo mondo verrà trasformato. Prima però, come usanza per coloro che riescono ad arrivare fin qui... Ti racconterò la tragica storia del nostro popolo. Tutto iniziò molto tempo fa... No, sai cosa ti dico? AL DIAVOLO! PERCHÉ DOVREI DIRTI LA STORIA, QUANDO STAI PER MORIRE?!

In this extract we see a new character, Undyne, a warrior with a tough and aggressive exterior but also an awkward and caring side. In her first lines of dialogue Undyne talks with a solemn and determined aura, while at the end she lets herself get overtaken by her anger and lashes out. This particular point is highlighted by the use of the capitalized letters, which imply a raise of voice and emotion. To keep the grave tone in which Undyne initially speaks, the dialogue is translated to be almost identical to the original. There is no challenge given by informal language or untranslatable puns, therefore going for a more literal translation may help explain exactly what is happening without the risk of confusing the player with convoluted paraphrases.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper aimed to describe and analyze the translation strategies used in video game localization, in order to better resolve different translation challenges. These included problems tied to informal language and register, idiomatic expressions, cultural references and context specific terms. The case study, that used as an example the game Undertale, helped define and appraise the use of transcreation and audiovisual translation in the localization process. Specifically, we went through different extracts of dialogue that sported a distinct use of creative thinking, not just a simple translation word-for-word. It was noticeable how disconnecting from formal equivalence and encouraging a cultural exchange between texts improved the final translation greatly.

Granting freedom to the translator resulted in a more refined and natural localization, which prioritized preserving implicit meanings or emotions when going from English to Italian. On the topic, we examined different extracts concerning wordplays and puns on skeletons, all of which were adapted to keep their humorous nature and objective in the target language. Similarly, the type of register used took on an important role in the adaptation of the dialogues. This informal kind of language presents a variety of different problems that differ from the formal one. It was proven how a character's personality can affect how they interact with others, particularly in relation to their dialogue. For example, the use of capital letters to express exuberance or give the idea they are using a high tone of voice. In addition, we saw how a video game with such a diverse cast of complex characters benefits from an attentive approach in its translation. It was clear that every character taken into consideration was designed to show a unique personality, both through texts and visuals (text and character design).

As previously stated, the numerous instances typical of informal language like wordplays, puns and contractions, found in characters' dialogues would not have expressed their whole meaning or idea if a literal translation was chosen. In this paper, it was established how game localization, specifically, seeks to preserve the game experience for the player, which we defined as a method intent on changing and adapting a dialogue or menu to fit the target language standards, without completely altering the original flavor. Many authors corroborate this statement, like O'Hagan and

Mangiron (2013). The field of translation is still relatively new and more research will be needed in order to establish a consensus among researchers that fortifies the idea that transcreation norms are often the best option for game localization (especially RPGs) and overcoming common translations challenges. More analysis on video games, of various genres or for different kinds of audiences, might help broaden the field's perspective and reach.

SUMMARY IN ITALIAN

In questa tesi sono state analizzate le varie strategie di traduzione più comunemente usate nel processo di localizzazione dei videogiochi. Nello specifico, sono state esaminate le seguenti strategie di traduzione: la transcreazione, la traduzione audiovisiva e la localizzazione. Il primo capitolo si è concentrato sull'analisi di queste ultime, nei successivi capitoli si è prestata particolare attenzione ai problemi e alle difficoltà tipiche di una traduzione a scopo videoludico.

La transcreazione è un concetto analizzato da diversi autori quali Fernandéz (2014) et al. in cui il traduttore ha interesse principalmente a veicolare il messaggio da una lingua all'altra mantenendo invariati tono, stile e idea di base dell'originale. Questo metodo promuove la libertà e la creatività del traduttore, il quale non è limitato alla creazione di una traduzione pressoché letterale in nome dell'equivalenza formale. Può invece mirare a preservare se non migliorare la struttura e l'intenzione del testo originale, assicurandosi che la lingua di destinazione ottenga una traduzione fluida e naturale. Scegliere l'approccio più adatto si è dimostrato quindi essere fondamentale per la corretta localizzazione di un testo o altro prodotto.

La traduzione audiovisiva è stata analizzata esplorando le ricerche sul campo portate avanti da autori come Mejías-Climent (2017) e Chaume (2018). Questo tipo di approccio si focalizza sull'intreccio di vari elementi presenti in un contenuto multimediale, in questo caso il videogioco, che ne creano la struttura portante. Si è parlato dell'impatto della musica, delle immagini e delle azioni compiute dai personaggi o dallo stesso giocatore. Tutti questi elementi sono capaci di influenzare le scelte di un traduttore durante il processo di localizzazione (Thibault e Baldry 2017). Come visto nel terzo capitolo, infatti, l'input visivo ha dato spunti interessanti per tradurre segmenti altrimenti ambigui o poco chiari.

La localizzazione, oltre a contenere le precedenti strategie di traduzione, si premura di adattare linguisticamente e culturalmente i prodotti digitali (tra cui i videogiochi) tenendo conto degli standard e dei requisiti del mercato straniero. Sull'argomento abbiamo analizzato due modi opposti di adattare un videogioco proposti da Venuti

(1995): l'addomesticamento e l'estraniazione. Il primo è una strategia volta a rendere estremamente conforme un testo alla cultura di destinazione, rischiando la perdita di diverse informazioni o riferimenti culturali della lingua di partenza. Il secondo, al contrario, agisce in modo tale da mantenere quanto più possibile le informazioni del testo di partenza, al punto di incastrarle a forza nella struttura della lingua di destinazione. Venuti (1995) sostiene quest'ultima modalità ritenendo più importante, nel passaggio da una lingua all'altra, preservare la cultura originale rispetto a conformarla o eliminarla.

A seguire sono stati esplorati i problemi comunemente trovati durante un'azione di traduzione. Sono state esaminate: le problematiche dell'utilizzo di un registro informale; la intraducibilità delle espressioni idiomatiche o dei riferimenti culturali; la difficoltà di adattare l'umorismo o le parole legate ad un contesto specifico; la sfida di esprimere caratteristiche paralinguistiche all'interno di un dialogo. Lo studio si è concentrato sul mostrare le varie questioni che possono ostacolare un fluido e naturale passaggio da una lingua ad un'altra. Per esempio, espressioni idiomatiche e riferimenti culturali inglesi si sono rivelati spesso intraducibili, poiché la lingua italiana non possedeva espressioni equivalenti adatti alla situazione. In questi casi sono stati esplorati diversi modi di ovviare a tali ostacoli, quali l'utilizzo della transcreazione per riscrivere creativamente specifici segmenti o l'uso delle informazioni visive (come immagini o segnali visivi) da implementare nella traduzione finale.

Nel secondo capitolo è stata fatta luce sul tema dei videogiochi e sul loro processo di localizzazione. Sono stati esplorati i vari componenti fondamentali di un videogioco, i generi esistenti che più traggono vantaggio da una traduzione fedele e la terminologia chiave che caratterizza un prodotto multimediale di questo tipo. Il processo di localizzazione si compone di tre fasi principali: la pre-localizzazione, la traduzione e la post-localizzazione. In primo luogo il traduttore deve familiarizzarsi con il contenuto che andrà ad adattare prestando attenzione al contesto e a qualsiasi elemento culturale presente. In secondo luogo è stato analizzato il cuore del processo, ossia la traduzione vera e propria. Tenendo atto delle informazioni raccolte nella fase precedente, il localizzatore andrà a trovare le soluzioni più attinenti che, allo stesso tempo, dovranno

mantenere il tono originale. Una volta perfezionato l'adattamento vi è l'ultima fase di controllo qualità, necessaria per assicurarsi un corretto andamento del processo. Questo procedimento incontra le stesse problematiche trovate nella semplice traduzione da lingua a lingua, precedentemente citate. Trattandosi di un videogioco con una formattazione specifica, O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) affermano, inoltre, che si può andare incontro a problemi di spazi in menù o finestre di dialogo magari troppo stretti perché la lingua di destinazione possa esprimersi al meglio.

Nel terzo e ultimo capitolo sono stati esaminati diversi brevi estratti, sia in inglese che in italiano, provenienti dal videogioco *Undertale*, un gioco di ruolo (GDR) creato da Toby Fox e pubblicato nel 2015. È stato scelto questo gioco proprio per la sua natura da GDR, poiché incentrato sul raccontare una storia attraverso il dialogo tra i suoi molteplici personaggi. Ognuno di essi è caratterizzato da tratti unici e facilmente riconoscibili anche attraverso il loro modo di muoversi e parlare. La versione italiana è un fansub, ovvero una traduzione fatta dai fan, realizzata da Spaghetti Project per rendere accessibile il videogioco alla comunità italiana. Attraverso l'analisi dei dialoghi di alcuni dei suoi personaggi, specificatamente Sans, Papyrus, Undyne, Monster Kid e Flowey, si sono messe in pratica le teorie di traduzione precedentemente approfondite. I procedimenti di transcreazione e traduzione audiovisiva sono stati utili a comprendere e migliorare il fansub originale, il quale è generalmente corretto ma, non sempre propone le soluzioni di traduzione più brillanti.

In conclusione, questa tesi si è focalizzata sull'analisi concreta dell'efficacia di diverse strategie di traduzione e sulla ricerca delle problematiche più evidenti e comuni che è possibile incontrare sulla strada della traduzione perfetta. Ulteriori studi sulla materia saranno necessari per tenere sempre aggiornato il mondo della localizzazione videoludica e per trovare strategie ancora migliori al fine di conciliare il senso della lingua di partenza con la struttura linguistica e semantica della lingua di destinazione.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Almanna, A. & House, J. (2023). *Linguistics For Translators*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Baldry, A. & Thibault, P. J. (2006) *Multimodal Transcription and Text Analysis*: *A Multimedia Toolkit and Coursebook*. Equinox.

Baker, M. (2018). *In Other Words. A Coursebook on Translation*. Routledge.

Baker, M. & Saldanha, G. (eds.) (2019). *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies,* third edition. Routledge.

Bassnett-McGuire, S. (1991). *Translation studies*. Routledge.

Chaume, F. (2018). Is audiovisual translation putting the concept of translation up against the ropes?. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 30, 84-104.

Chiaro, D. (2010). **Translation, Humour and Literature: Translation and Humour**, *Bloomsbury Advances in Translation*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Colina, S. (2015). *Fundamentals of Translation*. Cambridge University Press.

Delabastita, D. (Ed.). (1996). Wordplay and Translation. *The Translator*' 2/2.

Fernández Costales, A. (2014). Exploring translation strategies in video game localization. *MonTI. Monographs in Translation and Interpreting*, 4, 385–408.

Holmes, J. S. (2004). The Name and Nature of Translation Studies. In L. Venuti, L. (ed), *The Translation Studies Reader*. Routledge, 160-171.

Jewitt, C. (2014). *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Kaindl, K. (2013). Multimodality and translation. In C. Millán & F. Bartrina. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies.* Routledge, 257-269.

Katan, D. & Taibi, M. (2021). *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Mejías-Climent, L. (2017). Multimodality and Dubbing in Video Games: A Research Approach. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series: Themes in Translation Studies*, 17, 99–113.

O' Hagan, M. & Mangiron, C. (2013). *Game Localization: translating for the global digital entertainment industry.* John Benjamins

Panena Paolo. (2018). Localizzare vuol dire tradurre? Il caso dei videogiochi. *Rivista Internazionale di Tecnica della Traduzione / International Journal of Translation* (20), 131-147.

Valdeón, R. A. (2024). The translation of multimodal texts: challenges and theoretical approaches. *Perspectives*, 32(1), 1–13.

Venuti, L. (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility*: *A History of Translation*. Routledge.