CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH ON VIDEO GAME LOCALISATION:

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CROATIAN AND SPANISH GAMERS' PERSPECTIVES
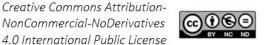
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ABSTRACT

This research aims to provide insight into Croatian and Spanish gamers' perspectives on video game localisation in their respective countries with different localisation traditions. The data was acquired through anonymous e-mail interviews with predominantly open-ended questions. Compared to their Spanish counterparts, Croatian gamers exhibited a higher degree of aversion towards localisation and rejected the idea of gaming in their native language, which also included the use of gamer slang. However, despite initially opposing views, both participant groups agreed that localisation could contribute to a higher degree of immersion.

Keywords: audiovisual translation, video game localisation, culturalisation, immersion

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the video game industry has experienced steady growth. According to March 2024 data by Statista, it is further expected to grow at an annual rate of 8.76% between 2024 and 2027. Additionally, the global video

game market has already outperformed traditionally dominant entertainment sectors, such as film and music, in terms of annual revenue (The Tech Portal n.d.). As the gaming industry continues to expand, some gaming companies invest in localisation to reach a wider audience (McArthy 2005, 149). In his book on video game localisation, Bernal-Merino (2013, 128) acknowledges that video game localisation does not have a unanimous definition, but for the purposes of this article, the term will refer to the process of adapting video games for different languages and regions – also known as *locales*. According to Bernal-Merino (2013, 61), "a locale is the language and culture variety natural of a particular geographic region". Even though different regions might share the official language, such as Spain and Spanish-speaking countries in South America, they might not follow the same cultural norms, conventions, and laws, all of which must be considered during the localisation process. The meaning of the term *locale* takes both language and geographical region into consideration to address these distinctions. However, for the purposes of this research, an emphasis has been placed on the linguistic and cultural aspect of the localisation process instead of technical or legal, as the focus lies on participants' personal reception of video game localisation rather than their respective countries' requirements for legal compliance, for instance.

Despite increasing importance within the industry, video game localisation is still not a frequent topic in academic research, especially in Croatia, which is the main motivation behind this research. This article starts with an overview of video game localisation in general, followed by an overview of video game localisation practices in Spain and Croatia, two countries with different translation traditions. Then, it moves on to the research background, including the two research questions: Are Croatian gamers more likely to exhibit aversion to playing video games in their native language than their Spanish counterparts? Are Spanish gamers more inclined to play video games in their native language compared to Croatian gamers?

After the research questions are presented, the article presents the methodology, followed by results and discussion before reaching conclusions.

2. Background

The following sections showcase localisation practices across the video game industry and then refer to the video game localisation trends in Spain and Croatia. Finally, they give an overview of the practical background for this research.

2.1 Localisation and culturalisation in the video game industry

In the beginning, most video games were relatively simple, making localisation nearly redundant. For example, arcade video games spread across the globe at its peak, including developing countries. According to Bernal-Merino (2017, 1), many people quickly learned to play arcade games due to the simplistic nature of the gameplay mechanism, despite having no knowledge of English, the source language of many popular arcade games. However, one of the earliest examples of video game localisation can be seen in *Pac-Man*. Originally developed in Japan by Namco, the popular arcade action game was introduced to the US market as *Puck-Man*. However, it was later changed to *Pac-Man*:

> The answer lies with Midway, the company who obtained the rights to manufacture the game in the United States. They were concerned by the potential for people to vandalise the machine by changing the 'P' into an 'F.' And so, Pac-Man was born! Following the North American release, Namco adopted Pac-Man as the official name for all future iterations of the game in Japan and abroad. (LocaliReview n.d.)

Furthermore, the names of Pac-Man's enemy ghosts in the game were also localised:

> In the Japanese version of the game, the red, pink, cyan, and orange ghosts are called Akabei, Pinky, Aosuke, Guzuta. If translated literally, these names would read as Reddy, Pinky, Bluey, and Tardy. […] When the game came to the West, these ghosts were introduced as Blinky, Pinky, Inky, and Clyde. (LocaliReview n.d.)

Midway decided to take a creative approach with the humorous naming convention in an attempt to boost sales (Bernal-Merino 2013, 226). Over time, video games have grown more complex since the release of *Pac-Man*, and so has localisation:

> These early games required the least amount of translation, as the games consisted mainly of dots and lines with very few command lines. By comparison, today's major game titles present many elements to be translated, reflecting intricate gameplay features with breathtaking 3D graphics, surround-sound and incorporation of human

voices as well as in-game cinematics, known as 'cut-scenes'. (Mangiron and O'Hagan 2006, 11)

With the ongoing expansion of the video game industry, there has been an increased focus on the importance of cultural adaptation in the process of localisation as well, also referred to as *culturalisation*.

Culturalisation was introduced into the field of video game localisation by Kate Edwards, who points out that culturalisation is "a step further beyond localisation, as it takes a deeper look into a game's fundamental assumptions and content choices, and then gauges the viability in both the broad, multicultural marketplace, as well as in specific geographic locales" (Dong & Mangiron 2018, 151). This includes history, religion, and other components that define a culture. As a result, culturalisation can be a challenging process due to cultural differences between locales. Video games may sometimes be censored in certain regions of the world. In 2020, China censored artworks for some characters from *League of Legends* due to their "seductive visual graphics" (de Leon 2020), igniting a debate over its justifiability. For instance, the official artwork for Evelynn, a seductive portrayal of a succubus, was altered to conceal her midriff. As Mangiron (2021, 4) notes, "cultural adaptation is also essential to guarantee playability of the localized versions, as players need to interact with the game in order to advance and enjoy the gameplay experience".

Video game localisation can contribute to the success of a video game across different markets, but it can also have detrimental consequences. Gaming companies should thus develop a strategy based on comprehensive market research, all while keeping in mind various constraints, such as tight deadlines, budget limitations, and legal restrictions. Furthermore, video game localisation may reflect trends in the translation of audiovisual content, for example dubbing. Countries with a long tradition of dubbing audiovisual content may also be more open to video game localisation into their native language. As a result, gaming companies might invest more into localisation to meet player expectations and market demand.

2.2 Video game localisation in Spain and Croatia

The following sections explore video game localisation in Spain and Croatia, two European countries with traditionally opposite practices in audiovisual translation.

2.2.1 Spain

Spain is arguably one of the biggest markets for the video game industry in the world. According to research carried out by Allcorrect in 2023, Spain ranks 13th globally and 5th within Europe, with 33.3 million gamers. Additionally, the average player spending of $71.6 per month indicates strong consumer engagement, further reinforcing the market's potential. Given these factors, it is likely that gaming companies will invest in game development strategies tailored to the Spanish audience, which includes not only marketing strategies but also localisation.

In fact, according to Keywords Studios (2023), a leading video game industry services company from Ireland, "the country has a long-standing tradition of audio localization, as all movies and books released in Spain have had to be localized by law for decades." Moreover, companies are expected to localise their content into European Spanish in particular. In another research project conducted by Allcorrect in 2022, "speakers of European Spanish said that they often notice a foreign-sounding quality in games that are translated into the Latin American variety. Slang, jokes, and dialectics are often confusing." This shows the importance of distinguishing different locales that share the same language. Furthermore, the exclusion of Spanish voice-overs can lead to poor sales and heavy criticism (Mendoza 2021). This could potentially be seen as a reflection of the established practice of dubbing films and TV shows into Spanish.

2.2.2 Croatia

Unlike Spain, Croatia follows the tradition of subtitling audiovisual content rather than dubbing. This may also be among the reasons why Croatia ranks among the top countries in the global English language proficiency ranking as per the EF English Proficiency Index. According to the test results from 2023, Croatia is on the 11th spot in 113 participating countries, while Spain ranks as 35th. Therefore, both the practice of subtitling and a high proficiency in English may be among

the reasons why video game localisation has not been widespread in the country. Croatia is also a smaller market compared to the FIGS (French, Italian, German, English) -region.

When it comes to *immersion*, the term itself lacks an established translation in the Croatian language that is used in the context of video games. Language users might sometimes employ the anglicism *imerzija* or descriptive paraphrases such as *uživljavanje u videoigru* instead. The paraphrase could roughly be backtranslated as *immersing yourself into the video game*; however, using the term *uživljavanje* in isolation would not be fitting as it is normally not primarily directly associated with video games. In broader discussions about the role of language and its impact on the feeling of immersion, the absence of a widely accepted term for immersion in Croatian may hinder this objective.

However, things may be slowing changing. Sony published a Croatian version of the fourth sequel of its video game *God of War* in 2018, which proved to be a commercial success worldwide: "According to data analysts The NPD, Sony Santa Monica's mega-selling PS4 title, *God of War,* is the fastest selling PlayStation exclusive title of all time, having shifted 3.1 million copies in its first few days, then five million within its first month" (Moyse 2018). This would make it "one of few large triple-A[1] titles to be officially translated and localised for the Croatian games market" (Kidwell 2018). In-game localisation includes menus, controls, etc. However, there is no Croatian voice-over; the game offers subtitles instead. Nevertheless, Sony's investment in the Croatian market may become an incentive for other influential companies to follow suit.

2.3 Research background

The following sections explain the motivation behind the research, key objectives, and the questions that participants were asked.

2.3.1 Research motivation and objectives

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[1] AAA, pronounced and sometimes written triple-A is an informal way of saying a video game was produced and distributed by a mid-sized or major publisher, which implies higher development and marketing budgets.

Video game localisation remains underrepresented in academic research, especially in Croatia, which motivated me to explore this subject and reveal any knowledge gaps pertaining to this topic. Despite speaking Spanish to a certain degree, I acknowledge that my level of linguistic fluency and cultural understanding is limited and – moreover – that my native Croatian background might have influenced the interpretation of the results.

With the potential bias in mind, the primary aim of the research was to acquire a deeper understanding of Croatian and Spanish player expectations and consumer behaviours, and lay the foundation for potential future research in the field of video game localisation, especially in Croatia.

2.3.2 Research questions

The following two questions are addressed in this article:

RQ1: Are Croatian gamers more likely to exhibit aversion to playing video games in their native language than their Spanish counterparts?

RQ2: Are Spanish gamers more inclined to play video games in their native language compared to Croatian gamers?

3. Methodology

The following section outlines how the research was conducted, how the data was collected, how the participants were chosen, and which questions they were asked.

3.1 Research method

The research was conducted between October and November 2023 via e-mail interviews as the primary data collection method. Participants, who were chosen through a convenience sampling method, were provided with structured instructions, followed by an interview with a series of open-ended questions. All participants were asked to provide written consent before the interview, in which they agreed to participate in the research project. Participation was voluntary. Furthermore, participants were assured that their responses would remain

confidential and that their identities would remain undisclosed throughout the research process, in accordance with international ethical research standards.

The interviews were carried out in the English language. Subsequently, as participants returned their responses, any ambiguities or gaps in their responses were addressed through follow-up e-mails. Even though Künzli (2022, 4) mentions it is under-represented in translation studies, this asynchronous online communication was an effective tool for ensuring clarification where necessary. Moreover, e-mails can accommodate a geographically dispersed sample, making them a practical approach for collecting data from participants in different regions, as is the case with Spain and Croatia. This method also enabled participants to provide reflective responses at their own pace, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of their perspectives on the subject.

After concluding all e-mail correspondence, the participants' responses were organised into a Word table in two adjacent columns, i.e. one for Croatian participants' responses and one for Spanish participants' responses. A comparative analysis was then conducted by examining the similarities and differences across the responses. These specificities are presented in a later section of this article.

3.2 Participant sample

The following section presents the conditions participants had to meet in order to be considered for the interview, followed by a presentation of participants' self-assessment of foreign language proficiency.

3.2.1 Demographic analysis

The interview was carried out on five participants from Croatia and an additional five from Spain. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method, drawing from my personal network and their acquaintances, which is why Spain was selected, as well as because of its translation tradition. This approach was employed due to the accessibility of the participants and a limited amount of time to conduct this research. The criteria for selecting the sample were as follows:

- Participants had to be born and raised in Croatia and Spain, with Croatian and Spanish as their native languages, respectively. Participants had to stem from a monolingual household to avoid their opinions being shaped by a foreign language. Therefore, people with parents from different countries were not considered. Exceptions were made for participants who spoke both Spanish and Catalan as native languages, due to the complex socio-cultural history of Spain. However, people from other Spanish-speaking countries were excluded because the research focusses strictly on Spain as a locale distinct from other Spanish-speaking locales.
- Participants had to be born between 1994 and 2003, i. e. they had to be in their 20s, indicating they grew up during the transition between the late 1990s and early 2000s, when video game localisation experienced sharp growth. Gender was irrelevant, as gender-based differences were not considered for the purposes of this research. The average age of Croatian participants was 25, while the average of Spanish participants was 24.4.
- Participants had to have played video games on a regular basis for at least 10 years. This was to ensure the participant sample consisted of gamers who had grown up with video games as one of the primary sources of entertainment, because they would be the target audience for the process of localisation.

3.2.2 Participant language proficiency self-assessment

Before proceeding to the main questions of the interview, participants were asked to self-assess their language proficiency in foreign languages. The self-assessment was conducted with reference to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)[2]. While this method provides a context for understanding participants' language skills, it is important to acknowledge that self-assessment is subjective by nature. As a result, there may be variations in the accuracy of these self-assessments. Nevertheless, they serve as a reference point for measuring participants' language proficiency.

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[2] Developed by the Council of Europe, the Common European Framework of Reference is a standardised framework used to assess a person's language proficiency in various European languages. The reference levels range from beginner (A1) to proficient (C2).

All Croatian participants listed English as their first foreign language, with their proficiency estimated at C2 (four participants) or C1 (one participant). Furthermore, all participants mentioned speaking other foreign languages, ranking their proficiency from A2 to C2, with a tendency towards the upper proficiency levels for most participants.

All Spanish participants also listed English as their first foreign language. However, their self-assessment was lower: B1 (one participant), B2 (two participants) or C1 (two participants). Furthermore, not all participants mentioned speaking other languages. Two participants mentioned speaking only English as a foreign language, while the other three participants indicated they spoke other foreign languages only at a beginner level (A1 or A2).

In summary, both groups have English as a common foreign language, but Croatian participants generally have a higher self-assessed level of proficiency and are more multilingual compared to their Spanish counterparts, who exhibit a lower self-assessed level of language proficiency and a lower degree of multilingualism. This could potentially be attributed to several factors. For example, English-language media, including films, television shows, and video games, are widely consumed in Croatia. This exposure to the English language in popular culture may enhance language skills. Additionally, Spanish is spoken as a first language in more countries, potentially reducing the urgency for Spanish speakers to become proficient in other languages. This should therefore be taken into consideration, as both participant groups provided responses in English, which is not their native language.

After the language proficiency assessments, participants were asked to respond to the open-ended interview questions that assessed their attitudes towards video game localisation. There were nine primary questions and an additional one that allowed participants to freely express their opinions about the topic if they could not fit them into any of the preceding questions. These ten questions can be found in the Appendix.

4. Results and discussion

The following section presents participants' responses, followed by a summary of findings from the interview.

4.1 Cross-analysis of participants' responses

The following sections break down participants' responses to each question.

4.1.1 Question 1 (Q1): gaming experience

Q1 inquired about the length of the participants' gaming experience.

Croatian participants stated they had been playing video games for 15-21 years (17.6 years on average). In a similar vein, Spanish participants stated they had been gamers for 12-20 years, with an average of 17. With the average Croatian participant age being 25 and Spanish 24.4, this indicates all participants have been playing video games most of their life. It can be inferred video games have been a significant form of entertainment during their formative years, making both participant groups valuable as a source of information for the topic of video game localisation.

4.1.2 Question 2 (Q2): general language preference

In Q2, the participants were asked to state which language they usually play video games in.

Four Croatian participants stated they played video games in the English language. One participant mentioned playing video games in the original language with English subtitles, before switching to another localisation of a language they are fluent in, if the localisation in that language is available (P2$_{HR}$). This indicates a strong preference for the English language in video games among most participants.

However, all Spanish participants stated they usually played video games in the Spanish language. P3$_{ES}$ mentioned they might play in English if there is no Spanish localisation available, which is rarely the case. This suggests Spanish gamers have a strong preference for their native language, which stands in sharp contrast to their Croatian counterparts.

4.1.3 Question 3 (Q3): multilingualism and language preference

Q3 asked the participants if they had ever tried playing video games in more than at least one foreign language if they were multilingual and which one they would prefer.

The responses indicate Croatian participants fluent in multiple foreign languages have experimented with playing video games in different languages. The reasons for this experimentation vary, with some participants using it to test their language skills (P2$_{HR}$, P4$_{HR}$). However, a common trend is that many participants prefer English despite trying various languages. This preference is often based on familiarity, as English is commonly used in video game phrases and interfaces, making it feel more natural (P1$_{HR}$) and default (P3$_{HR}$) to the participants. Overall, the data suggests English remains a dominant language for video gaming among Croatian participants, even when they are multilingual. For example, P3$_{HR}$ described playing video games in German as "a somewhat weird experience", while P5$_{HR}$ always switches back to English after playing in Italian "because I got used to video game phrases spoken in English rather than other languages."

Spanish participants, however, expressed a lower degree of multilingualism, and therefore mostly skipped this question. P4$_{ES}$ mentioned trying video games in different languages, such as French, Japanese, and English. However, they quickly resort back to Spanish because it is "easier to me to understand all the concepts".

The responses to Q2 and Q3 have shown Croatian participants perceive gaming terminology as intrinsic to the English language, while their Spanish counterparts do not share these views, and ultimately always choose their native language over any other language.

4.1.4 Question 4 (Q4): gaming and mother tongue

Q4 asked the participants if they had ever played video games in their native language.

The responses indicate most Croatian participants have not played video games localised into Croatian (P3$_{HR}$, P4$_{HR}$, P5$_{HR}$) Alternatively, some participants tried localised mobile games or educational games, but these are exceptions rather than the norm. This suggests Croatian gamers might prefer to play video

games in languages other than their native language, particularly in English. The lack of enthusiasm for playing fully localised video games in Croatian might be caused by a perceived poor quality of the localisation process, as stated by P2$_{HR}$.

Conversely, all Spanish participants regularly play video games in Spanish, as already indicated in Q2 and Q3.

4.1.5 Question 5 (Q5): language preference – foreign vs. native language

In Q5, the participants were asked to state whether they would prefer a foreign language they were fluent in or their native language, if a video game gave them the option to choose.

Among Croatian participants, only P5$_{HR}$ stated they would prefer Croatian, because they would "like to have the option that rapresents [sic] my country and language in the field of video games". Otherwise, participants expressed preference for English and other foreign languages. Moreover, P3$_{HR}$ even said they "consider [English] to be the mother tongue of gaming".

Spanish participants stated they would prefer their native language in most scenarios. The reasons might be convenience (P2$_{ES}$), comfort (P3$_{ES}$), and necessity to understand all concepts (P3$_{ES}$, P4$_{ES}$). However, P2$_{ES}$ mentioned they might prefer a foreign language if it helps with immersion: "If the setting of the scenarios is located in a place where the foreign language I speak is spoken, I might prefer it to be in that language". This suggests that, even though Spanish gamers prefer their native language, they are still open to playing in other languages if it helps increase the level of immersion.

4.1.6 Question 6 (Q6): immersion

Q6 asked the participants whether they thought localisation could positively or negatively influence gameplay immersion.

Based on the responses of Croatian participants, there are various opinions regarding the impact of localisation on the gaming experience and immersion into the fantasy world. Some participants said low-quality localisation could break the immersion (P4$_{HR}$, P5$_{HR}$), and most participants reiterated English was the default language in the gaming world. P1$_{HR}$ mentioned that even "movies are

also in English". This suggests English seems to be the dominant language in media in general.

Localisation especially becomes difficult in video games based on an existing culture. $P2_{HR}$ gives two examples that illustrate the importance of culturalisation:

> I have recently been playing games from the Japanese video game franchise *Yakuza*. Despite its global popularity, the series' localization for the non-Asian market encompasses only its title […] and the screen language […] being in English. […] none of the games from the franchise have English audio […]. All other aspects of game design are also in Japanese: for example, the buildings in the fictional town modelled [sic] after Tokyo all have signs written in one of the three Japanese writing systems. […]

> For comparison's sake, another game from the same studio that made *Yakuza*, called *Judgement*, is set in the same world as the former, but has a completely different storyline - the focus is not on Japanese tradition and turf wars between mafia gangs, but rather about daily crime-solving and the judicial system in general […], so this game, unlike *Yakuza,* actually has an English dub available.

The impact of localisation on a player's immersion can be influenced by the nature of the video game and its cultural context. The fact that *Yakuza* lacks English audio and that many aspects of the video game remain in Japanese highlights the developers' commitment to maintaining the authenticity of the video game's setting. Conversely, *Judgement*, set in the same world as *Yakuza*, offers an entirely different narrative focus, making it possible to localise the game into foreign languages and thereby accessible and relatable to a broader, non-Asian audience. The approach to localisation should therefore align with the narrative and target player base of the video game. For example, $P1_{ES}$ mentioned that in fantasy settings, "references about spain [sic] or Spanish culture is unnecessary in my opinion, it would ruin the experience".

4.1.7 Question 7 (Q7): storytelling and culturalisation

In Q7, the participants were asked to state their opinions regarding the role of language and culture in storytelling.

The conclusion drawn from the responses of both Croatian and Spanish participants is that successful cultural adaptation requires a delicate balance between maintaining cultural authenticity and making the video game accessible

and engaging for the target audience. For example, P1_{HR} recognised Croatia's potential for creating video games inspired by the country's history: "If I see Croatians as units, or characters in games I play I would definitely give it a shot because of personal sentimental meaning". Similarly, when talking about expansive narrative-driven video games, such as the *Assassin's Creed* franchise, P5_{ES} mentioned that "the environment is way better when the personalities are set in a historical context".

These findings highlight the importance of setting the characters in the correct historical and cultural context, as well as utilising correct language, as it plays an important role in localisation, because it drives the emotional connection between the video game and the player, enhancing the gaming experience and immersion. However, P3_{ES} cautioned against "over-adapting" certain cultural elements due to globalisation: "Most people are aware of other cultural aspects and their peoples' way of acting. Therefore, there might be no need to adapt some things that in the past had to be."

4.1.8 Question 8 (Q8): gaming expressions

In Q8, the participants were given an example of a typical sentence found in video games – *The spell deals 100 magic damage*. The participants were then asked to provide a translation into their own native language and to explain whether such translation sounded natural or not.

The translation of gaming expressions from English into Croatian poses challenges related to naturalness, as some of the English terms have already acquired a secondary meaning associated with gaming, for example *damage*. By contrast, the Croatian equivalent *šteta* does not have this connotation yet, making translation attempts difficult. Furthermore, all participants translated *magic damage* as *magična šteta* instead of, for instance, *čarobna šteta,* which would be the native Croatian etymological equivalent. This suggests Croatian words with foreign – usually English – roots (e. g. magična, coming from the English word *magic*) might be the best option, as it would make it closer to the English original, which has already been dubbed the "default" language several times by the participants. Furthermore, P3_{HR} even emphasised that, to create a successful Croatian localisation, "pure" Croatian words should be ignored in favour of internationalisms.

Spanish participants independently translated this sentence in a similar way, such as *El hechizo inflinge 100 de daño mágico*. For example, both P5_{ES} and P2_{ES} noted it sounded natural because they were used to playing video games in Spanish. P1_{ES} furthermore said that "people have adapted to understand this game expressions [sic], therefore it wouldn't sound strange at all if you would see that text in a game."

4.1.9 Question 9 (Q9): gaming terminology and gamer slang

Q9 asked the participants to provide translations of well-established English gaming terms, such as *AFKing*, *noob*, *buff/nerf.* Despite not being directly related to localisation, the use of gamer slang was taken into consideration as it might influence the participants' overall thoughts on gaming in their respective native languages.

The general sentiment among both Croatian and Spanish participants is that well-established gaming terms (such as *AFKing* and *noob*) that have widespread usage should remain in English, as they have become part of the global gaming culture. For less known terms like *buff* and *nerf*, there is willingness to provide translations, while acknowledging that the translation could lead to loss of nuances in meaning. Both Croatian and Spanish participants gave examples of using a foreign root and native suffixes to create a new word in their respective languages, e. g. *nerfati* in Croatian and *nerfear* in Spanish. This allows for a smoother transition between the original term and the localisation, without sounding too strange.

When it comes to Spanish participants, this contrasts with their previously almost unanimous statements that they prefer playing in Spanish, since the English language influences their internal gamer slang to a higher degree than it does their willingness to play video games in English in general.

4.1.10 Question 10 (Q10): additional info

Q10 asked the participants to express any thoughts on the topic they might not have been able to fit into the previous questions.

While Q10 encouraged participants to share their opinions, the responses yielded little new information, with most participants reiterating points made in

previous questions. However, P2_{HR} mentioned playing in the original as an act of showing "unspoken respect to the developers [of the game]".

4.2 Summary of findings

Croatian participants have been playing video games for an average of 17.6 years, indicating an almost life-long engagement with gaming. Even though all participants are multilingual, English remains the predominant language for video games, often being considered the "default" or "natural" language of gaming. Furthermore, most participants have not even played video games in Croatian, with minor exceptions. There is also a perceived lack of enthusiasm for fully localised video games due to concerns about the quality of the translation. Therefore, most participants would opt for a foreign language, especially English, if given a choice when playing video games. Poorly localised video games could break the immersion and ruin the gameplay experience, especially when the influence of the English language permeates not only the gaming world, but also other media forms, such as film.

Spanish participants have also been playing video games for most of their life, averaging at 17 years. Contrary to the Croatian participants, they usually play games in their native language out of familiarity and comfort, especially because they are not as multilingual as their Croatian counterparts. Most participants would choose Spanish over any other language when playing video games, but they remain open to playing in a foreign language if it helps create more immersive gameplay experiences. Furthermore, they seem to be more receptive to the influence of the English language in gamer slang.

According to both Croatian and Spanish participants, successful video game localisation requires a perfect balance between cultural authenticity and accessibility, to connect the video game's narrative with the target language and culture, which can be challenging. Furthermore, both participant groups believe translating gamer slang could be difficult, especially for well-established international terms.

5. Conclusions

The findings of this research have revealed information that could be used as an incentive for further discussion or additional research. When it comes to the broader context of video game localisation, both participant groups shared similar views regarding the potentially positive impact of effective localisation on immersion and the gaming experience. This implies an approach that considers both the source and target languages and cultures. These findings suggest that, even though Croatian participants expressed relatively negative opinions regarding localisation into their native language, this perception could change over time if more successful localisations become available in the video game market.

However, the scope of this research was limited. While it provided some insights, the research was conducted within approximately four weeks, limiting the opportunity for comprehensive data collection and subsequent analysis. Furthermore, recruiting participants for the interview was challenging. Of the 22 individuals that initially agreed to participate in the research, only 10 followed through after multiple reminders, resulting in a participation rate of just 45.5%. Moreover, some participants failed to respond to certain questions, such as Q9, due to unfamiliarity with the terminology from the examples. Consequently, they did not believe they could provide valuable insight.

To address these limitations, future research should consider refining the interview questions to elicit more detailed responses and recruit a participant sample that is more closely aligned with the specific research objectives and questions. Furthermore, the research should involve a larger participant pool and/or additional languages and locales, so that the findings do not point to potential tendencies, but instead represent solid conclusions supported by consistent and robust data. Implementing these adjustments will contribute to the reliability and accuracy of results.

This research contributes to a growing body of knowledge on video game localisation by providing practical insights into how localisation can impact player immersion and customer satisfaction in different cultural contexts, especially those with different traditions in the translation of audiovisual media. The findings offer a foundation for developers and publishers to make informed decisions about the territories they choose to localise for and strategies to employ, ensuring that localisation efforts align with go-to market expectations

and cultural sensitivities. This is especially true for niche markets with little previous market research on the topic of video game localisation, such as Croatia.

Gameography

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MEĐUKULTURNO ISTRAŽIVANJE LOKALIZACIJE VIDEOIGARA: USPOREDNA ANALIZA STAVOVA HRVATSKIH I ŠPANJOLSKIH GEJMERA

Andrej Novak

SAŽETAK

Ovim se istraživačkim radom želi pružiti uvid u stavove hrvatskih i španjolskih gejmera o lokalizaciji videoigara. Podaci su prikupljeni putem anonimnih intervjua provedenih e-mailom s pitanjima uglavnom otvorenog tipa. U usporedbi sa španjolskim gejmerima, hrvatski gejmeri pokazali su veći stupanj averzije prema lokalizaciji i odbili ideju igranja na materinskom jeziku, uključujući i uporabu gejmerskog slenga. Međutim, unatoč suprotnim stavovima u početku, obje skupine ispitanika složile su se da bi lokalizacija mogla poslužiti za poboljšanje osjećaja uživljavanja u videoigru.

Ključne riječi: audiovizualno prevođenje, lokalizacija videoigara, kulturalizacija, uživljavanje u videoigru

INVESTIGACIÓN TRANSCULTURAL SOBRE LA LOCALIZACIÓN DE VIDEOJUEGOS: ANÁLISIS COMPARATIVO DE LAS PERSPECTIVAS DE LOS JUGADORES CROATAS Y ESPAÑOLES

Andrej Novak

RESUMEN

El objetivo de esta investigación es conocer las perspectivas de los jugadores croatas y españoles sobre la localización de videojuegos. Los datos se obtuvieron mediante entrevistas anónimas realizadas por correo electrónico en las que

predominaban las preguntas abiertas. En comparación con sus homólogos españoles, los jugadores croatas mostraban un mayor grado de aversión hacia la localización y rechazaban la idea de jugar en su lengua materna, lo que también incluía el uso de la jerga de los jugadores. Sin embargo, a pesar de las opiniones inicialmente opuestas, ambos grupos de participantes coincidieron en que la localización podía contribuir a un mayor grado de inmersión.

Palabras clave: traducción audiovisual, localización de videojuegos, culturalización, inmersión