



Challenges of video games localization: a translator's perspective

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Localization

- ▶ **Localization** (also referred to as "l10n") is the process of adapting a product or content to a specific locale or market. Translation is only one of several elements of the localization process. In addition to translation, the localization process may also include:
 - ▶ Adapting graphics to target markets
 - ▶ Modifying content to suit the tastes and consumption habits of other markets
 - ▶ Adapting design and layout to properly display translated text
 - ▶ Converting to local requirements (such as currencies and units of measure)
 - ▶ Using proper local formats for dates, addresses, and phone numbers
 - ▶ Addressing local regulations and legal requirements

Source: <https://www.gala-global.org/industry/intro-language-industry/what-localization>

Video games localization

- ▶ Video games localization aims to technically adapt and translate linguistically a game according to **needs**, **expectations** and **cultural conventions** of the target users.
- ▶ The localized video game has to be as **attractive** as possible to target users, who are supposed to buy it and play it.
- ▶ The language of texts constituting the core of the game is to be **natural** and authentic in order to enhance **credibility** of the game world, which is supposed to result in **immersion** of the gamer in the game world.

Levels of game localization

- ▶ The level of localization depends on financial viability to the producer/developer
- 1. No localization
- 2. Localizing only the box and documentation.
- 3. Partial localization. Localizing text, while voiceover remains in English
- 4. Full localization. Localizing texts as well as voiceover. Mainly AAA titles.

Challenge 1. Marriage of specialized and literary translation

- ▶ From the translator's perspective games require a competence in both **specialized** (IT, marketing, legal) and **literary** translation.
- ▶ **Technical** elements (the interface, instructions) requires knowledge of software localization, IT terminology and localization industry standards.
- ▶ **Marketing** content requires a focus on the target user as well as a dynamic, attractive style characteristic for advertising.
- ▶ **Legal** elements require a competence in translating contracts, terms and conditions and privacy policies.
- ▶ Translating **literary** fragments such as dialogs and plot, requires cultural and linguistic sensitivity, knowledge of pop culture, creativity and a literary talent.

Challenge 2. Multitextuality and translation approaches

In-game content	Documentation
<p>a) interface (GUI): menu, dialog boxes, strings (error messages, status messages, questions, tooltips)</p> <p>b) game core</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ plot (descriptive texts, epic texts)➤ dialogs (between player and NPC, between NPCs)➤ quests and missions (dialogs, summaries, journals)➤ item names and descriptions➤ hero classes and skills➤ player instructions and hints➤ trophies and achievements	<p>a) user instructions: game manual, walkthrough</p> <p>b) marketing texts: adverts, descriptions, web content</p> <p>c) informational texts: Readme, updates, patches</p> <p>d) legal texts: EULA, Terms and Conditions, Privacy Policy</p>

Translation approaches

Approach	Style	Terminology
Standard	Standard	Standard
Creative	Creative	Creative
Standard-creative	Standard	Creative
Creative-standard	Creative	Standard

Translation approaches versus text types

TEXT TYPE	STANDARD APPROACH	CREATIVE APPROACH	STANDARD-CREATIVE	CREATIVE-STANDARD
Interface (GUI)	✓			
game core		✓	✓	✓
user instructions	✓			
marketing texts		✓		✓
informational texts	✓			
legal texts	✓			

Standard-creative continuum

- ▶ It is possible to discern a continuum of the creative and standard approach and put various text types along it.

Standard

- ▶ (Ex. interface)

Creative

- (Ex. dialogs)

Challenge 3. Knowledge of gameplay and game genre

- ▶ In order to understand the localized game concepts and gameplay the translator needs to be skilled in **playing games** in general and in playing a particular **game genre**: the translator has to be a gamer.
- ▶ More often than not the translation is conducted with **little context**. The translator's knowledge of gameplay and game genre helps to tackle problems and ask relevant questions.

Challenge 4: Knowledge of gaming terminology

- ▶ The translator has to understand gamers' **jargon**, but does not use it in official translations.
- ▶ The translator has to use **official**, established gaming terminology.
- ▶ The translator has to use proper **platform** terminology (PC, XBOX, PS, iPhone etc.)
- ▶ Some terms move from the jargon into the official **terminology** (instancja, PvP, GvG)
- ▶ Some terms are created **anew** for a particular game.

Challenge 5. Fragmentariness and non-linearity

- ▶ The interactive and dynamic quality of games results in fragmentariness and non-linearity of the game core content.
- ▶ This requires a good understanding of the game genre as well as imagination on the part of the translator.
- ▶ The whole text needs to be read before attempting translation.
- ▶ These qualities also cause the need to ask questions when the context is unclear.

Challenge 6. Variables

- ▶ Number variables (%d = decimal)

Source	Incorrect translation	Correct translation
%d houses	%d domów	Domy: %d
%d reward(s)	%d nagród(-oda, -ody)	Nagrody: %d
There are %d units	Jest %d jednostek	Liczba jednostek: %d
You need %d recommendations	Potrzebujesz %d rekomendacji	Potrzebujesz następującą liczbę rekomendacji: %d Potrzebne rekomendacje: %d

Challenge 6. Variables

► String variables

Source	Incorrect translation	Correct translation
%s improvement complete.	Ukończono ulepszenie %s.	%s – ukończono ulepszenie.
%s has lost a %s.	%s utracił %s.	%s traci: %s.
Your %s has been killed!	Twój %s został zabity.	Twoja jednostka (%s) została zabita!
You have set %s to be an enemy!	Ustawiono %s jako wroga!	%s jest teraz twoim wrogiem!
No population room for %s; training will be suspended.	Brak miejsca dla %s. Szkolenie zostanie wstrzymane.	Brak miejsca dla jednostki %s. Szkolenie zostanie wstrzymane.

Challenge 7. Pop-culture allusions

Achievement	Film	Original quote
This Is No Mine Beat Catacombs on Hard	<i>Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring</i>	<i>This is no mine</i>
This Is A Tomb, Theirs Beat Catacombs on Suicidal		<i>It's a tomb</i>
They Shall Not Pass Beat Catacombs on Hell on Earth		<i>You shall not pass</i>
You Can't Fight In Here, This Is The Control Room Beat Outpost on Normal	<i>Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb</i>	<i>You can't fight in here. This is the War Room!</i>
This Is What Happens When You Meet A Zed In The Alps Beat Outpost on Hard	<i>The Big Lebowski</i>	<i>This is what happens when you meet a stranger in the Alps</i>

Challenge 8. Gender-neutrality

Source	Incorrect translation	Correct translation
Forgot password?	Zapomniałeś hasła?	Nie pamiętasz hasła?
%p entered the room	%p wszedł do pokoju	%p wchodzi do pokoju
Did you obtain the sword?	Czy zdobyłeś miecz?	Udało ci się zdobyć miecz?
Did you bring the soulgem?	Czy przyniósłeś klejnot duszy?	Przynosisz klejnot duszy?
If you're finished with your business, you should get moving!	Jeśli skończyłeś swoje sprawy, ruszaj!	Jeśli to wszystko, ruszaj!

Challenge 9. Length limitations

A	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
i	Compiled source	Leng	Type	Translation	Comment	Length (translation)	Statu
1	"sample text: good length"	24	level name (16 characters max.)	"sample text: ok"		15	ok
2	"sample text: too long"	21	level description (23 characters max.) See the Status column.	"sample text: too long, really too long"		39	too long
3	"Gears"	5	level name	"Trybiki"		7	ok
4	"Rearrange the gears so	22	level description	"Ustaw trybiki tak, żeby	rearrange = move or move around	23	ok
5	that they turn the gold	22	level description	poruszyły złoty element.		24	too long
6	gear. To slide a tile	21	level description	Aby przesunąć panel	slide = move	19	ok
7	into an adjacent space,	22	level description	w wolne miejsce obok,		21	ok
8	click it with the left	21	level description	kliknij na niego lewym		22	ok
9	mouse button."	13	level description	przyciskiem myszy.		17	ok
10							

Challenge 10: Wordplay and humour

Source	Possible translation
Tanks for the Memories	Jedzie mi tu czotg?
Tijuana Dance With Me?	Ostatnie tango w Tijuanie
It's Nacho's Fault	To Njetvoja wina
Bastille Brawl	Burda w Bastylii

Other challenges

- ▶ Non-standard language in dialogs (dialects, drunken speech, speech impediments, character idiolect)
- ▶ Localizing proper names (characters, places, items, skills etc.)
- ▶ Knowledge of game universe (adaptations of RPG systems, TV series, films, previous installments)
- ▶ Need to appease the gamers community