

ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS
CULTURAL STUDIES MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

**EXPLORING TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN THE WITCHER 3:
WILD HUNT**

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İSTANBUL
2022

**EXPLORING TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN THE WITCHER 3: WILD
HUNT**

**THE WITCHER 3 WILD HUNT OYUNUNDA ÇEVİRİ STRATEJİLERİNİ
KEŞFETMEK**

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Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih: 19.07.2022

Toplam Sayfa Sayısı: 106

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) fantastik edebiyat
- 2) video oyun çevirisi
- 3) Efsunger
- 4) The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt
- 5) yerelleştirme

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

- 1) fantasy literature
- 2) video game translation
- 3) Wiedźmin
- 4) The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt
- 5) localization

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Evil is evil, Stregobor. Lesser, greater, middling, it's all the same. Proportions are negotiated, and boundaries blurred. I'm not a pious hermit, I haven't done only good in my life. But if I'm to choose between one evil and another, then I prefer not to choose at all.” (Sapkowski, 2008, p. 90)

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. İtir Erhart for her support and guidance during this research. My deepest appreciation to my committee members, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Erkan Saka and Assist. Prof. Dr. Ertuğrul Süngü for their kind participation and invaluable contributions.

My gratitude is to my mother, my greatest teacher, my role model, and my inspiration. My words aren't enough to express the great contribution she made to my life. Growing up as the child of such a strong, intelligent, and independent woman who introduced me to the world of literature at a young age is a true blessing. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my dad; my guardian angel who always supported me no matter what.

All my love to my younger brother Emre, my very first game buddy, for sharing his enthusiasm for cartoons and video games with me.

I would like to share my respect and love for my big brother, my cousin, my secret keeper, and the person I look up to; Baran, who always shared his precious thoughts, values, and experiences with me. The inspiration for this research would never come if he wasn't generous enough to share his library full of comics and fantasy novels as well as his passion for video games with me since childhood.

Special thanks to my old friend Thozan, for sharing his wisdom on the subject and sending me his evil laugh every time I thought I made a good decision that leads horrible consequences in *The Witcher 3*.

And from the bottom of my heart, I want to thank my soul mate Cruse, for making me the happiest person in the world every day.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore the translation approaches used in the Turkish localization of the video game The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, including the two official expansions, (Heart of Stone and Blood and Wine)

Existing translation techniques used within the scope of the video game localization will be investigated to highlight the translation approaches and problems while transferring the distinctive traits of fantasy literature including but not limited to the denotations of fantastic and mythical creatures, titles, weapons, location names, alchemy materials or culinary elements in the video game.

In-game texts from English to Turkish subtitles will be the main source of focus. Theoretical aspects of the thesis will be analyzing the multi-layers of localization, conceptualizing game localization act as a translation phenomenon, and examining translation from source-oriented or target-oriented approaches of Skopos Theory in the game translation.

Keywords: fantasy literature, video game, Andrzej Sapkowski, Wiedźmin, The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, localization,

ÖZET

Bu tez, “Heart of Stone” ve “Blood and Wine” adlı iki resmî ek paket de dahil olmak üzere, The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt video oyununun Türkçe yerelleştirilmesinde kullanılan çeviri yaklaşımlarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Video oyunu yerelleştirmesi kapsamında kullanılan mevcut çeviri teknikleri araştırılarak video oyununda geçen fantastik ve mitolojik yaratıklar, unvanlar, silahlar, haritada bulunan yer adları, siyaha ve mutfak malzemeleri dahil ancak bunlarla sınırlı olmamak üzere fantastik edebiyatın ayırt edici terimlerini aktarırken kullanılan çeviri yaklaşımları ve sorunları ortaya çıkarılacaktır.

İngilizceden Türkçeye çevrilmiş oyun içi ve altyazı metinler ana odak kaynağı olacaktır. Tezin teorik yönleri yerelleştirmenin çok katmanlı analizini yapmak, oyun yerelleştirme etkinliğini bir çeviri olgusu olarak kavramsallaştırmak ve oyun çevirilerinde Skopos Teori üzerinden kaynak veya hedef odaklı yaklaşımların uygulamalarını incelemek olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: fantastik edebiyat, video oyunları, Andrzej Sapkowski, Wiedźmin, The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, yerelleştirme

INTRODUCTION

Video games are now a significant form of home entertainment. Two of every 5 people across the world is now a gamer. According to Wepc.com statistics, recent forecasts are estimating the video gaming industry to be worth \$268 billion by 2025 and there are more than 2.9 billion gamers around the world. (“Video Game Industry Statistics”, 2022)

Thanks to technological advances, independent game developers are now launching their games without requiring a publishing company, because the cloud gaming services facilitate all kinds of games to be in an accessible space and allow them to be explored and played by a broader audience (Gilbert, 2022).

As a result, gamers around the globe are attracted and have broad access to video games more than ever through the medium of the internet. Video games are now also offered in watchable digital entertainment forms via live streaming channels, YouTube, and multiple social media platforms so that gamers can also follow other gamers’ playthroughs without even purchasing the respective games and get acquainted with the producer companies.

In fact, as O’Holleran states, a common goal of modern video game development is to make the gaming experience as close to the cinematic experience as possible (O’Holleran, 2010, p. 596).

This leads us to witness a period in which games may transform into one of our indoor entertainment sources even when we don’t play them. They become popular without being purchased as they are now also available as watchable digital pieces.

From the marketing perspective, the game producers also tend to communicate with the consumers through these digital channels in order to maintain engagement with their audience. In order to be up to date and as part of their marketing strategies, companies are now supporting their existing games with free content updates, additional language support, and patches as well as adding the game more elements

such as new maps, stories, weapons, creatures, facilities, and characters. All these activities are building an interactive relationship between the games and the gamers.

The majority of the additional content updates are mostly navigated based on the expectations and requests of their fan bases made via social media accounts or fan forums that also enhance the interaction between the game and the players. There are well-known games in the industry that have been maintaining their success and popularity for very long years with their strong fan base and continuous updates and software developments. In order to maintain the game's longevity, popularity, and success, the producers are remastering their video games with better graphics to meet the modern standards of the new generation consoles or adding new expansion packs to the games. This also leads to reviving the sales.

Having settled on the current parameters that keep the games to be considered as live digital works, we may conclude that the majority of video games are not considered finished products anymore, on the contrary, they are digital entertainment forms constantly evolving, expanding, and running in parallel with the progress of new technologies. As a result, the communication and interactivity between the games and the consumers are constantly increasing accordingly.

On top of all these technological and industrial advances in the video game industry, as part of their communication strategies, game producers are now aware of the importance of a high-quality translation that is taking into account the social and cultural norms of the target countries where their games will be marketed. This has brought video games to the inclusion of Translation Studies both from practical and academic perspectives.

Currently having the capacity of offering complex play mechanics, high-quality graphics, and intensive storylines, the video games address their global audience in multiple languages.

In fact, it wouldn't be wrong to say, what happens in video games does not always stay in the video games anymore. Once the games are marketed on a global scale

especially in multiple languages, keeping the reputation without offending the target consumer cultures while maintaining the game's global identity is only possible through a successful game localization; and translating the linguistic assets is a huge part of it.

Before the advancements in technology, game localization was expensive and relatively unnecessary as the games weren't as narratively complex as they are today. Once the games began to be transformed into more complex stories, the requirement of a high-quality translation to transfer the linguistic assets of the games has also become a necessity to reach an international audience.

When the producers saw the opportunities of what the global recognition may bring to their games from the marketing and financial perspectives and once distributing a game in multiple languages became rather easier than it was before due to technological advances, game translation has become a crucial part of game localization stages.

If the game is to be localized, providing an effective translation in a video game is essential today, as it will make the game either gain popularity or lose its reputation depending on the level of its quality. Even though the companies require a strong fan base or they need to feel there is a good selling opportunity in the area to start an additional translation project into the target language, we observe a significant number of companies regardless of their scales are offering their games in multiple languages for marketing purposes nowadays. As the studies also indicate localizing a game result in big revenues.

Edward, for instance, considers localization as a well-known necessity in the game industry for 50 percent of the revenue comes from localized games, and localization activities may return up to 400 percent profit if performed effectively (Lowood, Guins and Edwards, 2016, p. 97).

The translation history in games is not only limited to professional translation activities conducted by companies. As fans are deeply engaged in different aspects

of games, forming the core of game culture (O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2013, p. 278), in fact, some may also say amateur fan translations have moved game translation activities forward.

There are still gamers around the globe, downloading the semi-amateur translations of the games. Such translations may still be found in the gaming forums. It has been an old but very common practice for gamers to download the fan translation content that is translated by the respective gamers when there is no available official translation of the game. It is also a very well-known fact there is a reasonable number of gamers who prefer playing the game in their mother tongue if there is an official high-quality translated option, whether they speak the source language or not.

Today, we begin to see more Turkish localization activities in the market but previously, for non-English speakers, the way of playing a popular game was to download fan translations in the forums.

According to Yılmaz and Çağiltay, Turkish people may have encountered computer games later than many Westerners, but they have wasted no time catching up. Digital games are introduced in Turkey when color TV sets, VCRs, and similar electronic goods became familiar effective from 1983 when the Turkish government accepted free-market policies at a period the yearly national income was around 1000 US dollars. So only a small minority could afford game consoles or 8-bit computers at the time. The 'Atari Halls' were opened as public gaming spaces to serve children who were not able to afford a game console. Many entrepreneurs started to hire consoles on daily basis and started the early stages of video games shifting from public to private spheres. This was only the beginning of the journey of digital games serving a fantasy universe to the audience while the country was still under the influence of the 1980s coup (Yılmaz and Çağiltay, 2005, p. 2).

Today the number of Turkish publishers is rising, and there are millions of gamers around Turkey keeping up with the international trends despite the fact that the

fluctuation in exchange causes video games to be difficult to afford. Nevertheless, the localization activities in Turkey are now gradually evolving, and consequently, we began to see more and more examples of officially localized games for Turkish audiences for both mobile and video games.

Considering the world gaming industry, Turkey has been ranking 18th in mobile and overall games in terms of income according to the market report Turkey Game Market 2021 report (“Turkey Game Market Report”, 2021).

Since the market share of Turkey is now bigger, Turkish translation activities have also been included in the industry’s scope although it is also still at an initial stage. Before the localization activities began, the Turkish gamers were also providing their own amateur translations on the forums while there was no available official translation.

It is very common to observe the comment sections in multiple gaming forums where fans are debating about whether the translation of the official localization companies or the fan-based translations is quality-wise better for particular games localized by both semi-amateur fans and professionals at the same time.

These debates are mainly because the translators are expected to have broad pre-existing knowledge about the games as the fan base commonly has very high and specific expectations. Especially if the game has already had prequels or it is an adaptation of a canonized book or movie series. This may either be a restrictive pressure or a driving force on the translators that are expected to add a bit of humor and local taste in order to enhance the game experience for the target local players. This whole debate applies to the translation of The Witcher 3 Wild Hunt too since there was already a fan translation available on the forums before the localized version was released.

The main focus of this study will be tackling the debates on the multi-layers of localization, conceptualizing game localization act as a translation activity, strategies used throughout the translation through the lens of The Witcher 3, Wild Hunt’s Turkish localization.

The exploration area is very broad considering the evolving nature of the game industry in general as well as the continuously growing popularity of The Witcher 3 which had a major success since its release date on the 19th of May 2015. The game has been a phenomenon worldwide as well as in Turkey. Since the number of professional game translation examples in Turkey is not as many as they are on a global scale, The Witcher 3 Turkish localization has been a great example of reflecting the fact to what extent the translation (or in this case Turkish localization) is challenging in a popular game with a great fan base, especially when there are numerous of cultural specific elements within its intense narratively driven story.

In this thesis, I intend to discuss the important translation parameters and challenges that bring the overall gaming experience to the next level while translating such a game.

I will try to shed light on the translation-related concepts within game translation such as common translator challenges, the importance of linguistics competency, the hardship of maintaining the linguistic consistency while working with a big team of translators, the minimum requirements such as expertise, market and terminology knowledge, word omitting due to technical reasons such as space restrictions in on-screen subtitles, deliberate reductions taking into account social norms of the target culture, and adaptation of the cultural specific terms. To sum up, all the elements that are under the umbrella of translatable language assets in the game, and which translation strategies are used are to be discussed within the scope of this dissertation.

While jumping from one adventure to the other with Geralt the witcher, I have spent months enjoying the random encounters I had that led me to a bigger story, communicating with the characters based on the dialogues I have selected, hunting monsters, reading the books, finding the hidden little notes, assigning myself to the witcher contracts on the display boards in numerous misty villages of Skellige, wandering around the Inns and Taverns of Novigrad, and searching for scripts scattered around the open world of The Witcher 3 video game in order to find exclusive gears. One thing that has fascinated me most was the great writing of the

in-game texts and the thought of the amount of effort spent on the Turkish localization as a translator. And as a gamer, I am fully aware that there is yet a lot to be explored considering the richness of the game. And as a translator, hope this study will serve as a good contribution to Translation Studies.

This game will always be standing as a monument for its incredible writing from my personal point of view, so I hope this dissertation will also serve as my humble tribute to every single person who has an effort in this game's project.

CHAPTER I

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

1.1. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis will consist of five chapters including the introduction. The introduction chapter will serve as a piece of introductory information on The Witcher Saga, based on the latest instalment of the video game series The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, including the two official expansions, Heart of Stone and Blood and Wine. The protagonist of the video game Geralt of Rivia's history and his surroundings will briefly be explained based on the books that can be found within the game while pursuing the quests. Both cultural and commercial impacts of the game worldwide will be discussed and the research question will also be introduced.

In chapter two, the theoretical background will be discussed in detail to conceptualize the game localization as a specialized translation sub-domain in Translation Studies. (Chandler, 2005) cited in (O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2013, p. 19).

Source-oriented and target-oriented translation approaches will be examined through the lens of Skopos Theory.

Globalization, culturalization, and internationalization will be discussed through the lens of localization.

In the third chapter, the game translation challenges are examined in detail.

The fourth and fifth chapters of the thesis consist of the discussions on cultural context, the aesthetics, and special terminology of the in-game texts in Witcher 3 in order to explore to what extent the game is reflecting the source culture and what aspects of the narrations are required to be omitted, added, renamed, adapted, transcreated during the localization according to the target language, culture, and

audience expectations. The empirical analysis of the translated terms within the in-game glossary is also performed.

1.2. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE REFERENCE

One of findings I have not anticipated from the start was the personal limitations in the glossary sections. The separate sections in the menu including characters, inventory, bestiary that includes the name and descriptions of the monsters or mythological creatures, alchemy and weapons are gradually updated based on the players progress in the game. And considering the open map of the TW3 universe, it is very unlikely to encounter every element, material, creature or gears in the game at hundred percent. Speaking of effecting the research quality, my personal progress prevented me performing a complete comparative analysis from English to Turkish translations in the abovementioned sections as the sections included the content due to my progress in the game.

However, if the whole official translated content is to be provided, the data can be processed properly to see the overall translation strategies used during the overall project in TW3.

Secondly, there is no Turkish dub in the Turkish localization in the Witcher: Wild Hunt, thus, the dubbed dialogues can not be analyzed in terms of the regional dialects and different pronunciations. The deliberate accent choices or certain dialects or pronunciations of the regions and characters that may be associated with specific cultures may be seen more clearly in the English version. This does not apply to the Turkish translation of the game.

Due to the limitations of this study's scope and the fact that the game is lack of the Turkish dubbed version, the translated versions of the language varieties or specific dialects could not be analysed fully. A limited number of examples have been found in the translated versions reflecting the socioeconomic background, social status, race or class of the speakers within the subtitles, however, it is still wide open to

exploration in the future. Since the Turkish subtitles have been added to TW3 after the game's rapidly gained popularity, there may be a future possibility of performing a further analysis both for The Witcher series once the future installations of the series have their Turkish dubbed versions as well. In addition to this, to what extent do the dialects or accents run a risk of enforcing the stereotypes, and to what extent the dialogues will be omitted during the Turkish localization process may soon be added to the scope of the academic research.

Today we see many popular games releasing their Turkish dubbed versions, such as Last of Us I (announced to be released on September 2022) and Last of Us II, Call of Duty Modern Warfare 3, Uncharted 3 and 4 and many more. Considering the rapid progress of localization activities in the Turkish video game market, it would not be wrong to say there will be more video games to be localized which will lead to more academic research on game translation within Translation Studies' scope.

Heteronormativity is still an issue in video games, however, we begin to see more LGBTQ+ characters today. As part of the study, the preferred pronouns have also been considered as a translation challenge for such a gender-neutral language as Turkish. Since there is no academic research on the topic and there are no academically agreed upon translated terms yet, it may be useful to note that the issue has been recognized in this study but it is still open to debate for future research.

1.3. A BRIEF HISTORY: THE WITCHER SAGA

It is difficult to comprehend the game localization progress of The Witcher Saga without a sense of the brief history of how the series was initially conceived as a form of fantasy literature and then eventually became a cultural phenomenon in the game industry by the release of the video games in chronological order as “The Witcher”, “The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings” and “The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt”.

The last installation of the game series was released as an action-based open-world RPG¹ including its official expansions, “Heart of Stone” and “Blood and Wine”.

Although the popularity of Sapkowski’s *The Witcher* is considered to grow massive, as the series tripled its existing popularity by entering the mainstream culture due to the 2019 Netflix release as the TV series, the author already had a great following thanks to his award-winning and best-selling *Witcher* epic fantasy books and collections and the video games it spawned (Cordasco, 2021, p. 7).

In the beginning, “*The Witcher*” started its journey as a series of novels written by the Polish fantasy writer Andrzej Sapkowski, consisting of five novels and a continuation of the author’s early stories, published in the 1980s. The series includes the novels: “*Blood of Elves*” (1994), “*Time of Contempt*” (1995), “*Baptism of Fire*” (1996), “*The Tower of the Swallow*” (1997), and “*The Lady of the Lake*” (1999). They are a continuation of the stories known from Sapkowski’s earlier writing, which appeared in magazines and then collected in the volumes: “*The Witcher*” (1990), “*Sword of Destiny*” (1992), and “*The Last Wish*” (1993). The story series about the *Witcher* Geralt of Rivia started with the short story called “*The Witcher*”. It was published in the Polish monthly “*Fantastyka*” in December 1986. Andrzej Sapkowski is reluctant to describe his work as a saga because, as he claims, this is a concept reserved for Norse mythology. He uses the term “cycle” much more willingly (Beres and Sapkowski 2005) cited in (Gawroński and Bajorek, 2020, p. 3).

Ranking as an all-time classic of fantasy literature in Poland, the series gained popularity on an international scale due to the multimedia adaptations. It wouldn’t be wrong to indicate both the novel and the game have a symbiotic relationship in terms of providing popularity to each other on a mutual basis.

¹ RPG, *abbreviation*, Rol Playing Game.

The international success of “The Witcher” dates back to 2007 when the first computer game based on the series made by CD Projekt was launched (Gutfeld, 2017, p. 78).

After its first release date in 2007, the game achieved massive success so quickly in the industry, that as of 2008, the production company CD Projekt RED announced it hit more than 1 million copies only after its release twelve months ago.

The co-founder of CD Projekt Red, Michal Kicinski was giving also signals of the possibility of a sequel game indicating there is a huge audience out there and the world of Witcher hasn’t been explored fully enough (Lee, 2008).

The background and what inspired the series have been an ongoing debate. Despite all the disputes about whether the nature of “The Witcher” is reflecting Slavic mythology or not, Sapkowski himself expressed that Slavic and Polish elements can be spotted by smart readers however his works have grown much bigger when the translations and the world’s fantasy industry have been added when he was addressed to the ‘Slavicness’ of his works (Redanian Intelligence, 2019).

Despite his own sayings on the Witcher series mentioned above, The Witcher has still built its reputation as a national pride of the Polish people when the sequel game The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings was launched in 2011.

The series was already so beloved and recognized as a cultural product in Poland to an extent the country’s prime minister at the time Donald Tusk presented US President Barrack Obama with the collector's edition of the game to commemorate his visit (Smith, 2015).

With our focus on the third sequel of the game series, The Witcher 3, it seems reasonable to discuss the initial historical stages of the game as well as the identity of Geralt of Rivia to comprehend the progress that led the last instalment to become an RPG legend in the industry.

The *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* was released in 2015 as an open-world game with a third-person perspective available on PlayStation 4, Xbox One, and PC gaming platforms.

Despite the *Witcher 3* is arguably the most “Slavic” considering its folkloristic dimension and Slavic aesthetics and CD Projekt’s story director Blacha also depicts the entire series as a tribute to Polishness and the Polish language, he additionally emphasizes that elements that are drawn from Slavic folklore and pre-Slavic mythology are all visually re-interpreted in the way they perceive them from today’s mind; not from ancient manuscripts (Blacha and Kubinski, 2016).

As part of the discussion, Slavic mythology, aesthetics, and folkloric dimensions of the game are to be discussed further in order to highlight the world-building of the game and to what extent it was localized in Chapter 4. in detail.

According to Steam², the genre of the video game is described as a story-driven open-world Role Playing Game (RPG) set in a visually stunning fantasy universe full of meaningful choices and impactful consequences.

First announced in 2013 and released officially in 2015, this modern role-playing video game also takes place in the same fictional universe and features the same characters as the eponymous series of short stories and novels by Sapkowski.

In *The Witcher 3*, the player controls a scholarly mutated monster hunter, Geralt of Rivia, as he searches for his missing adoptive daughter in a fantasy world ravaged by war and famine, all the while contending with regional political intrigues and ancient prophecies. To claim that the game was decently successful would be an understatement; it sold roughly 6 million copies in the 6 weeks following its release and managed to remain one of Steam’s top 100 best sellers for 3 consecutive years (Fenlon, 2018; and Purchase, 2015) cited in (Stevens, 2022, p. 539)

² Steam. (n.d.). *The Witcher® 3: Wild Hunt* on Steam. (Retrieved June 8, 2022) https://store.steampowered.com/app/292030/The_Witcher_3_Wild_Hunt/

1.4. TOSS A COIN TO YOUR WITCHER: GERALT OF RIVIA

Although witchers, in truth, there is naught more repulsive than these monsters that defy nature and are known by the name of “witcher”. They are the offspring of foul sorcery and witchcraft. They are veritable scoundrels without conscience and virtue, unscrupulous creatures off hell able only to take lives. They have no place amongst decent and honest folk³.

When Filonenko discusses the difference between the definition of “witch” and “witchcraft” and “witchers”, she states that the word “witcher,” used for Andrzej Sapkowski’s character, cannot truly be considered a male equivalent for the word “witch” as the witcher’s use of magic in Sapkowski's stories is very much different from what is normally believed to be witchcraft. Despite the emphasis that the word “witch” can be used for both female and male practitioners, magic and witchcraft are described as two separate concepts, connected yet distinctively different. In Western culture, witchcraft has predominantly been associated with female practice. The concept of magic is connected to Western esoteric tradition and is often associated with a phenomenon that is learned by hard work, whereas witchcraft practitioners are not required to study the intellectual aspects of this craft but rather expected to have an inborn or acquired ability (Filonenko, 2021, p. 32-34).

In order to understand more about what witcher means, it would be useful to analyze the word. Macmillan dictionary describes the “-er” suffix to be used with many verbs to make nouns meaning someone or something that performs an action⁴.

³ *Monstrum, or a Portrayal of Witchers*. Volume 1, the book and quest (The Witchers ‘Forge) item in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*.

⁴ Macmillan Dictionary. (n.d.) In the Macmillan Dictionary. Suffix *-er*. (Retrieved July 8, 2022) https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/er_3

Interestingly, the suffix -er is used to indicate a profession; for instance, a writer, which describes a person who is writing as a profession, or a witcher, where the suffix -er identifies either a male version of a witch or a profession (Daniel, 2016, p. 8).

In Sapkowski's universe, witchers do not have inborn magic capacities, commonly they acquire the ability to spell magic that is called "Signs" after going through special trials and training. They are also well-trained in alchemy which allows them to craft potions to have additional magic skills temporarily and they have special "witcher senses" to feel when there is magic or supernatural surrounding them.

Witcher novels and games and currently the series have faithful fans that may differentiate those terms. However, the word "witcher" may be confusing for those who are not familiar with Sapkowski's universe. What differentiates a "Witcher" in Sapkowski's world from a traditional witch, a wizard, or a mage in Western fantasy literature or esoteric tradition, may be found in the in-game texts and digital books scattered around the open world of The Witcher 3. In order to expand the concept of being a 'witcher', the general characteristics of witchers are described as follows.

According to the multiple entries within The Witcher game series; witchers comes into being when the first settlers were colonizing the untamed lands of present-day Temeria. Defending humans from the monsters inhabiting the wild in exchange for coins, witchers are mutants professionally trained to slay monsters in Witcher Schools.

The best-known witcher schools on the Continent are the School of the Wolf, the School of the Bear, the School of the Griffin, the School of the Viper, and the School of the Cat. To become a witcher, the human child apprentices have to survive a set of dangerous trials called the Trial of Grasses in which they experience mutations resulting to obtain specific physiology and biochemistry.

Since the trials the young boys undergo have a significant ratio of fatal consequences and only a few of them are likely to survive⁵; those who are mentally and physically strong enough may pursue their training in casting spells and mastering combat skills to become competent witchers. The witchers are described as neither mages (practitioners of magic) nor common men though they have traits of both⁶.

The transformations they undergo during the Trial of the Grasses, which are widely considered to be irreversible, cause witchers to become infertile, while significantly increasing their physical strength and sharpening their senses. The processes also deprive witchers of emotions and human reflexes⁷. Their incredible resistance to physical torture⁸ as a result of these trials and intensive training during their apprenticeship as young boys prepare them to be great beast hunters.

The mutations witchers undergo influence their temperament, immune system, strength, and endurance, yet one cannot consider them unthinking beings forged only for killing as a result. In fact, witchers cultivate a unique culture, a specialized body of knowledge, and an effective training system, and even a code of honor.

They know an incredible amount about the effects of ingesting various organic and inorganic substances, and also a small amount, but nevertheless something, about the fundamentals of magic (by which they call "Signs"). On the surface, the witchers appear to be a homogeneous social entity, but in truth, their fighting styles, training regimens, and world views differ significantly depending upon the school to which they adhere⁹.

⁵ Trial of the Grasses registry tome: Trial of the Grasses registry tome is a document in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. Found in the cave north of the Bastion. (Retrieved from *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*).

⁶ Journal Entry: Witcher Signs is a book in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. (Retrieved from *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*)

⁷ *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, Blood And Wine Books Witcher Mutations: An Introduction to Research is a book in the Blood and Wine expansion and found during Turn and Face the Strange by examining the bookshelf in Professor Moreau's lab. (Retrieved from *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*)

⁸ Laboratory Notebook: the book and quest item in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. It's found on Mad Kiyon's body in the cave beneath Temple Isle, along with the moonblade and all the standard armor diagrams for the Cat School Gear. (Retrieved from *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*)

⁹ *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. Witchers: Book, Not Quite the Devils You Thought. (Retrieved from *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*)

Due to their transformed nature, such as their signatory yellow eyes allowing them to see in the dark, unusual abilities, and magical skills, the witchers are positioned as the other and treated as social outcasts; even met with hatred in society. The social interactions with the members of this profession in this universe are almost always limited to business; which is killing monsters in return for money.

Despite all the stereotypes towards witchers living without conscience or virtue being widely adopted by the average folk, the protagonist witcher, Geralt of Rivia is told as an exceptional individual known as the White Wolf according to his journal entry in *The Witcher 3 Wild Hunt*.

Being one of Geralt's closest friends and a well-known bard in *The Witcher* universe, Dandelion depicts Geralt as a man of good humor with an honest readiness to help his friends, a master of blades, introverted, tight-lipped, and gruff from the outside but having an overflowing sea of goodwill on the inside¹⁰.

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt (that will be referred as TW3 effective from now on) is a game displaying a high level of complexity in the narrations on both micro and macro levels.

The players are playing as witcher Geralt travelling through an open map searching for his adopted daughter Ciri. Throughout the whole journey, the game simulates pursuing a career as a witcher, which is basically killing monsters in return for coins by fulfilling the witcher contracts in the villages in the open world of TW3. Meanwhile game provides the option to meet and interact with some canonic characters from Sapkowski's books as well as strangers or persons of interest throughout the journey. Having an extremely complex set-up; TW3 challenges the players to take on the role of Geralt on the open map with the option to craft their own narratives from multiple dialogue options that leads to major effects on the overall story as the game has multiple alternative endings. The game is a complex

¹⁰ *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. Journal Entry, Geralt of Rivia. (Retrieved from *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*)

simulation of being a witcher, allowing players a full experience of monster-slaying in the witcher universe.

Despite the main structure of the game being somewhat linear and the main arcs of the story having already been set, the side quests are operating independently. Although it is not mandatory to finish the side quests in order to beat the game, each side quest may have a significant impact on the main storyline, connecting the characters and main events to one another and playing as a turning point affecting the game's ending.

The players are encouraged to finish the side quests and the witcher contracts to gain the following perks:

- a.) it is both essential for character development and earning coins,
- b.) more exploration means a broad understanding of the TW3 world,
- c.) the number of side quests outweighing the main quests so it enhances the duration of the game and
- d.) the side quests may have a great impact on the main quests.

Progressing in the Witcher's intense narratively structured universe, it is mainly up to the players' choice whether they choose to spare ¹¹the life of a *rock troll* who has been killing the miner villagers living in a small *Skellige* town or to kill *the Silver Basilisk* that has been hunted to near-extinction.¹²

None of the decisions is called "right" or "wrong" in Geralt's universe. Despite Geralt's moral conduct is normally based on not believing in "lesser evil", the interactive dialogues provide the players enough freedom to proceed however they wish to pursue within the game based on their moral codes. This is how the game

¹¹ Contract: Missing Miners: A contract quest in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. It was released as one of the 16 free DLCs on 27 May 2015. (Retrieved from *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*)

¹² Contract: Mutual of Beauclair's Wild Kingdom, a contract quest in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (Blood and Wine) (Retrieved from *Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*)

facilitates the choice excitement to the audience and consequently provides multiple narrative options to the players at the same time.

The narrations in the TW3 world-building are extremely rich to an extent that it includes but are not limited to the multilayered dialogues while progressing the game as well as separate sections on the menu including the characters' information, a constantly evolving bestiary based on the game progress, and a glossary providing the explanatory descriptions of the monsters, and backgrounds of the mythological creatures and characters Geralt encounters within the game. While the alchemy section includes descriptions of fauna, flora, stones, gems, and culinary items, the village Notice boards display notes and witcher contracts as well as nearby points of interest. The posters around the streets may give clues about the political or social life of the respective region and the books scattered throughout the open world give information about the overall world, treasure hunt scripts show clues to find exclusive gears. All these elements play an important role as an example of micro-narratives.

Since the game is extremely story-driven and draws players to pay attention to the overall in-game dialogues and narrations to receive a meaningful ending, true transfer of the written content to the source language becomes crucial.

TW3 game world consists of six open-world regions called White Orchard which is a relatively a small human settlement, the Royal Palace in the capital of Vizima, the cities of Velen and Novigrad, Archipelago of Skellige including six islands, Kaer Morhen as the quarter of witchers, and the duchy of Toussaint. Having individual maps, all regions are independent and explorable by the players through story progression. The hidden activities are shown with white question marks and also merchants, armorers, and blacksmiths are shown via their respective signs. The game has both daylight and night time, however, Geralt can meditate on selected hours to pass the unwanted time zones. All regions can be visited through the fast travel signs once they are discovered while progressing in the game.

Considering its evolving map throughout the play and the comprehensive narrative content of TW3, the translation strategies cannot be strictly associated with a single genre, on the contrary, multiple approaches are combined to preserve the game experience of the video game which will be explored in the following chapters in this study.

1.5. TOPIC INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

In the early stages of translation theory, translation was defined as replacing a text in one language with another in a different language, and the translation activity was resulted in with the two texts having approximately the same meaning. The main emphasis was on the linguistic and semantic aspects of translation. The meaning in translation has always been a problematic debate, after all, what meaning is intended? Is it semantic or pragmatic or social? Finally, all these types of meaning were thought relevant, and have been resumed under ‘cultural aspects of translation. Nowadays translation is rarely envisaged without one taking into account the source culture and the target culture (Al-Hassan, 2013, p. 97).

Today culture and translation are almost two inseparable subjects in Translation Studies. Especially for video game translations, where the movement of characters, the environmental aspects and the culture they represent are even prior to the movement of texts. The functionality of the cultural translation became an important strategy in video game translation that translators use as a mediation tool to transfer the source culture to the target one.

As the number of the players on a multinational scale has increased as well as the storyline complexity and playing techniques evolved by the advancements in technology, dimensions of video game translation have also expanded as per target audience requirements.

Even though the academic analysis of video game translation has not been tackled enough and is still wide open to exploration, the availability or in other words the ease of accessibility of video games by the multinational audience is forcing us to

rethink the role of translation in terms of delivering the cultural aspects of the source product; in this focus of study – through the source language.

In need of addressing the new geographies, effective gaming translation has become crucial to deliver the multiple localized adaptations of the game to the target audiences. Video game producers tend to profit from the rapidly growing consumers; thus, the language barriers are required to be removed between the producer and consumer. From the translation of in-game subtitles to game moderation, the in-game instructions to technical support, a wide range of different translation approaches are tailored to translate video games into multiple languages for local players.

The discussions on what game culture means may gradually lie at the heart of Game Studies. But it wouldn't be wrong to mention that game culture is mainly formed by means of video games. Thus, it would be highly problematic to claim that there only exists a singular video game culture since it is extremely diverse and constantly evolving by its nature. Being presented to the target audience in multiple translated versions of languages, each video game, and even each genre of a video game brings its own cultural authenticity and uniqueness depending on which country it is developed or which device it is played at. This creates multiple translation challenges for video game translators.

So how does the video game's source culture relates to translation activities? What are the parameters that translators take into account while transferring the cultural-specific terms in video games? How much of the content is decided to be transferred to the target audience and what is lost in translation? Taking it up to the next level, can culture be translated?

Before discussing what cultural translation is if one tackles the definition of culture, Larson (1984), for instance, defines culture as “a complex set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and rules which a group of people shares”.

In his definition of culture Newmark (1988) states that culture is “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular

language as its means of expression”. Duranti (1997) (in Durdureanu, 2011) views culture as “something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, through human actions, often in the form of face-to-face interactions, and, of course, through linguistic communication”. Komissarov (1991) contends that “people who belong to the same linguistic community are members of a certain type of culture, and, consequently, they share many traditions, habits, ways of doing and saying things (Larson, 1984; Newmark 1988, Duranti 1997) cited in (Neshovska and Kimovska, 2018, p. 167-168).

On the basis of all of the abovementioned definitions of culture, translators are expected to have a comprehensive understanding of both the source and target culture while handling such culture-specific terms in translation activities in order to execute an effective translation for the target audience that has a different set of language, traditions, doings, and habits. The translator should take into account the linguistic dimensions, layers of meanings as well as cultural elements in two different cultural contexts.

To understand what is considered ‘culture words’ for the translator, it would be useful to remember the proposals of Newmark and Guerra.

Newmark (1988) proposes five different domains for classifying all existing culture words: 1) ecology (flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills); 2) material culture (food, clothes, houses and towns, transport); 3) social culture (work and leisure); 4) organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts (political and administrative, religious, artistic, etc.), and 5) gesture and habits.

Fernández Guerra (2012), on the other hand, organizes culture-specific terms (CST) into four major domains: 1) geographic and ethnographic terms; 2) words or expressions referring to folklore, traditions and mythology; 3) names of everyday objects, actions, and events (such as food and drinks, clothes, housing, tools, public transport, dances and games, units of measurement, money, etc.); 4) social and historical terms denoting territorial administrative units or divisions; departments, professions, titles, ranks, greetings, and treatments; institutions, patriotic and

religious organizations, etc. (Newmark, 1988; Guerra, 2012) cited in (Kimovska, 2019, p. 248)

So having settled on the culture-bound terms, in open-world video games, especially where the game openness is relatively infinite in contrast to linear and structured games, the in-game textuality requires a broad understanding of cultural translation as it requires all the cultural elements Newmark and Guerra suggested above. Such video games provide a simulated reality and allow players to be exposed to a wide range of cultural elements. The elements used are not limited to but include geographic features, words and expressions, religions, customs, and many else based upon the main storyline of the game. This leaves the translator the whole responsibility to comprehend all specific terms of the source culture and transfer them to the target culture yet provide a familiar experience for the end-users.

As Susan Bassnett discussed in “Why did Translation Studies take a Cultural Turn?”, the arguments she sought to present were that translation plays a major role in shaping literary systems, that translation does not take place on a horizontal axis, that the translator is involved in complex power negotiations (mediating between cultures, as it were), that translation is always a rewriting of an original (Bassnett, 2007, p. 14).

Although the concept of “cultural translation” has been used in various academic paradigms to address different problems as in postmodern sociology, postcolonialism, migration, cultural hybridity and much else (Pym, 2014, p. 129), the paper at hand will look into cultural translation within Translation Studies’ scope to understand why cultural translation is required and how it is used as a mediation tool while translating in-game text, where the translator is being positioned during the cultural translation process and what translation strategies are being used while transferring the existing cultural words in the gaming world of TW3.

With our focus on the localization of TW3 under the umbrella of the discussions mentioned above, it wouldn't be wrong to propose, that in addition to functionalist translation approaches, the cultural translation approach has also been executed during the Turkish localization of the game. In the following chapters, the analysis of The Witcher 3 localization will be presented in detailed examples to highlight which translation approaches are used during the localization process and how they affected the outcome.

The cultural translation approach substitutes the linguistic approach in many sections, emphasizing the importance of cultural translation plays in the TW3 localization. As in Bassnett's discussion on the role of culture in translation, the shift can be observed during the Turkish localization process, where translators decide avoiding from the traditional approaches in which the words, phrases, and texts, are considered translatable units.

Rather at certain points, they prefer following the cultural approaches where culture itself becomes the focus of translation in order to transfer the source culture to the receptor culture during the process.

According to their interviews on TW3 Turkish localization, the third game is much larger than the second in terms of size so translators had to derive a lot of new names for The Witcher's Turkish vocabulary as they believed it is important for the Turkish role-playing community to find the appropriate counterparts for the names that appear in the game.

This dissertation is to explore which of the existing translation techniques are used in TW3 localization as well as the investigate the problems of transferring the distinctive traits of fantasy literature of TW3 including but not limited to the denotations of fantastic and mythical creatures, titles, weapons, location names, alchemy materials or character names in the video game.

While analysing TW3 game translation process through the lens of Video Game Localization in academic researches, the following questions are intended to be answered.

To what extent the role of the translators is transformed into a mediator to transfer all cultural elements to the target audience, to what extent the game is a rewritten version of the original, to what extent the in-game translation of the game has remained loyal to its authenticity and what are the restrictions that effected the translation process.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. TRANSLATION AND SKOPOS THEORY OF TRANSLATION

As Gambier and Hulst explain the very definition of translation in the early stages, the act of translation has long been seen, in a certain number of societies, as striving towards a faithful reproduction of a source text and possessing an invariant, stable meaning. The translated text was considered equivalent to an original. The study of translation was to link to high culture, such as the translation of sacred texts and canonized literature while informal interactions in multilingual spaces were passed under the radar (Hulst and Gambier, 2018, p. 19).

Thus, the quality level of the translation was to be measured by the extent of the linguistic equivalence and faithfulness from the source language to the target language. The human factor, however, has not been considered a variable in the translation activity. Considering the communicative situations' specificity, complexity, and the context of the dialogues, the relations between the sender and the receiver in a basic human interaction regardless of being verbalized or non-verbalized as well as the influence of the translator on the text, the transfer of the linguistic assets of the source texts could only meet the requirements of an effective translation to a limited extent.

Back in the 1970's when Hans J. Vermeer proposed Skopos Theory, he also introduced a new perspective to the translation studies that have been focusing on source-oriented views. Skopos is the Greek word for "aim" or "purpose", so he claimed every action has a purpose and considered translation as an action, thus, it must have a purpose too. Although this purpose is subject to change depending on the translation since the text is to determine the translation strategy (Xiaoyan, 2012, p. 2190).

In Christiane Nord's "Translating as a Purposeful Activity-Functionalist Approaches Explained", she explains the Skopos theory in Vermeer's own words, to define his general position on the subject; "*Linguistics alone won't help us. First, because translating is not merely and not even primarily a linguistic process. Secondly, because linguistics has not yet formulated the right questions to tackle our problems. So let's look somewhere else.*" (Vermeer, 1987b) cited in (Nord, 2001, p. 10-11).

Nord also determines what Vermeer meant by pointing us out to look somewhere else in his approach, she says his intention is to highlight that every action has a purpose; and the word skopos, then, is a technical term for the aim or purpose of a translation. Further: an action leads to a result, a new situation or event, and possibly to a 'new' object. And since the situations are embedded in cultures, any evaluation of a particular situation, of its verbalized and non-verbalized elements, depends on the status it has in a particular culture system. In "Skopostheorie", a theory of purposeful action, Vermeer highlighted the importance of the purpose in translation intending to the receptor of the target text with their culture-specific words, their world knowledge, and their cultural and linguistic expectations as well as their communication needs. To sum up, according to Nord (2001), Skopos Theory was based on 'to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addresses in target circumstances' (Nord, 2001, p. 10-11).

Looking at the modern functionalist approaches in translation based on the industrial needs of gaming world today, one of the translator's main tasks is not only to maintain linguistic equivalence between to languages but also to process the target culture's habits, doings, culture-specific words and decide what is offensive or what is not and understand how the source text can work for the target receptors. Rather than classifying the video game genres one by one and explaining how translation activities work for each genre, this paper intends to focus on the translation strategies of the video games in the RPG genre of which Skopos theory responds very well.

2.2. LOCALIZATION

Edwards defines localization as the process of adapting game content for a specific geographical locale. It typically includes translating resources and assets from the source language to the target language, implementing these translated assets into an internationalized build, and then testing, editing, and fixing bugs in the translation. The localized elements may consist of a variety of file types, including translated resource files such as art, audio, etc., localized voice-over files, packaging material, and metadata, among many other types of content (Lowood, Guins and Edwards, 2016, p. 97).

Whereas Esselink also highlights software elements on top of traditional translation and explains the additional activities within the required services in the localization process as follows; proofreading, reviewing, checking the consistency of software references, using and updating terminology with key terms, engineering, and testing online help files and converting the translated text, etc (Esselink, 2000, p. 51).

Dunne also discusses that localization arose at the intersection of technology, language, and culture, to ensure success in international markets since companies “convert their software so that users saw a product in their own language and firmly based in their own culture” (Dunne, 2018, p. 123).

2.2.1. History of Game Localization

With a little bit of a history sense on how the early stages of game localization initially conceived, it will be more clear to comprehend how game localization is included the scope of applied translation studies.

Frasca defines the video game as “any form of computer- based entertainment software, either textual or image-based, using any electronic platform such as personal computers or consoles and involving one or multiple players in a physical or networked environment” (Iveson, 2018, p.11).

The history of modern games can be traced back to the prototypes of the electronic games Tennis for Two (1958) and Spacewar! (1962). Both developed in the US at public research facilities in a rather incidental context and circulated freely giving inspiration to early coin-operated arcade games such as Computer Space (1971) and Pong (1972), as commercialized by Atari (O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2013, p. 46-47).

The Japanese arcade games Space Invaders (1978) and Pac-Man (1980) followed these games and are considered to have set the subsequent course of video games as a cultural phenomenon (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Simon, et al., 2012, p. 57).

Pong and Space Invaders had few elements that required translation to sell in different markets. Despite being developed in Japan, Space Invaders still used English phrases such as "High Score" and "Game Over" (O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2013, p. 49).

As mentioned above, the arcade games developed at the initial stage were very simple regarding their textual content consisting only a few words such as "Game Over", "Start" or "Press x To Play", first prototypes of arcade games did not require a detailed translation for the US market.

Although the early Japanese arcade games mostly had no major language barriers, certain aspects are required to be changed for socio-linguistic reasons. One of the early examples in game localization which socio-linguistic reasons are considered is the change in the spelling of Pac-Man from its original Japanese transliteration as Puck-Man. Despite the source name of the game derived from the Japanese expression "gobble" depicting mouth movements in the image of somebody chewing loud, the word "Puck" is decided to be changed since it would likely tempt vandals in the US by replacing the first letter to "F". The cabinet cover art and the title screen of the game have also been changed in arcade machines. As such, it provided an early taste of what was to come for game localization in the following years of the localization processes in complex games (O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2013, p. 49).

Another additional example of an early localization practice was for the quartet of characters from Pac-man also collectively known as the Ghost Gang. The original Japanese nicknames of the key characters (four ghosts) were based mainly on colors and the attitude of the last one, “Reddie”, “Pinky”, “Bluey” and “Slowy”. They became Blinky, Pinky, Inky, and Clyde in the official English translation as it was thought to be more catchy for the audience.

It was also considered as an early indication of game localization approaches in future as the target text is changed almost completely based on the target audience and the translation method used also highlights the importance of catchy sounds and a good amount of humor while translating games rather than being loyal to the source text.

Considering today’s technology and the complex narrative content of the games, localization, however, requires a lot more than replacing names.

From the big arcade machines in public places to the home computers and consequently, to consoles, the environment of play changed throughout the years as the activity of playing video games has gradually moved from public to private spheres with the invention of home computers and eventually the consoles. Thus, the game localization activities have also evolved simultaneously.

By their basic interfaces that allowed users to perform limited activities due to their restricted play mechanics, the early video games have set the basis for more complex versions of today, where players could even perform an active role in the story development.

And when the technological capacities have expanded, even more, the design, graphics, textual content, and play mechanics of the games have improved simultaneously. These improvements had major impacts on the availability of different localized games in multiple language versions other than Japanese and English in the late 1990s.

Since roughly 2006, we have seen an explosion of new video game forms, with video games now being distributed not only in boxes sold in stores, but also on mobile phones, as downloads, in browsers, and on social networks, as well as being targeted at almost the entire population, and designed for all kinds of contexts for which video games used to not be made (Juul, 2013, p. 5).

As stated above and to summarize, according to Wills, in the years between 1972, marking the release of Pong, and 2016, which witnessed the advent of affordable virtual reality gaming, the American society underwent a widespread digital revolution. The society witness a shift toward a digital landscape (Wills, 2019, p. 232).

The rapid advances in technology and especially the rise of the internet have introduced video games to a global audience. Being transformed from a ‘niche market’ into a multi-billion dollar industry today, nearly all video games are now offered in multiple languages for local players around the world. In need of marketing video games on a multinational scale, translating video games has become one of the most important activities in demand per meeting the communication requirements of the digital entertainment market.

The high-quality graphics and audio components, technical structure, complexity in storylines and narratives, play techniques, and massive budgets of today’s video games have introduced their own localization challenges and new approaches to the scope of Translation Studies.

2.2.2. Translating Narratively Driven Video Games

Before examining the translation of video games, we need to agree on the concept of how translation activities function within localization.

Video games, are now somewhat is a way of storytelling and requires a high level of narrative related elements that needs to be translated. Defining a singular approach in translation while translating a particular video game would be

problematic due to the multi-layered nature and content of the video games. Also defining a single translation approach to video games, in general, would be insufficient since there are various genres under the umbrella of video game categories.

In addition to this, Dunne also emphasizes that during the localization process, there is no single correct way to manage translation and localization given the uniqueness and uncertainty in any project undertaken. The judgment and the expertise are to balance the constraints of scope, cost, time, quality, and resources in order to achieve the best possible result (Dunne and E. S. D., 2011, p. 9).

Focusing on more narrative-related elements, the content and the nature of some titles allow to define certain textual categories: as in the case of cinema or literature, different genres can be established to classify the different types of video games according to their specific features. The fact that several typologies can be set in the study of video games is a relevant issue from the point of view of translation, as some types of games –such as RPGs– rely on more complex storylines, are heavily narrative-driven, and may include more text and translatable assets (O’Hagan and Mangiron, 2006) cited in (Costales, 2012, p. 132).

As in the advancement in technology, the technical aspects of video games have drastically developed in line with story complexity. Consequently, the narrative content of the video games, especially RPGs relying on more complex storylines has become no longer associated with a single textual type but began to offer a wide range of textual variety requiring a comprehensive evaluation and translation considering both semantic and cognitive aspects.

Thus, the functionalist translation approaches in which the translator selects particular strategies according to the context of the video game are inevitably used to fulfill skopos.

Jesper Juul, for instance, discusses at least three arguments when examining the standard arguments on games being narratives, a.) we use narratives for everything,

b) most games feature narrative introductions, as well as back-stories, and c) the games share common traits with narratives. He also underlines that games are not part of the narrative media ecology formed by movies, novels, and theatre, and the time concept works differently in games than in narratives. In addition to this, he also emphasizes that the relationship between the reader/viewer and the story world is different than the relation between the player and the game world (Juul, 2022).

In order to understand what differs in video game translation from other genres, one should understand the importance of the relation between game narratives and the players. It is essential to understand how the textual content in video games is conceptualized. One should also note, that translating the following textual types requires different approaches and different terminologies.

Merino groups the video game textual types into six categories and explain their roles as follows: journalistic text, technical text, user-interface text, didactic text, legal text, narration, and dialogue text.

Journalistic text presents the product within a genre and brand, drawing potential buyers through official websites, articles, or in some cases, on the in-game screens.

Technical text offers advice to the players on the type of hardware and software requirements for the best game experience.

User-interface text consists of precise and short texts facilitating the gameplay without interruption.

Didactic text is to direct players on how to install the game, serving the role of a game manual and explaining game mechanics including basic instructions and, in some cases, legal and technical texts.

The legal text provides warranties, service information, and health warnings. The most well-known example can be found in the end-user license agreement that users are asked to approve and comply with when installing games. The translation of this textual type requires very specific knowledge of legal terminology.

And last but not the least, narration and dialogue texts in order to provide good storytelling that is especially essential for the RPG world where almost every line of narration and dialogue is in tune with the world of the game (Bernal-Merino, 2008, p. 43-44).

The storytelling in video games depends on the creativity in translation in order to preserve the game experience as much as possible as it is in the original. Fans of the game demand perfection in textual content while experiencing the game. The succession of the game greatly lies in the heart of using the right terminology while transferring the cultural and linguistic aspects of the original from the player's point of view.

One should note that, the constraints the translators face are not only limited to the requirement of transferring the game experience to the target culture but also comply with the screen restrictions and multiple technical requirements while displaying the texts which will be discussed in the video game translation challenges chapter.

2.2.3. Globalization, Culturalization, Internationalization

Having settled on the terms of localization and how localization is also included to the scope of translation studies, it is also important to define the concepts of Globalization, Internationalization and Culturalization as part of the study.

In an interview, Miguel Sepulveda who has more than 20 years' experience in the localization industry pointed out how game localization shouldn't be an afterthought: *"The game localization process is actually quite long. It might start with deciding in which markets we want to launch a game, then following this by choosing a font and preparing internationalization activities. But that's just the beginning. I like to refer to the Globalization formula as the combination of the following: Culturalization, Internationalization, Localization, Localization QA.*

Each phase is happening at a different stage in the game workflow development but all of them are necessary to create a global product.” (Jakovlev, 2020).

Taking into consideration of video game history, there had been many examples demonstrating the impact of cultural expectations leading not only to textual changes but also in the general content during the localization process before a game is being prepared for the consumption of other target cultures. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the localization process is not only limited to the transfer of textual content to the target language but also the overall process includes localizing all software elements. Although some software issues such as the space constraints in the video games have also impacts on the final translation that leads to other challenges for the translators, this study will be focusing on the translation and linguistic aspects of the localization process rather than its software issues.

Yet, to understand how localization activities work and how the scope of translation is expanding throughout the localization process accordingly, the following concepts require to be tackled; Globalization, Culturalization, and Internationalization.

2.2.3.1. Globalization

Although Cadieux and Esselink defines the word “globalization” word as a minefield, they consider globalization in the game industry as the dictionary suggests, “make global.”

The very definition of globalization, according to their article, is “the process of developing, manufacturing, and marketing software products that are intended for worldwide distribution. This term combines two aspects of the work: internationalization (enabling the product to be used without language or culture barriers) and localization (translating and enabling the product for a specific locale).”

Despite they also highlight that the globalization of a thing - be it a social program, a marketing strategy, a website, or a software product - is simply about spreading a thing to several different countries, and making it applicable and useable in those countries (Cadieux and Esselink, 2005).

2.2.3.2. Culturalization

Edwards, argues on what we currently understand from the culturalization is that it's scale is broader and localization is only one aspect of it.

She discusses that culturalization potentially provides gamers a space where they can engage with the game's content at a much deeper, more meaningful level. Culturalization process ensures that the audience will not be coming across any content that may be considered incompetent or even offensive in their culture and allows the audience playing a game that is locally relevant throughout the play. It removes the potential risks that may create problems in the source culture and make the audience engage with the game experience on a culturally familiar level as well as presenting a game that is culturally acceptable, valid in the broad multicultural market as well as on specific geographic scales.

She divides culturalization into two types: reactive and proactive.

Reactive culturalization identifies and removes the culturally problematic elements in the game; whereas proactive culturalization identifies and adds elements that may enhance the local relevance; thus, the gaming experience (Lowood, Guins and Edwards, 2016, p. 97).

2.2.3.3 Internationalization

In his article of “The evolution of Localization”, Esselink explains the international expansion of software and hardware developers automatically triggered the product localization process for international markets. The new challenges were handled in different ways, as some did establish their in-house teams of translators and language engineers to provide international support while others assigned international offices or distributors to localize. Before the translatable texts were also embedded in the software source code and the requirements of updates were making the version management extremely complex. This is how internationalization began as the adaptation of products to support or enable localization. The key features have always been the support of international natural language character sets, the separation of locale-specific features such as translatable strings from the software code base, and the addition of functionality or features specific to foreign markets. Without internationalization, localizing products can be very challenging (Esselink, 2003, p. 4).

CHAPTER III

GAMING TRANSLATION CHALLENGES

As Chandler discusses what a video game translator should develop in order to evoke the game's tone and provide the same amusement for the end player, she mentions two crucial traits: creativity and a sense of fun (Chandler, 2008, p. 36). These choices of translation reflect the criteria of creatively adapting the original text as opposed to just doing a straight translation in video games.

Merino also describes types of games in two categories based on the freedom the translators are given. While some games require more research rather than creativity, others require more creativity than research. Since the majority of video games are naturally influenced by popular culture elements such as films, literature, comic books, sports, novels, etc., the translators are required to have a broad knowledge and professional understanding of the respective subjects' terminology. Translating games has its very own challenges. To become competent and provide excellence in transferring the particular universe of the game to the target audience to ensure naturality, the official materials that are related to the origins of the game should be researched in detail. As Merino states, video game translation is mostly constraining translators since there is a pre-existing common knowledge and translation as well as a large group of player fans that have very high and specific expectations of the game universe. In other cases where there is no pre-existing knowledge regarding the game universe, the game localization process may provide a genuine translation providing a correct amount of creativity and humor that sits well with the game universe (Merino, 2007, p. 3).

However, the challenges of the translators face while translating the video games are not only limited to transferring the culture-bound words, the humor aspects, or terminology issues, but it is an overall process including multiple software parameters that need to be taken into account by translators.

This chapter will be examining the video game translator challenges in the following sections.

3.1. CENSORSHIP

As discussed in the previous chapters, as technology has advanced, the complexity in content and storylines in video games has also increased. Once the spaces of game consoles have shifted from public to private spheres and the video games became more accessible, regulations started to be issued to control the legal and psychological aspects of the video games content-wise.

According to O'Holleran's article called "Blood Code: The History and Future of Video Game Censorship", "because the technology speed was slower to meet the requirements of video games to develop, the development of video game controversy was slower compared to films as well. This slow evolution clearly indicates why we did not see legal actions until mid-1990's and early 2000's." (O'Holleran, 2010, p. 580).

For instance *Mortal Kombat* (1992) and *Night Trap* (1993) both could not pass the radars during the time they were released. When an average gamer is asked what *Mortal Kombat* reminds them of, the answers will be quick. "Fatality", and "Brutality" as the finishings as well as extremely gore combat moves. When released in 1992 as a fighting game and had itself a great reputation for having an extreme level of gore and blood graphics thanks to the high-quality visuals, *Mortal Kombat* has become a phenomenon of its generation. When it was released for the consoles and entered homes, its availability is increased for consumption and consequently the worries rose about the game's impact. Although some of the controversial aspects of the game were referring to popular films, the referred movies had not drawn nearly as much criticism or outrage. Having the 11th game as of 2022, the versions of the game was banned and lifted around the globe multiple times.

Depicted as a combination of “slasher and vampire films”, *Night Trap* faced the same outrage when it was released. The game’s story was based on the players who are required to rescue a bunch of teenage girls, trapped in a house full of vampires. Although there were no blood drippings, there is a scene where vampires put a collar around a teenager’s neck who is in a nightgown and drink her blood. As a consequence of the concerned letters from Senators of the time, in which the game was described as “deeply offensive to women”, two of the largest toy chain companies have pulled the game from the shelves as of December 1993 (O’Holleran, 2010, p. 580).

According to Goodson and Turner, in 2005, the California State Legislature made the sale of violent video games to anyone under the age of 18 illegal. For the sake of a brief explanation of why video games began to be censored, according to Goodson and Turner, the media has been pointing fingers at video games for many violent incidents that are committed by youngsters over the last two decades. Rather than focusing on the individuals or any possible mental health issues that are likely to cause what happens, the blame is often to be put on the video games.

As in Davin Moore’s case, when he committed three acts of first-degree murder in 2003, his actions were reported to be a result of him playing *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* (GTA). Warren Leblanc was jailed for murdering his classmate with a knife and claw hammer but the incident was related to his obsession with playing *Manhunt*. *Gears of War* was the focus of the crime when a 13-year slashed his friend’s throat. More examples can be found on the internet that are focusing on video games causing violence, and we see more and more individual censorings based on the legislation of the respective countries accordingly. A further compilation of studies on the effects of playing violent video games can be found in Simon Goodson and Kirstie J. Turner’s work (2021), *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* (Goodson and Turner, 2021, p. 3), but violence is not the only element that is included to the scope of censoring.

Removing the assets that may sound culturally or historically offensive in the video games is a very common practice today and executed based on to the violation of

rights or legislations in each country. And translators, in that sense becomes a crucial part of the process while processing the linguistic assets that may create problems in the target audience.

Localization Project Coordinator at Toppan Digital Language, Abraham Martínez Rodríguez talks about how producer companies face with localization progress, he highlights the challenges of dealing the locale differences in different countries. Each country has its own format expectations and legal limitations. For instance, Japan has strongly established rules for what is to be shown or censored in the game to be published. In fact, the country has no boundaries in terms of nudism or fighting as long as the required censorship is applied entirely to the game.

Regarding the Arabic limitations, the characters should be covered if they are found explicit and there are certain limitations based on the government's costume regulations. The country also expects the producers to remove all potential different Gods' names and replace the words like stars, the lord, and destiny. The word "Allah" is forbidden too (Rodríguez, 2020). Nudity, sexual or polytheistic content, LGBTQ+ characters, or any implications on homosexuality may be a part of the reasons behind the bans.

For instance, 2018 God of War is the first entry of the game to be approved by UAE's National Media Council. The previous seven games were all banned from being sold in stores in the UAE since residents have complained there is offensive material in regards to religion and sexual scenes (Lau, 2018).

As Chandler states, the adaptation of a game to a different culture must take all legal issues into account. Having particular legislations and rules, some countries have limitations regarding video games showing excessive violence or offensive language. As in Germany, where blood must be turned green and the use of violence or some kind of symbols are strongly monitored and watched by the authorities (Chandler 2005: 26) cited in (Costales, 2012, p. 12).

To sum up, translators should be aware of the limitations and legislations of the countries they are working in, otherwise, the games can be subjected to bans or can be removed from the shelves based on the content.

3.2. WHEN TRANSLATING HUMOUR GOES WRONG

Although translating humour is very important to provide the playful experience of game universe, in some occasions, one little mistake may have cause major impacts. The translators should to be very careful and consider the historical aspects and mechanisms and estimate the possible impacts on the target receptors before trying to be humourous.

Transferring the humour or an unfortunate joke attempt in translation may create an outrage amongst the target receptors depending on the cultural vulnerabilities. One of the recent examples has been seen in *Cyberpunk 2077*'s Turkish localization. It has caused a major reaction amongst the players since the famous quote, "*İstikbal Göklerdedir*¹³" by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic was displayed in a slightly different way.

The name of the electropunk group within the game called "**perilous futur**"'s Turkish translation was shown as "**İstikbal Götlerdedir**" where the translator has chosen to replace the word "gök¹⁴" with "göt¹⁵" to put humour to the text.

Once it was exposed by a careful gamer and became viral on the internet, the localization company had to post a public apology for the incident and informed the audience that it will be removed with the following patch.

¹³ Literal translation. "*The future is in the skies*" by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

¹⁴ Translation: *Sky*

¹⁵ Translation: *Ass* (Slang)

Figure 3.1. Perilous Futur



Perilous Futur, ST vs TT (Ertunç, 2020).

3.3. CONSISTENCY

In major game translation projects in which the narration content is extremely wide, a large number of translators are working during the game localization. We have discussed in the previous chapters on how the RPG video games are extremely narrative driven and requires a huge amount of translation for verbal and non-verbal dialogues and written assets.

Especially in open world games, in which the players can wander around in an open map, exploring, socially interacting and joining combats, they may encounter posters in market places, find notes explaining a random situation or incident while looting the boxes, read books including the stories of the characters or incidents about the universe etc., the consistency becomes crucial. In some cases, all those written assets can be linked to one another.

If to give an example, a recipe to mix a magic potion that is linked to the alchemy section, the translation of the ingredients should be the same in both sections although there is a possibility that the terms or sections may be translated by different translators within the same project.

All those small written assets have to be consistent in terms of their terminology to support the players game experience.

When being asked in an interview, former Lead Project Manager Elizaveta Sidovora shared how the process of game translation is handled in her company, she states, first the text is received by the project manager.

The manager assesses the text and loads it into the CAT tool. The translator then starts working and asks questions about the text, and the manager serves as a bridge between the client and the translator. Once the translator is finished, the editor proofreads the translation. In the final stage, the manager does a QA check, makes sure all the tags are in place, and reviews the file after exporting it. It's highly recommended that you always do linguistic quality assurance (LQA) after the translation is done. It's an integral part of the workflow for good localization. During testing, you can find cosmetic and contextual bugs that detract from the translation.” (Jakovlev, 2020).

In addition to this, the Global Localization Manager at the King, a video game development company famous for Candy Crush Saga; Mette Clark highlights that to ensure the best quality, at least two people should work on every piece of text to deliver full TEP (translation, editing, proofreading), while the Linguistic Quality Assurance process has to be carefully planned (Jakovlev, 2020).

The consistency is not only about the terms within one particular game. In some cases, one game can be released as a series. For instance, when the localization company of TW3, 23 Studios was interviewed on how they operate their localization process, the first thing they highlighted was that they put extra effort to use the same terms in The Witcher 3 to ensure maximum consistency between the previous games.

3.4. DOMESTICATION VS. FOREIGNIZATION CHALLENGES

“Domestication” and “Foreignization” strategies are the two concepts we currently see in video game translations today. A domesticating translation conforms to the culture of the receptors even in some cases, it means losing the style, nature, and distinguished cultural elements of the source text. The main purpose is to make the target audience feel natural while reading or hearing the translated texts as well as to make the source text more accessible for the target readers. Basically, it brings the source text to the target user however, in some cases domestication may cause reducing the ethnocentric nuances.

Based on Frederick Schleiermacher’s theory of translation methods of the 19th century which put forwards that “*Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him*” (Çekçi, 2020, p. 559).

Lawrence Venuti introduced his discourse on domesticating and foreignizing translation into the translation studies scope. Venuti explains the Schleiermacher’s division as:

“Admitting that translation can never be completely adequate to the foreign text, Schleiermacher allowed the translator to choose between a domesticating method, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home, and a foreignizing method, an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad.” (Venuti, 2004, p. 20).

In Venuti’s view, domestication is rather dangerous as it provides the target-language reader with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural “other” (Zsuzsanna, 2017, p. 95)

On the other hand, foreignization of the translation means taking the reader to the text, though in some cases, using the elements such as style, wording, phrases, and such in the source text that are **not** commonly found in the target receptors' cultural or linguistic knowledge. This also may result in the finished-text sound 'foreign' in the receptors.

Venuti considers foreignizing effect as an ethical imperative for translators. In his own words, *“insofar as translation traffics in the foreign, it ought to resist assimilation to dominant values in the receiving situation and somehow register linguistic and cultural differences.”* (Constantine, 2017, p. 26)

However, in the article “In Defense of Schleiermacher: A Critique of Venuti's Foreignization and Domestication”, Tee states, *“Venuti generally views domestication and foreignization as two extreme poles, and never explains the binarism as a range that could simultaneously apply in relative degrees in translating any given text.”* In his defense of Schleiermacher, Tee gives the example of how Schleiermacher rejected an overly foreignizing translation in Greek classics, on the contrary, Schleiermacher handled both concepts, not as two extreme poles but could instead co-exist in the same text (Tee, 2021, p. 141).

Having settled on the definition of “Domestication” and “Foreignization” from three different perspectives in the mentioned above discussions, the most crucial decision a translator has to make is to what extent these two concepts will co-exist or sit on the opposite poles during the translation as this decision will have an impact on the overall result of the game translation.

Do the translators in the project have the intention to preserve the source nuances, cultural assets, and the linguistic structure and bring receptor gamers to the universe with a source-oriented translation, which may have possible negative results such as difficulties in understanding the game, or do they want to domesticate the game's language as much as possible so that the gamers may feel natural like they are 'home' that may also have possible negative results such as the translator's

visibility or rewriting a whole new text especially if there is a pre-existing knowledge about the universe.

In one interview, when he was asked if readers can perceive foreignness, Venuti stated a translator can also decide to translate a source text by using a strategy that is marginal or less familiar. He gives the example of Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky using the approach with Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* in 1990. Their strategy, at once writerly and closer to the Russian text, mixing archaism and current standard English, adopted a completely new interpretation of the novel, departing noticeably from the translations that had gained dominance from Constance Garnett onward (Constantine, 2017, p. 26).

Constance Garnett, née Constance Clara Black, (1861-1946) English translator who made the great works of Russian literature available to English and American readers in the first half of the 20th century. In addition to being the first to render Dostoyevsky and Chekhov into English, she translated the complete works of Turgenev and Gogol and the major works of Tolstoy¹⁶.

She was the most famous English translator, heavily criticized later for her Victorianish translations in the '30s and '40s cornered the Russian novel translation market (Wallace, 2019).

According to Geballe, Garnett's translation choices were mostly based on her Victorian sensibilities, especially on Dostoevsky's fiction. Critics highlight her interventions based on her visible prudishness in the translations, which are more visible than in her translations of Dostoevsky, who, unlike Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Turgenev, appalled both Garnett and her publisher, William Heinemann, who asked her to "tone down" the passages that might offend English readers (Geballe, 2020, p. 608).

¹⁶ Britannica. (n.d.). In the Encyclopedia Britannica "*Constance Garnett*". (Retrieved December 15, 2021) <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Constance-Garnett>.

Needless to say, the English language has been the dominant language in many communication tools and the hegemony of Anglo-American cultures leads the world to be enforced in that direction through multiple media mediums today.

In order to understand more on the discussion behind Venuti's criticism of the concepts of "foreignization" or "domestication" resulting in the ethnocentric reductions and "translator's visibility" in translation activities, further analysis is required.

A brief summary of a discussion can be given as an example from Abhinaba Chatterjee's article "The (Many) Worlds of World Literature: Redefining World Literature in the Context of Untranslatability" to understand why Venuti also criticized foreignizing or domesticating the texts during the translation process.

Apter's criticism of the advocacy of the translation process as a primary necessity of 'World Literature' is based on the essentially Anglo-centrism of the translation process. In "What is World Literature", David Damrosch defined the term 'world literature' through the lens of translation; thus, he emphasized that "*we need to look closely at the ways a work becomes reframed in its translations and its new cultural contexts.*" He also states that he wants to trace "*what is gained and what is lost in translation as looking at the shifts of language, era, region and religion, and literary context as they move from its point of origin to a new cultural sphere*" (Chatterjee, 2022, p. 124).

The most popular translation debate on TW3 by far is the translation of the word "Witcher" for obvious reasons. Rather than a literal translation, which is also not possible since there is no Turkish equivalent of the word witcher which is a translation of the Polish word wiedźmin, it is translated as "Efsunger"¹⁷ in the Turkish language. Efsunger can be translated as a person who performs magic. The word is an Ottoman word derived from Persian¹⁸.

¹⁷ Tureng. (n.d.) In the Turkish English Dictionary "efsunger". (Retrieved July 8, 2022) <https://tureng.com/en/turkish-english/efsunger>

¹⁸ Osmanlıca-Türkçe Sözlük. (n.d.) In the Osmanlıca-Türkçe Sözlük "efsunger". (Retrieved July 8, 2022) <https://www.osmanlicaturkce.com/?k=efsunger&t=%40%40>

According to the localization company of The Witcher 3, the translation approaches used during the localization process are described as a firm establishment that may serve as a common standard for all translators in this field providing a base of terminology to be used in games, books, and other fields. For instance, they claim that although they admit that some people may find terms like “Efsunger” strange at first, then they get used to it and the feedback they get has been generally positive. The localization company describes finding a suitable Turkish equivalent for some of the unique terms that appear in The Witcher 3 takes a lot of brainstorming and research. In addition to making use of old Turkish dictionaries, they indicate they also referred to Turkish mythology.

For example, while working on the name of the creature named “**Chort**”, the localization company saw the similarity as the creature was in fact also seen in ancient Turkish stories known as “Çor”. Since the universe in which the game takes place is based on Eastern European mythologies and there have been many interactions between the two cultures throughout history, they decided to use the similarities in such areas. Such examples may be considered as Venuti puts it, “a narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural “other”, further empirical analysis on domestication will be shown in Chapter 5.

3.5. TRANSLATOR COMPETENCE AND GAME TERMINOLOGY IN RPG’S

Fantasy, is the imaginative fiction dependent for effect on strangeness of setting (such as other worlds or times) and of characters (such as supernatural or unnatural beings¹⁸).

As Fabrizi (2016) states, *over the years, fantasy literature has attracted a body of scholarly criticism devoted to illuminating works of fantasy not unlike critical analyses of classic and canonical literary works. One of the foremost interesting*

¹⁸ Britannica. (n.d.) In the Encyclopedia Britannica “*fantasy*”. (Retrieved 12 June 2022) www.britannica.com/art/fantasy-narrative-genre

qualifications of fantasy writing is that it tends to question life by leading the readers to re-think the concepts such as the nature of good and evil, universal morality, the afterlife, heroism and the quality of one's character, the role of the individual in society, and the importance of cultural diversity (Fabrizi, 2016, p. 1).

There are academic researches that examine the critics of fantasy literature from different points but the study at hand intends to discuss the elements in fantasy literature to examine the linguistic assets from the point of translation studies in general.

However, in order to give a brief example of the current critics of fantasy literature to understand the traditional world-building, McGarry and Ravipinto states, that in countless examples of fantasy literature, the protagonists are traditionally white, heterosexual males who are to save the world at the end of the day. They live in the old ways when old ways are considered 'good', and the power structures are to be contained under the shadow of the romantic vision of earlier ages. Marginalized groups such as women that do not conform to the dominant social norms, and individuals from different ethnic backgrounds or sexual orientations may be the sidekicks to help the heroes, however, they rarely question the dominant paradigms and are mostly invisible in the society and lost in the status quo (Fabrizi, McGarry and Ravipinto, 2016, p. 13).

Despite the above critics, no one can deny that the diverse structure of fantasy literature with its relations to diverse characters, interracial dialogues, and all elements existing in a realm of 'otherness' sets a good example for readers from all demographic age groups to be more accepting of the 'other' as well as the multiracial or multicultural environments, although fantasy literature also has been considered childish and for children and overlooked for ages.

In order to perform excellency in translation, the translators should have a general understanding of fantasy literature world building as well as the canonic character types.

For instance, conceptualizing the notion of race in modern fantasy literature is not very easy, because the boundaries of the very definition of race are obscure and what is referred to as ‘race’ and what is not cannot be defined easily. J.R.R Tolkien’s place in the fantasy genre, who is called the father of modern fantasy literature in popular culture today, has always been irreplaceable since he has set the tone for the many following authors in the same genre with his concept of races in the Middle Earth. So, *it’s unsurprising that his conception of the “races” of Middle Earth has become more-or-less standard across the fantasy genre* (Sturtevant, 2017).

He outlined the racial characteristics of humans, hobbits, elves, dwarves, orcs, uruk-hais or mixed ancestry, trolls, and many more although there is also pre-existing canonized or mythological knowledge for some of them. One should also note that all elements in the literature are also evolving by their nature since fantasy literature is dynamic and subject to changes and they are exposed to re-interpretations in video games in the RPG genre constantly.

One of the challenges a translator may also face while translating in fantasy literature is the generated words that do not exist in the canonic literature so there is an absence in their translation too.

As Sarmaşık discusses, *as a key element in artistic creation, defamiliarization serves as a catalyst in fantasy literature to make things “unfamiliar”* (Sarmaşık, 2022, p. 2) To be more clearer, fantasy literature authors often prefer using invented character names that are never been heard before, or location names generated based on the concepts such as playfulness and unrealism to create a sense of otherness in the receptors. The world-building of the fantasy genre is commonly multi-layered and stories generally take place in “other” worlds that receptors are not familiar with, so the characters, creatures, spiritual or supernatural beings, races, cuisine, fauna, alchemy materials, magical tools, vehicles or every magical element that is related to the fictional universe, weapons, religion and beliefs, idioms, and many other elements existing in the fantasy worlds are not only unfamiliar in terms of their nature but also may mean different in terms of their generated names.

The translators, in this case, are expected to perform comprehensive research on the fantasy literature, previous examples, and pre-existing terminology knowledge, and to be professional enough to understand the similarities or differences between the game terminology and the canonized fantasy terms as these terms are also exposed to shifts depending on the author or source culture of the games as well. When the localization companies' job posts are examined, the minimum requirement for a translator to be hired in the video game industry is being knowledgeable about games, and being a gamer is highly desirable to overcome the competency challenges in the projects.

3.6. GENDER IDENTITY AND PREFERRED PRONOUNS

The video game developers may disregard that there are different languages and dialects as well as distinguishing pronouns or different words for male and female or singular and plural. Developing the game and its localized versions simultaneously may solve some of these linguistic or dialect problems if the producer company is in-housing the project or in total control of the contents, however in some cases where the localization is executed after the release of the game, or when the translation team has no idea or pre-existing knowledge about the game content, the quality of the translation may result insufficient or sound even offensive.

There is a wide range of studies on the concepts of sex and gender, gender identity, and gender expression. While there are still a considerable number of countries where there is only a basic division between gender definitions as male and female, we also started to witness numerous laws and legislations being issued and executed on the subject in many developing countries nowadays. This paper at hand will be looking at the translation problems in particular so the question of this chapter is, how preferred gender pronouns (PGP) are included in video game translation scope?

A preferred gender pronoun or set gender pronouns are used when persons ask other individuals to use specific pronouns to represent their gender identity when they are being addressed. The use of preferred gender pronouns means to show *respect for the autonomy of individuals whose gender identity may not conform to the way they are perceived by others, or individuals whose identity is gender non-binary* (Pook, 2020, p. 6).

As Hackney discusses, the representation of characters from different sexual orientations in the video games that resist the status quo is opening the field to minorities and women. One of the most underrepresented communities, without a doubt is the LGBTQ community.

A major breakthrough in the video game industry has recently been recognized, when *Last of Us II* (2020) was released as the second game of the series. The fans have encountered Ellie as a child character in the previous game for the first time and she is coming out as a young lesbian woman in the sequel and is seen with her girlfriend Riley.

Although a proper representation of the marginalized characters is not an easy task to accomplish in video games from both gamers' and society's perspectives considering the dominant paradigm, the majority of the producers are no longer marginalizing these members and slowly moving toward a general goal of acceptance (Hackney, 2018, p. 863-904).

There are multiple examples of the representations of sexual orientations today. For instance, as of 2021 first-person shooter game *Apex Legends* tapped the mic via its official Twitter account to announce that Bloodhound who is the technological tracker in the game is referred to as non-binary and uses they/them pronouns (Playapex, 2022).

In "*Borderlands 3*," the latest installment of a sci-fi series that has sold 48 million copies. Developed by Gearbox Software, gamers encounter nonbinary, pansexual, gay, considering transitioning and heterosexual characters.

For instance, one of the characters, FL4K is identified as nonbinary, omnisexual, and omni-flirtatious referred to with singular they/them pronouns in the game. All defined by the developer company's senior writer Danny Homan as "*Our goal is to entertain the world, so we have to have a cast of characters that are of the world*" (Goldberg, 2019, p. 894).

The examples can be multipliable, and considering the current progress and the positive reactions from gamer communities, it wouldn't be wrong to say we will see more diverse characters in the future of game industry.

The reason why gender-specific pronoun translation is problematic is that gender identities and what is attributed to these terms are problematic. Translation attempts of these terms bring two concepts to the center of attention.

"Untranslability" of some pronouns such as "non-binary" or preferred pronouns such as they/them accordingly may create ambiguities in video game dialogues during translation.

Plus, the assumptions or predictions of the pronouns may also create lexical obscurities in some target receptors speaking gender-neutral languages. In order to be more clear, despite Braun (2001) describing Turkish as a gender-neutral language, he also highlights Turkish language acknowledges gender pronouns by assumptions based on gender stereotypes that are commonly accepted by society. The receptors tend to give priority to males rather than females if there is no clue unless there are exceptions that are used that are mostly attributed to female professions.

He argues that *there are asymmetrical gender markings in the Turkish language, concluding that male gender remains unmarked regardless of context, whereas the female gender tends to be overly expressed. For example, female children are more likely to be referred to with marked gender than male children. The exception to this pattern is when the subject is exceptionally stereotyped as feminine as in the word 'house helper'* (Braun, 2001) cited in (Ciora, Iren and Alikhani, 2021, p. 2).

Shifting between a gendered specific and a non-gendered language for a translator has its own difficulties as stated above. We see translation examples that do not sound Turkish but we do understand why it sounds like a translation as the origin of the translation is coming from a gender-specific English sentence.

Translators not only have to be careful in terms of transferring the gender-specific sentences or dialogues in order to be comprehended by the receptor culture properly but also, they need to make themselves acquainted with the current gender policies and politically correct expressions in order to find proper equivalences of gender-specific terms.

3.7. INVENTED LANGUAGES AND VARIABLES, DIALECTS, PARTICULARITIES

Translating the multicultural environment of fantasy literature that takes place in video games in RPG genre requires a broad knowledge of what fantasy literature stands for and what are the similarities and differences between the canonic and re-interpreted. Translators should also have a good understanding of the references that relates to mythologic or folkloric elements.

Invention of new languages is a common practice for fantasy and fiction genres and mostly it is to create the sense of otherness and strangeness of the fantasy worlds. From Klingon language in Star Trek to Dothraki language in J.R.R Martin's Game of Thrones, the examples can be multiplied for invented languages that come with their own history, people, mythology, culture, and topography.

On the other hand, last but not the least, Tolkien's invented Middle-Earth languages, including *High and Common Elvish (Quenya and Sindarin)*, along with *Dwarvish, Black Speech, and Entish*, and a clutch of others that are less fully developed. The set of languages invented for Middle Earth does not only reflect Tolkien's personal aesthetics but also embodies the culture of the communities he created, capturing the soul of the characters' culture, knowledge, habits, and doings (Anderson, 2015).

According to Garth, *Tolkien's long-lasting passion for inventing languages also led him to create the languages in the realization of all languages require mythology or culture to live, and in this case, it was Middle Earth. Tinkering with the languages and mythology, he created distinctive, sounds and languages that have consistent grammar structures for particular races based on their characteristics, history, and culture* (Garth, 2016, p. 43).

When Garth explains the process of language invention in fantasy writing, he highlights an important fact that some invented languages in fantasy literature are not simply made for communication purposes while the others have consistent grammar structures to emphasize a high culture. He states, in some cases, neither the complexity in the grammar nor substantial lexicon matters as they are not invented for communication requirements, but rather the distinctive sounds or alliterations are crucial to make a statement for the culture and mythology they represent. As in the Dothraki people in Game of Thrones, the author uses distinctive language and strong sounds such as “kh” in order to distinguish them from the other communities and highlight their ‘wilderness’ (Garth, 2016, p. 43), whereas as the linguistics researcher Fred Hoyt told the Guardian in 2013 about Tolkien’s Elvish that it is a language in which “*it would be easier to compose an elegant elegy for the dead than it would be to order a sandwich*” (Anderson, 2015).

In the video games, the invented languages are kept on screen as a subtitle as well as translation is given right below the subtitle. In such cases, the competency of the translator is also important since they should take into account the importance of transferring the intended atmosphere, the alliteration of the highlighted sounds if there are any, the order of the sentence if there is an intentional deviation, and the style into the target language and this is only possible by having a broad knowledge of the characters in terms of their racial and historical background, doings, habits, styles, and culture.

For example, when translating fantasy literature from English to Turkish, it is a very common practice to use the words from Persian and Arabic languages borrowed

into Turkish in order to create an atmosphere of the mysticism of past times or to provide a sense of different use of language; as if it is the language of magic. The use of ancient words evokes otherly worlds that are distant from the present day, that we can understand but are not a part of. However, translators should also note that excessive usage of these old words in Persian, or Arabic origins may result in difficulties for the receptors to understand the dialogues (Okayayuz, 2006, p. 183).

In fact, the use of dialects, over-characterization, and playful or elegant styles of talking in video games enriches the game content and it is also one of the most interesting aspects of world-building in *The Witcher 3* as well. Ruses such as extreme characterization, hiding stories in dialects, and various accents were used in order to maintain the diverse structure of the *Witcher* universe.

In an interview, Borys Pugacz-Muraszkiewicz, the English Adaptation Director of TW3 states that although the source material they get is Polish, it is resonating with the English language audience. As a non-playable character (NPC) in the game tells a story in the way Polish fairytales and legends are told and the story is retold in English and resonates the canon.

Since the map consists six open-world regions called White Orchard as the human settlement, the Royal Palace in the capital of Vizima, the cities of Velen and Novigrad, Archipelago of Skellige including six islands, Kaer Morhen as the quarter of witchers, and the duchy of Toussaint, there aren't individual accents designed for each race and regions as a result of the intensive narrative-based structure of the game.

Pugacz-Muraszkiewicz states the team had the accent established for Velen that is a relatively poor countryside, as the West Country accent. Regarding the supernatural beings, if it is not an elf or dwarf, and it is twisted somehow whether it is a gnome, goblin, or a troll the accent is set as Welsh. This accent has been applied to *The Three Crones* as well, also known as *Ladies of the Wood*, the three witches who live in a cabin in the swamps of Velen.

Looking at the world-building of Skellige islands in terms of folklore, art, architecture and living, he highlights that if the decision was to him, Skellige people as islanders would speak Norwegian in the English version with English subtitles.

Numerous European accents are thoroughly parodied to maintain the diversity in the video game universe. And despite the location names, the looks, the wine names, and numerous character names being either French or somehow related to “romance” languages; the accent they went for Toussaint was Danish (Video Game Documentaries, 2017).

Due to the fact that there is no dubbed Turkish version in TW3, a comprehensive analysis could not be performed to understand how the accents or dialects were translated to Turkish. Although it is clearly seen in the subtitles that old words derived from Persian or Arabic have been used to create the mystic atmosphere for certain characters speech styles in translation, a further analysis may only be possible in future when there is a dubbed Turkish version in the game.

CHAPTER IV

THE WITCHER SAGA

4.1. THE WORLD BUILDING OF WITCHER: CULTURAL CONTEXTS AND REFERENCES

As discussed in the above chapters, it is also important to re-highlight the fact with the author's own words, that the game series are not considered as an 'alternative version', nor a sequel.

Sapkowski states that *"The game is a free adaptation containing elements of my work; an adaptation created by different authors,"* According to him, *"although CD Projekt Red drew from the literary works to develop the game, the video game adaptations are in the end a "free adaptation" simply containing elements of the novels but Geralt's stories can only be told by Andrzej Sapkowski"* (Gera, 2012).

Without a doubt, Sapkowski's The Witcher series became a cultural phenomenon, the books, the video game series, and consequently, the TV series have their faithful fans. However, each adaptation brought certain challenges in terms of the translation of culture-bound elements that exist within the original content. According to Daniel, for instance, the general structure of the forest, plants, and creatures displayed in the book are endemic to the Slavic lands. However, in the English interpretation, the woodland loses its original Slavic characteristics, and English-speaking readers may understand it as a medieval woodland from Robin Hood instead of a Slavic forest (Daniel, 2016, p. 10).

The game adaptation, on the other hand, is inevitably inspired by the books, and on top of that, it is released as an inspirational combination of European folklore, mythology, folklore, fantasy literature, and culture. Since all localized projects have gone through the filter of target cultures and languages as well as the laws and

legislations of the respective countries, the video game has its very own interpretations in the countries it is marketed.

In order to narrow down the discussions from the other adaptations, when the world-building of TW3 is examined, there is obscurity in terms of the timeline in which TW3 takes place, but it wouldn't be wrong to say that TW3's medievaesque fantasy world that is not only influenced by European mythologies, fairytales, and folklore, but also highly anachronistic with its combination of fantasy, mythology, and fictional elements from different periods.

Jański highlights that Sapkowski is aware of his work lacks the details of a consistent history and mythology and an organized fictional space unlike many other authors in the same genre creating a detailed world with concrete, consistent maps. In his case, the maps were drawn by fans in collaboration with the author (Jański, 2019, p. 123).

In the interview CD Projekt gives explanations regarding the localization and adaptation process of TWC, Senior Localization Project Manager, Ainara Echaniz and Senior Localization Producer, Mikołaj Szwed state that what differentiates TW3 localization project from others is that they usually perform localization for all languages simultaneously. There is no language that is set as a base and no such requirement for other languages to try to copy that language. They highlight that they were required to work in different scenarios for each country individually, because in some of the regions the translation of the books was already in the market and they had to comply with the pre-existing knowledge and translations, that are already established in the target culture. Whereas, they kept English as the source where there is none. Afterall, the video game project team intended for the localization companies not to copy everything but rather, they asked them to find a good natural equivalence and evoke the message.

Every single design in the game such as villages, the name of the people have them for a particular reason, such as White Orchard because located in Temeria and occupied by Nilfgaard, the village has always been famous for its orchard trees. Or

being one of the major ports in the continent and deriving its name from the Slavic words “Novi” as “new” and “Grad” as “city”, Novigrad is a free, rich metropolis in Redania and is one of the largest cities of North, consisting factories, and a very diverse population.

Although the city is very rich and developed and the architecture is well-improved due to the commercial activities, as part of its big city identity it has also very bad neighbourhoods including brothels, wandering thugs attacking people, temporary settlers such as sorcerers or different races other than humans being threatened by the Eternal Fire, that is an extremist religious group patrolling the city and so on.

The Toussaint Region, on the other hand, provides chivalric romance themes such as the kings, queens, cursed princesses and knights fighting for their honor and proving their courage to the Damsel in Distress, pursuing noble quests to show their combat skills against giants or dragons living in the wild forests or in the caves on the top of hills, horse riding tournaments with prizes and duel challenges for men to honor their family names.

In order to be more clearer Jański refers to Zaborowski in the discussion of which motifs Sapkowski has combined from Slavic and other mythologies and fiction, *“The image that emerges from the prose is that of a gritty, low fantasy setting imbued with moral ambiguity, brutality, racial and religious prejudice, and persecution typically associated with the Dark Ages. Sapkowski also draws heavily on Slavic folklore and demonology¹⁹ (Jański, 2019, p. 123) which he combines with Arthurian and Nordic material, more typical of fantasy as a whole; furthermore, the novels and short stories are highly intertextual.”²⁰ (Zaborowski, 2015; Kuster, 2015) cited in (Jański, 2019, p. 123).*

¹⁹ Jański, Krzysztof. (2019) notes in article, “Creation of the fictional world in The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt” that for the discussion of motifs borrowed from Slavic mythology in Sapkowski’s texts, refer to Paweł Zaborowski’s article “Mitologia słowiańska w cyklu o wiedźminie”.

²⁰ (Janski notes) The description is necessarily succinct. For an extensive discussion, see the pioneering work by Katarzyna Kaczor, Geralt, czarownice iwampir (2006), which offers a detailed description of characters, plot patterns, inspirations, and motifs. For an in-depth analysis of intertextuality, in particular of the borrowings contained in mottos or stylized excerpts provided by Sapkowski before each chapter, refer to Maciej Kuster’s article (2015)

As mentioned in the previous sections, Sapkowski's combination of Slavic and other mythologies with fantasy and fiction has also gone through the filter of the game developers. In addition to the usage of mages, elves, and dwarves, or re-interpreted fairytale characters from fantasy and fiction genres, as well as mythological creatures or Eurocentric folktale inspired monsters were drawn within the design. Although the developers stated that they haven't gone through ancient manuscripts or canonic historical documents while designing the mythological creatures or monsters in traditional folktales, it can be useful to give examples of how the game cooperates with Slavic, Nordic, Arthurian, or medieval folklore.

In the quest: Imperial Audience, during Geralt's interaction with the Nilfgaardian Emperor Emhyr, he is asked to perform all medieval court life customs in Emperor's presence. Being portrayed as a mixture of the Byzantium Empire and a 16th-century early European state, the imperials demand Geralt to change his clothing, shave properly and learn how to bow to the emperor according to the palace etiquette (Lidén, 2017).

The developer team has used a very important Slavic traditional element, *that is still celebrated as one of the biggest literary works in Poland known as Dziady that is Adam Mickiewicz's four-part poetic drama that can be translated as Forefathers' Eve. Being one of the greatest works of European Romanticism* ("Classic Polish Epic Finally Available", 2022), *Halloween's Polish counterpart has a rich tradition dating back to old Slavic times. Rather than jack-o'-lanterns, it's linked to Karaboshka masks and the great literature of the Romantic era* ("The Polish Halloween", 2016).

The purpose of Dziady is to make contact with the land of the dead that are once friends or relatives and summon them to communicate important matters. When the Polish region was introduced to Christianity, since the ritual is far from Catholic practices but it is coming from a folkloric pagan tradition, the ritual was forgotten in time by the pressure of the church. It used to be celebrated twice a year which is at the beginning of May and at the end of October.

There is an exact Slavic flavor that is used in TW3 as a secondary quest Geralt assigns himself that is called Forefathers' Eve where game producers show a very similar ritual. In the journal entry of TW3, the story goes as follows:

“During his travels through No Man's Land Geralt ran into the pellar once more. The strange fellow had a favor to ask of the witcher. He wanted Geralt to help him perform a cherished local peasant rite known as Forefathers' Eve. During this ritual, he explained, lost spirits are summoned and their deeds judged - fantastic material, by the way, for a poet looking to make his name with an atmospheric ballad. This Forefathers' Eve was set to be held at midnight on Fyke Isle, and Geralt, having no other plans and his curiosity piqued, promised to attend.

On Fyke Isle, the pellar led the witcher through the arcane rites that marked the opening of Forefathers' Eve. Alas, and alack, uninvited guests then arrived and threatened to break up the ritual before its conclusion. The witch hunters considered what the peasants practiced on Fyke Isle to be vile necromancy, and demanded they stop it at once.”

Amongst all regions, Skellige has the most obvious representation as a region with its mountain-like islands and its freezing climate situated in the North Sea. As discussed in the dialect section by Pugacz-Muraszkiewicz, if there is any community that represents Viking-like people, it is the settlers of Skellige Isles. Their fierce characteristics in terms of their battling skills as warrior-sailors, the social interactions, the political conflicts amongst the clans competing to be in power, inhabitants' livelihood coming mainly from the sea as fishermen or pirates, and the overall surroundings such as the design of the ships, clothing, and weapons, their beliefs based on the architecture of ancient temples and the Nordic names of the Gods and Goddesses, the design of the Skellige Islanders are highly influenced by Norse people, their culture and mythology.

However, the translation of the cultural assets is not only limited to mythology, fantasy, or fictional elements. Both adaptation and translation require a broad knowledge of the source and target material from historical events too. As Bartosz

Von Ochman, QA / Tester on Living World Design states when he was digging the Warsaw slang, there is a phrase “would you like to buy a brick?” from the times Warsaw was completely destroyed after the war. There were thugs from Prague wandering in Warsaw streets, grabbing the bricks from the destroyed buildings, asking people with good attire if they would like to buy a brick if they are approaching them. Their heads were being smashed if people would reject. This became a historical part of the folklore of the city. So the developers wanted to give the same situation in Novigrad to provide the same dangerous atmosphere for the backstreets as well as add some Slavic historical flavor and mix it with fiction. They state that they put a cultural instance invisible to the receptors but in a sense that it makes sense to them. The developers highlight that they asked target cultures to find similar roles for other continents although they wanted to keep the Slavic flavor as much as possible without being sounded ‘strange.’

CHAPTER V

EXPLORING VIDEO GAME TRANSLATION THROUGH THE LENS OF WITCHER WILD HUNT III.

5.1. NPC DIALOGUES AND DIALECTS

The definition of NPC in a video game is "non-player character" and in addition to this, according to Urban Dictionary, an NPC is *seemingly a human that is unable to think objectively, programmed to spout and repeat opinions in a cult-like manner*²¹.

The NPCs are also a major contributor to the atmosphere of the regions and spaces in world-building in TW3. Players can come across NPC's providing hints for the social and political environment they live in, such as children talking to each other about what do prostitutes do right in a bad neighborhood where a brothel is located in Novigrad, a poor villager woman complaining about eating roots causing her stomach to be rotten or hearing an NPC screaming "Freya's tits" in a tavern of Skellige, or a beggar asking for help claiming he is dying from poverty in an urban area in Novigrad, a woman talking about her daughter who is fit and ready to get married in Toussiant or people talking about humans should only get married to humans to maintain the race pureness around the areas where the religious cult, the Eternal Fire has a major influence on.

Based on their environment, cultural heritage, ethnicity, race, and class, all NPC's such as human villagers, elves, dwarves, witch hunters, warriors, soldiers and etc., perform their everyday activities in the background in their own languages and even react to what is happening time to time if the player starts a fight or so, commenting on the weather if it is raining, talking about their religious beliefs, complaining about the existing political conflicts in the region, flirting each other, quarreling

²¹ Urban Dictionary. (n.d.) In the Urban Dictionary "NPC". (Retrieved June 8, 2022) <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=NPC>

with their spouse or having daily chats representing the regional folklore. This is how they keep the whole game alive and create a realistic atmosphere as well as give information about the social and political structure of the region serving as a secondary actor of guidance to the players.

This type of guidance can also be found on the notice boards in the villages. As also discussed in the dialect section, all regions have their own respective dialects as well as some NPC's have their own specific invented languages based on their races. Such as Elves speaking a combination of Elvish and common language or Nilfgaardians speaking Nilfgaardian which are also major contributors to the diverse atmosphere of the game. Invented languages are mostly not translated as part of the translation strategies as well.

The below examples show the NPC's monologues both in English and Turkish around different regions of TW3 in which the humour, style, and social class of the teller are professionally reflected by the translators in both languages:

Table 5.1. NPC Dialogues

| | | |
|---|--|---------------------|
| Good Health To You | Sihhatler Olsun Sana | Touissant, Villager |
| Strapping Lad! | Dalyan Gibi Çocuk! | Touissant, Villager |
| Hi Diddly Ho ²² ! | Canım Canım Ben Senin Amcanım! | Touissant, Old Man |
| Roots Are Gonna Rot My Gut ! | Kök Yemekten Midem Çürüyecek | Velen, Old Woman |
| "Said One Hag To Another. Now Here's A Stunt, I'll Shove A Broom Up Your C*nt." | "Cadı Demiş Ki Cadiya, İşte Sana Numara Bu Tırmığı Sokacağım *mına." | Velen, Villager |
| Help This Poor Fellow Out! | Şu Garibana Bir Yardım Et! | Novigrad, Beggar |
| I will not speak to you, I refuse. <i>Va fail</i> ²³ ! | Seninle konuşmayacağım. Bunu reddediyorum. <i>Va Fail!</i> | Novigrad, Elf |

²² Ned Flanders from Simpsons has the odd habit of attaching "diddly," "doodly" and other nonsensical phrases to his sentences such as "Hi-diddly-ho". When a native speaker is asked on how this expression translates to the culture, the statement is "it can be connected to someone who is really Christian and nice."

²³ Tureng. (n.d.) In the Tureng Dictionary "Goodbye" (Retrieved June 10, 2022) <https://tureng.com/tr/turkce-ingilizce/goodbye>

5.1.1. Trolls

Rock Trolls are an ogroid race that is able to communicate with humans as well as non-humans on a fundamental level in common language and they generally don't have a wide capacity of understanding and are not as intelligent as other races in the TW3 universe. Although they speak the common language, they are not very developed in communicating fluently, so they have a unique communication style that needs to be transferred considering both semantic and lexical aspects.

The below example dialogue between Geralt of Rivia and the Rock Troll Trollololo shows the trolls' overall linguistic capacity for communication in both localized versions.

The associated quest is called "The Volunteer", in which Trollololo first appears on screen chanting a few Redanian army melodies. When the Third Northern War broke out, Trollololo was within the zone so a bunch of Redanian officers requested him to watch and guard a few boats and they get drunk. While the villagers aren't pleased to see the soldiers drunk and chanting, they wanted to get the boats back. Thinking that his services were required at that very point, Trollololo attacked the villagers to protect the boats to help the soldiers, due to his extreme brutal power, he killed the soldiers and villagers at the same time.

He didn't want to waste good meat so he cooks them all. Calling himself "Private Slate", he thinks he is now enlisted by the Redanian Army and chosen to protect the army goods, chanting Redanian Army songs and looking for paint to create a coat of arms, his path crosses with Geralt of Rivia.

Table 5.2. Trollololo Songs

| | |
|---|--|
| Who drink barrels and ask for more? The infantry from Tregotor! | Kim fiçı fiçı içee ve daha fazla istee? Tregotor piyadeleri! |
| Pikes in air, swords to sky! Nilfgaard scum must die die die! | Mızrahlaa havayaa. gılıçlaa göğee! Ölmeli, ölmeli Nilfgaard pislükleri! |
| Who makes Emhyr wet his panty? Cavalry from Nimnar Valley! | Kim zıçtırıyoo Emhyr'i altına? Nimnar Vadisi Süvarileri! |
| When a man fall dead off horsie Then make a soup ! Then make feast! Good no wasting tasty meats! | Adam attan düşerse Çooba yap! Ziyafet çeh ööleyse. Lezzetli etlee sakın ziyan etme! |

Table 5.3. Trollololo Dialogue

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Er Gaya. Emrinize hazır.- Şu işe bak ki yanımda biraz boya varmış. - Oh oh oh! Aa.. Uff. Off.- Mesele nedir ?- Boya vaa... Ama... Nassı bilmem.- Hmm. Bu sorun olabilir işte.- Adam nasıl biliyooo? Ben emret! Adam biliyoo!- Galiba biliyorum... Ne istediğine bağlı.- Guş rengli olsun. Redanya guşu. Kalkanlaa kibin.- Bir şansımı deneyebilirim sanırım. Fırçan varmı?- Göözeel. Cici guş.- Öyle mi düşünüyorsun? Beğendiysen iyi.- Adam iyi. Diğer adamlaa gibi deel. Teşkün sana. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Private Slate. Report on order.- Just so happens i have some paints on me.- Oh ohh. Uh! Ohhh. Owww.- What's the matter ?- Has paint.. How... Dunno.- Hm this might be a problem- Mans how know. I order.Mans knows- I guess I do. Depends on what you want.- Birdo colory. Redania birdo. Shields like.- Guess I can give it a shot.Got a brush?- Beautifoo. Pretty birdo.- Think so? Long as you are happy with it.- Mans good. No like othermans. Thank yous. |
|---|---|

5.2. CHARACTER NAMES

The Crones, also known as the Ladies of the Wood, are the three witches living in the swamps of Velen. While two of the Crones' names are translated, the name of the Crone, "Whispess" remains the same under the characters section that creating inconsistency in the translation. However, in the bestiary section, her name is translated as "fisiltıcı" in the journal entry.

Table 5.4. The Crones

| | |
|----------|-----------|
| Brewess | Demleyici |
| Weavess | Dokumacı |
| Whispess | Whispess |

Wham-a-Wham (Rock Troll)

Wham-a-wham the rock troll's first TW3 appearance is in a witcher contract Geralt assigns himself. In search of missing miners who never returned from the mountains, he finds out that a rock troll who lives in a cave near Blandare is responsible for their death. In his journal entry, in his own words:

Table 5.5. Wham-a-Wham (Rock Troll)

| Wham-a-Wham | Pat-Küt |
|--|--|
| <i>Thems in-walk troll house. Troll say, "Out mans!" But they wham-a-wham troll rocks. So troll wham, too!</i> | <i>Onlar da geldi trolün evine. Trol dedi, "Dışarı insanlar!" Ama onlar trole taşları pat-küt ettiler. O yüzden trol de onlara pat etti!</i> |
| Rock troll known as Wham-a-Wham | Pat-Küt diye bilinen kaya trolü |

Whoreson Junior is also known as Cyprian Wiley is one of Novigrad's most dangerous criminals. According to his TW3 journal entry, he inherited his father's casinos, fighting rings, and brothels. He is also known as a sadistic man who tortures and murders captive women.

According to his journal entry, when Geralt discovered his nickname "Whoreson", he realized this was in fact a “sugar-quoted” representation of the truth while he was searching for clues. - something much stronger was needed to describe a man who gets great pleasure in murdering captive women.

Table 5.6. Whoreson Junior

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Whoreson Junior | Küçük Şerefsiz |
|-----------------|----------------|

Carlo Varese, better known as Cleaver, was one of the four main crime bosses of Novigrad. Since his name cleaver is a big part of his identity, a literal translation is executed to his name. The interlopers’ fingers were sliced off with his namesake cleaver, and they were fed to the hungry hogs. The name is also translated to be more descriptive.

Table 5.7. Cleaver

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Cleaver aka Carlo Varese | Satır |
|------------------------------------|-------|

The Unseen Elder, The Child of the Elder Blood As in the above discussions on translating the fantasy literature from English to Turkish, it is mentioned that it is a very common practice to use the words from Persian and Arabic languages borrowed into Turkish in order to create an atmosphere of the mysticism of past times which works very well in the below examples for the translation of “Elder” as “Kadim” leaving a feeling of mystery for the receptors.

Table 5.8. The Unseen Elder and The Child of the Elder Blood

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| The Unseen Elder | Görülmemiş Kadim |
| The Child Of The Elder Blood | Kadim Kanın Çocuğu |

Pellar, as the initiator of the quest which represents one of the most important Slavic elements called Forefather’s Eve in the game, has been translated as “Cinci”, which also is a common folkloric element in Turkish culture, especially in the suburban areas. Both characters are playing the boundaries of taboo and are regarded as uncanny as both cross the monotheist religions’ strict lines although their ‘spiritual services’ are required from time to time such as communicating with the dead and hearing the prophecies from other worlds. This type of translation is an example of domestication. Although the meaning is somehow translated to the receptors, there is a risk of not understanding what the real cultural meaning of pellar is about.

Table 5.9. Pellar

| <i>Pellar</i> | <i>Cinci</i> |
|---|--|
| <p><i>As is often the case with charmers, diviners, healers, and other such cunning folks of the countryside, the pellar of Blackbough was a man of mystery, around whom circled a great many rumors and legends.</i></p> <p><i>Some claimed he could commune with the dead, other, that he had a different sort of familiarity with the grave...</i></p> | <p><i>Tılsımcı, falcı, şifacılar gibi taşrada yaşayan böyle kurnaz kişilerde genelde olduğu gibi, Karadal Cincisi de, etrafında bir sürü söylenti ve efsaneler dönen gizemli bir adamdı.</i></p> <p><i>Bazıları onun ölülerle konuşabildiğini söylerken, kimileri de, kabirle olan başka bir ilişkisinden söz ediyordu (Khalifa and Hardie, 2005).</i></p> |

5.3. LOCATIONS

Land of Thousand Fables, also known as Fablesphere is also a parallel magical universe that was created by Artorius Vigo, a Toussaintois mage who specialized in illusion magic to bring fairytales to life. In Turkish, the number is changed to thousand and one as culturally more familiar and natural.

Table 5.10. Land of a Thousand Fables

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Land of a Thousand Fables | Binbir Masal Diyarı |
|---------------------------|---------------------|

The majority of the locations are translated based on the meanings or what they represent if translatable, while the fantasy atmosphere of the game has also been contained. Some examples are shown below:

Table 5.11. Various Locations 1

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Sawmill | Bıçkılıane |
| Ford | Nehir Geçidi |
| Cunny of the Goose | Kazın Kucusu |
| The Orphans of Crookback Bog | Kamburbatağı Yetimleri |
| Lindenvale | Ihlamur Vadisi |
| Glory gate | Görkem Kapısı |
| The Palli Gap Coast | Pali Gediği Sahili |
| Bald Mountain | Çıplak Dağ |
| White Orchard | Akbostan |

On the other hand, there are also names that are borrowed as they are. Some examples from the Skellige region are as follows,

Table 5.12. Various Locations 2

| English version | Turkish version |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Boxholm | Boxholm |
| Fayrlund | Fayrlund |
| Fyresdal | Fyresdal |

5.4. QUESTS

Beyond Hill And Dale, is the name of a quest where Geralt travels to the Land of a Thousand Fables. Considering his enemies to defeat, Wicked Witch, Pixies, Big Bad Wolf, Longlocks who is a wicked reinterpretation of Rapunzel, Three Little Pigs and etc., the Turkish translation is the cultural equivalence of the opening of traditional fairytale telling.

Table 5.13. Beyond Hill and Dale

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Beyond Hill and Dale | Dere Tepe Düz Gittim |
|----------------------|----------------------|

Swamp Thing is the name of the quest Geralt pursues in Velen, which is a mysterious fog killing all who ventured into it. While keeping the mysterious atmosphere, the Turkish version is also intentionally distorted. The word “thing” translated as “şey” is represented with a suffix to create humor.

Table 5.14. Swamp Thing

| | |
|-------------|----------------|
| Swamp Thing | Bataklık Şeysi |
|-------------|----------------|

There can be only one, a secondary quest in which Geralt is promised a blade from a hermit he encountered by the lakeshore if he proves that he lives by the five chivalric virtues. The Turkish translation is more like an expression resembling a chant supporting the champion.

Table 5.15. There can be only one

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| There can be only one | Başka büyük yok |
|-----------------------|-----------------|

Out on your arse! Is the name of the quest of which Geralt encounters a crying woman and asked if she needs help. She asks him to get rid of the band of Skelligers taken over her establishment.

Table 5.16. Out on your arse!

| | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Out on your arse | Basın gidin buradan |
|------------------|---------------------|

Duck Duck Goosed! Is another quest in the Land of a Thousand Fables, where Balbina the Goose, as the golden egg laying bird asks for help for her impression of someone watching her aiming to harm her. The inspiration of the quest name is coming from “**duck duck goose**” which is a traditional children’s game in which players walk in a circle and tag each player until someone is chosen, then the chosen player chases the picker. Turkish culture has the same children’s game with a song that is highly associated with it. The first sentence of the song is in the below example:

Table 5.17. Duck duck goosed!

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Duck duck goosed! | Yağ satarım bal satarım! |
|-------------------|--------------------------|

Whatever a Man Soweth is a quest Geralt pursue as part of the expansion called Heart of Stone. Although many scholars say the hardest task is to translate idioms for a translator (Akbari, 2013), in this case both idioms have the very same lexical and semantic meanings.

Table 5.18. Whatever a Man Soweth

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Whatever a Man Soweth | Bir adam ne ekerse... |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|

Possession is a quest in which Geralt fights against a hym, a creature generally possessing guilt-ridden victims, tormenting their souls until they go mad and harm themselves. The quest is translated as “*musallat*”, a word derived from Arabic to Turkish.

The word “*musallat*” has a deep cultural meaning for Turks before and after Islam. This word is commonly used for unwanted people as well as unwanted evil spiritual

beings. During the pre-Islamic period of Turks, based on their Shamanic beliefs, there were evil souls who are believed to scare babies and possess mothers who had recently given birth, causing them confusion or illnesses that may even result in death (Arslan, Çelikkaya and Taşbaşı, 2016, p. 203). In Islamic writings, the existence of spiritual beings is also told, and they are called the “jinns”. *A true jinn possession can cause a person to have seizures and the possessed is unable to think or speak of his own will* (Al-Ashqar, 2003) cited in (Khalifa and Hardie, 2005).

Table 5.19. Possession

| | |
|------------|----------|
| Possession | Musallat |
|------------|----------|

Not only eagles dare is a treasure hunt quest. Since the treasure is hidden underwater, the Turkish translation shown below is a good example of a descriptive translation with an intentional pun.

Table 5.20. Not Only Eagles Dare

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Not only eagles dare | Kartallar Derine de Dalar |
|----------------------|---------------------------|

Gwent: To Everything - Turn, Turn, Tournament! is a secondary quest in the game. The game gwent is a card game developed by CD Projekt, based on a card game in Sapkowski’s novels. TW3 challenges players to collect gwent cards either from playing the game or finish Gwent-related quests. The wordplay in the translation is protected in the target text however, a more natural translation could have been “Her Şeyine” to sound more natural.

Table 5.21. Gwent: To Everything - Turn, Turn, Tournament!

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Gwent: To Everything - Turn, Turn, Tournament! | Gwent : Her Şeye – Tur Tur Turnuva |
|--|------------------------------------|

5.5. BESTIARY

Wraiths are classified under specters, encountered generally in catacombs or graveyards in TW3. They are vengeance-seeking ghosts as they have a sense of being wronged.

The definition of wraith according to Merriam-webster is a *ghost,(...) the likeness of a person usually just before death as an apparition, or an insubstantial form or semblance* whereas TDK (Turkish Language Association) defines “heyula” as a scary dream²⁴. The word is derived from Arabic and is defined as formless material²⁵.

Table 5.22. Wraith

| | |
|--------|--------|
| Wraith | Heyula |
|--------|--------|

Chorts are monsters classified under the relicts that appear in TW3 universe also inspired from Slavic mythology. Based on the journal entry in TW3, *they destroy farmsteads, devouring anything that can be devoured, including poultry, pork, the family dog, and then the family itself*. Cultural and linguistic equivalency can be seen when looked carefully.

In the Yakut Turkish language, the expression "Cuort" is used to define "Satan and evil spirit". E. K. Pekaiski. states this word is borrowed from the Russian language. The word "Çort" in Tatar Turkish is also used in the same meaning. According to the researchers, the Turkic word "Çor" (and its other version, "Çer") may be mixed with the word “Çert” in the Russian language.

"Chert" in Russian has a human appearance but is described with horns, tails and nails. This idiom can also be found with the form "Çort". "Çort" in Belarusian means "Satan", "evil spirit". However, the word "Çert" gained the meaning of "evil power" as a result of the influence of Turkish languages. According to Yakut Turks,

²⁴ TDK. (n.d.) In the Türk Dil Kurumu. (Retrieved 10 July, 2022) <https://sozluk.gov.tr/>

²⁵ Türkçe Etimoloji Sözlüğü. (n.d.) In the Türkçe Etimoloji Sözlüğü “Heyula”. (Retrieved 10 July, 2022) <https://www.etimolojiturkce.com/kelime/heyula>

there is an evil spirit named "Çörek Uya" that is believed to harm animals and Kumandins believe spirits called "Çertegri-Aza" and "Şorat-Aza", accommodate in the human body causing diseases Looking at the names of two spirits, the "Çer-Şor" forms and the root "Çor" are clearly seen (Beydilli, 2004, p. 143).

Table 5.23. Chorts

| | |
|--------|--------|
| Chorts | Çorlar |
|--------|--------|

Kikimore workers, Arachasae, Arachnomorphs, Nekkers, Bruxa, Leshen, and Shaelmaar, are only a few of the examples where TW3 Turkish localization is using borrowings.

Table 5.24. Various Monsters

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Kikimore workers | İşçi Kikimorlar |
| Arachasae | Arakaslar |
| Arachnomorphs | Araknomorf |
| Nekkers | Nekkerler |
| Bruxa | Bruksa |
| Leshen | Leşen |
| Shaelmaar | Şayelmar |

Drowner is a creature that is believed that arises from the bodies of those who drown in shallow water, lost travelers falling into bogs, or children swimming far from the shore.

The word drawn is translated to "boğulan - gark olan".

Table 5.25. Drowner

| | |
|---------|----------|
| Drowner | Garkolan |
|---------|----------|

Godlings are comparable to children in behavior and appearance in TW3 universe. Godlings are profoundly bounded and loyal to their domain and perform acts of

care and guardianship to those staying close to o their territory. They protect humans as well as creatures, and since they are shy creatures, they prefer remaining unseen.

Although “iyes” are regarded both good and evil based on etno-cultural differences, according to the traditional views of Azerbaijani Turks, every house has an “iye”, an owner. Some sources say iye is depicted as a short man. House iyes are sometimes called “House Gni”. A house iye is believed to visit the house he protects every day, and he may get frustrated when he finds the order of the things unpleasant, such as when he sees the light in the house turned off. Since the house iye is always in the house, it is necessary that the residents should salute the house every time they enter, so it protects the house as well as brings prosperity. They are angel-like entities so they cannot be seen. Despite it warns the people of the possible dangers for protection, when greetings are not offered by the residents, it gets offended and takes the blessings of the house (Beydilli, 2004, p. 205).

Table 5.26. Godling

| | |
|---------|--------|
| Godling | İyeler |
|---------|--------|

Grotto seemed to have taken a liking to "grottos," giving rise to its nickname. A new word has been generated for the Turkish version, derived from the word “Kovuk²⁶” with a suffix -an.

Table 5.27. Grotto

| | |
|--------|---------|
| Grotto | Kovukan |
|--------|---------|

Slyzard Matriarchs are mentioned under the draconid class, smaller than dragons and far less dangerous, however, they also breathe fire and strike with the tail with venomous spines. The translation of Bergaman on the other hand is a word

²⁶ Tureng. (n.d.) In the Tureng Dictionary “kovuk”. (Retrieved June 10, 2022). <https://tureng.com/en/turkish-english/kovuk>

borrowed from Persian meaning giant snake, monster, dragon²⁷. According to the Turkish Language Association (TDK), Maderşah on the other hand is also a word derived from Persian meaning matriarch²⁸.

Table 5.28. Slyzard Matriarchs

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Slyzard Matriarchs | Bergaman Maderşahı |
|--------------------|--------------------|

5.6. ALCHEMY

Table 5.29. Alchemy Materials

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Enhanced Cursed Oil | Gelişmiş Lanetli Yağı |
| Superior Beast Oil | Üstün Hayvan Yağı |
| Superior Hybrid Oil | Üstün Melez Yağı |
| Ogroid Oil | Ogroid Yağı |
| Specter Oil | Üstün Hayalet Yağı |
| Superior Full Moon | Üstün Dolunay |
| Superior Maribor Forest | Üstün Maribor Ormanı |
| Superior Petri's Philter | Üstün Petri İksiri |
| Superior White Raffard's Decoction | Üstün Ak Raffard Özü |
| Pops Mold | Patlak Küf |
| Enhanced Devil's Puffbal | Üstün Şeytan Püftöpu |

5.7. SPELLS

As discussed in the previous chapters, the witchers cannot cast spells as mages do, however, they cast Witcher signs and craft magical potions which are classified

²⁷ TDK. (n.d.) In the Türk Dil Kurumu Sözlüğü “anaerkil” (Retrieved June 10, 2022) <https://sozluk.gov.tr/>

²⁸ Luggat. (n.d.) In the Luggat “Bergaman”. (Retrieved June 10, 2022) <https://www.luggat.com/ejder/1/1#:~:text=ejder%20%2F%20D8%A7%DA%98%D8%AF%D8%B1&text=B%C3%BCy%C3%BCK%20canavar%2C%20b%C3%BCy%C3%BCK%20y%C4%B1lan.>

under alchemy. The name of the spells is kept the same to protect the original atmosphere in the translation.

Table 5.30. Spells

| | |
|------------|---------------|
| Aard Sign | Aard İşareti |
| Axii Sign | Axii İşareti |
| Igni Sign | Igni İşareti |
| Quen Sign | Quen İşareti |
| Yrden Sign | Yrden İşareti |

5.8. WEAPONS

Table 5.31. Weapons

| | |
|--|---|
| Griffin Armor (Witcher Gear) | Engerek Zırhı (Efsunger Teçhizatı) |
| Manticore Boots (Witcher Gear) | Mentikor Çizmeleri (Efsunger Teçhizatı) |
| Wolf Gauntlets (Witcher Gear) | Kurt Zırh Eldivenleri (Efsunger Teçhizatı) |
| Manticore Trousers (Witcher Gear) | Mentikor Pantolonu (Efsunger Teçhizatı) |
| Grandmaster Feline Silver Sword (Witcher Gear) | Büyük Usta Kedi Gümüş Kılıcı (Efsunger Teçhizatı) |
| Manticore Steel Sword (Witcher Gear) | Mentikor Çelik Kılıcı (Efsunger Teçhizatı) |
| Greater Glyph Of Yrden | Güçlü Yrden Glifi |
| Greater Svarog Runestone | Güçlü Svarog Rün Taşı |
| Crossbow | Arbalet |

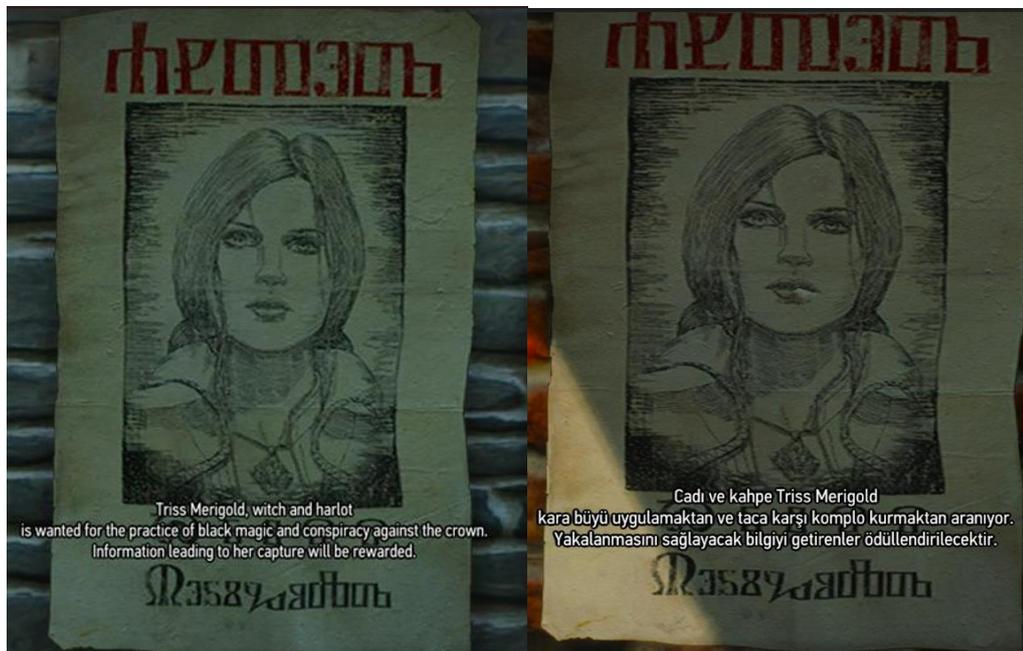
5.9. VISUAL ELEMENTS

The textual content in the game is not only limited to the character dialogues, glossary, alchemy, characters, inventory, or menu instructions in the TW3 universe. The art assets in the game have also a very rich textual richness embedded in the

papers, notes, posters, notice boards, and books scattered around the TW3's in-game world.

Such visuals help players to reinforce their understanding of the character's storyline in line with the progress of the game.

Figure 5.1. Triss Merigold



Or they may give information about the current political or social environment, communicating with the player to give directions while cooperating with the player's progress.

These elements are great visual actors enhancing the playing experience and providing the players a sense of what kind of environment they are in. Some of these visual elements need to require intertextuality by their nature. Although in some cases, they are all separate visuals, giving completely different messages; they may require mutual terminology which means another challenge for the translators.

Figure 5.2. King Radovid Poster

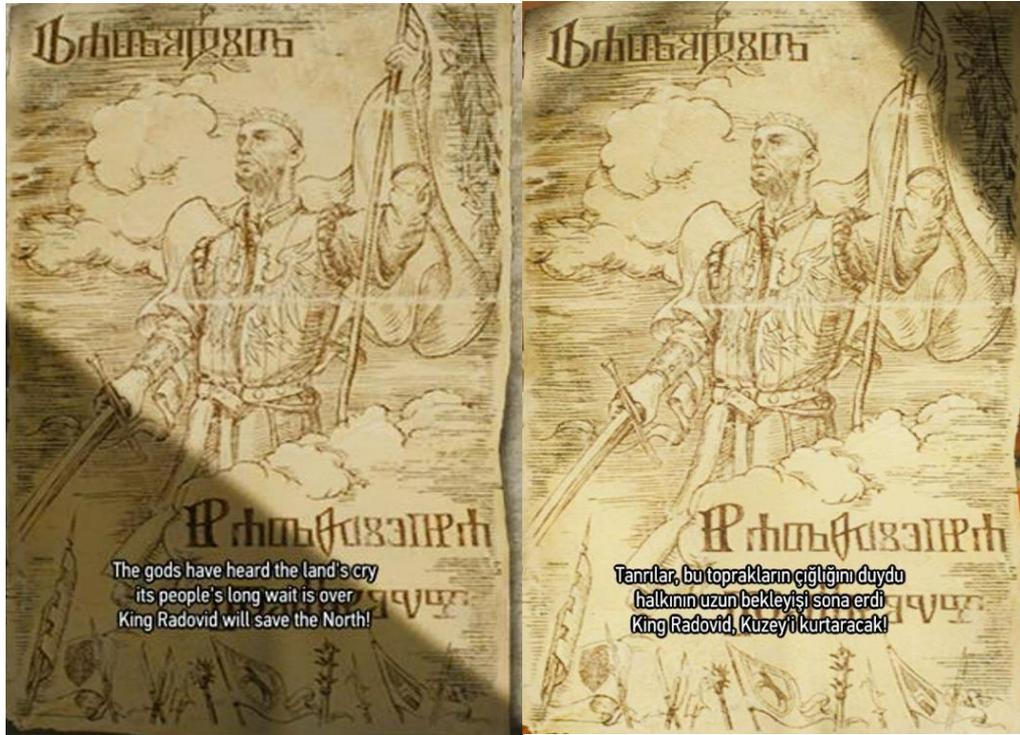


Figure 5.3. Death to the Invaders (Turkish)

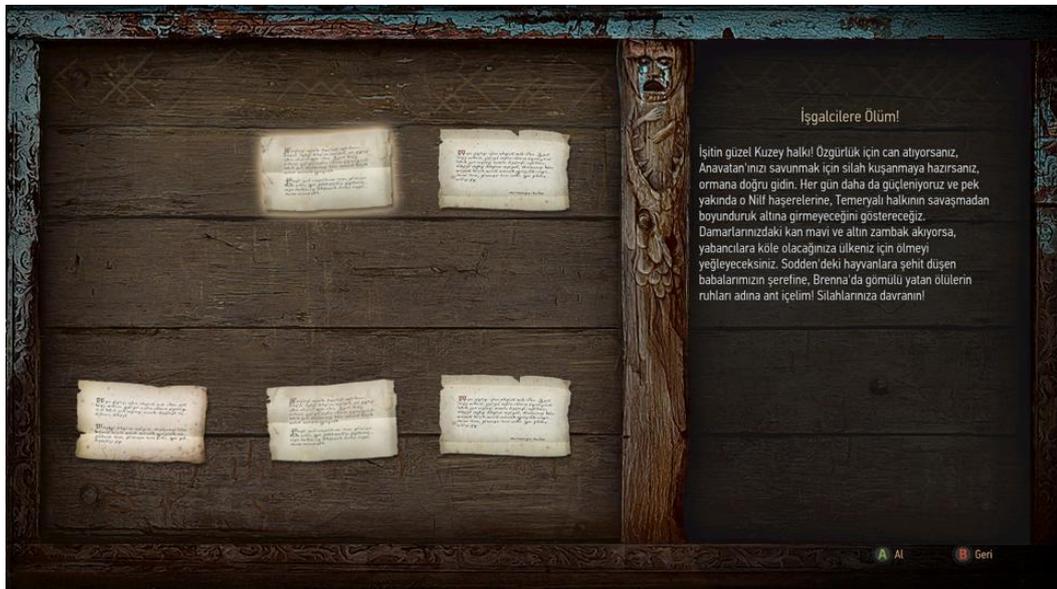


Figure 5.4. Death to the Invaders (English)

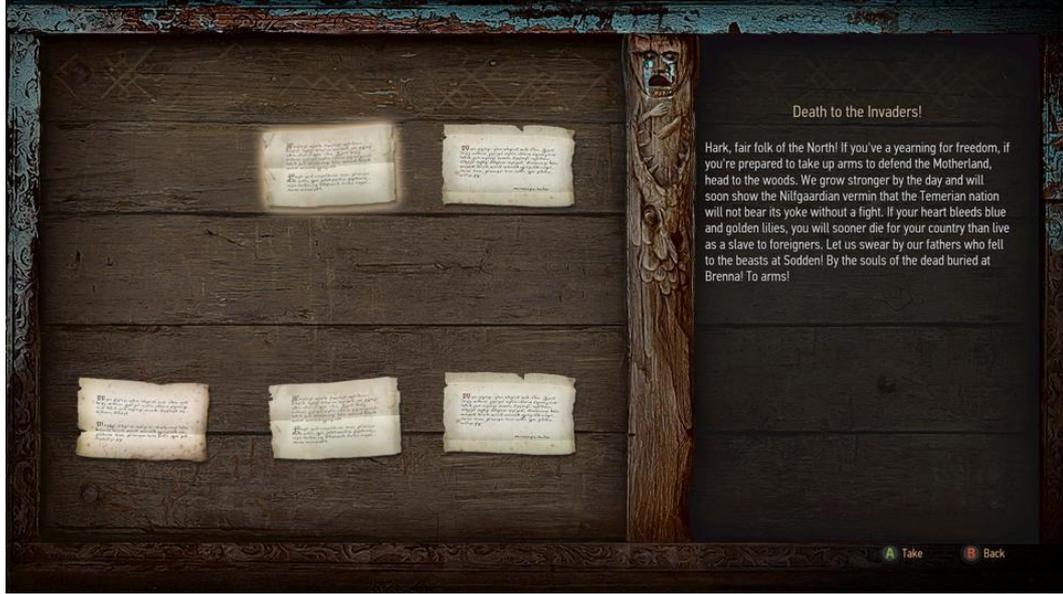


Figure 5.5. Personal Announcement (Turkish)

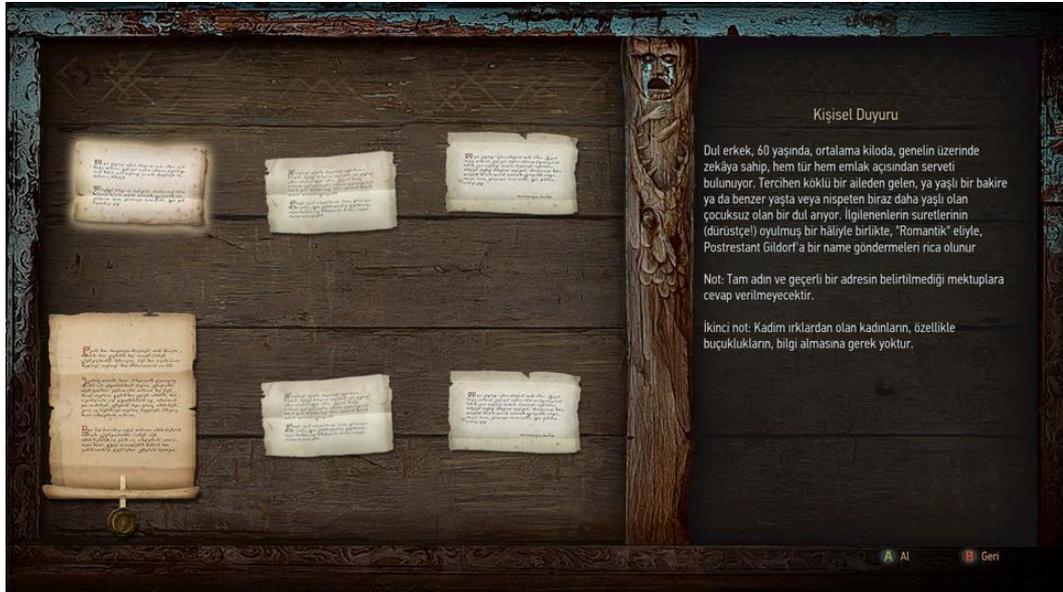
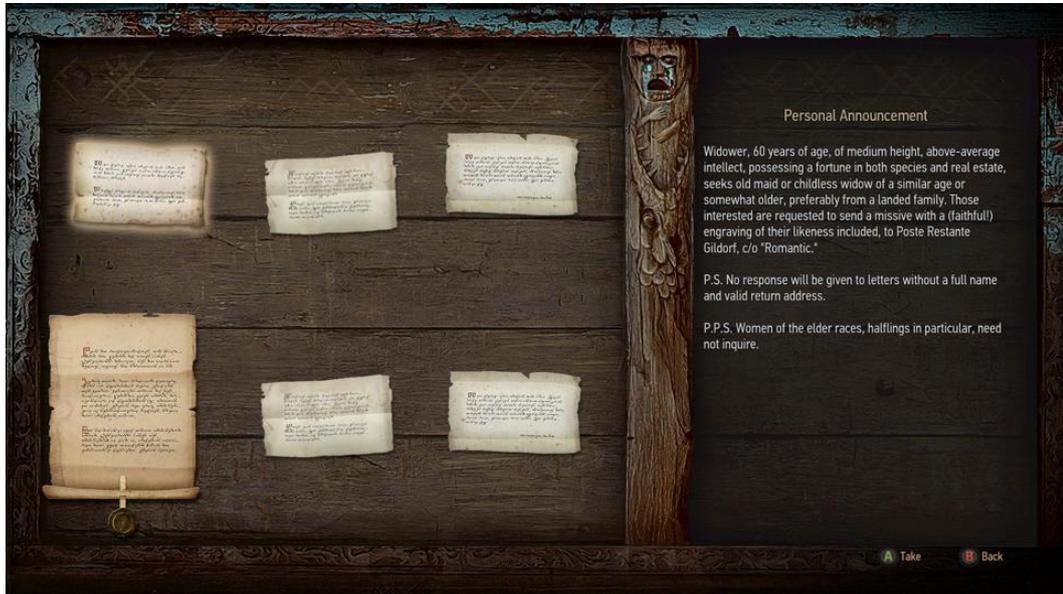


Figure 5.6. Personal Announcement (English)



CONCLUSION

This analysis presents a variety of translation strategies performed in game translation through the lens of *The Witcher 3 Wild Hunt*.

The aim of this thesis was to analyze which translation strategies work the best for video game translation. When I first started this thesis, I had multiple research questions: (1) What are the existing translation techniques that work the best for video game translation in *The Witcher 3* to enhance the game experience for Turkish players? (2) To what extent the cultural elements of the game are diminished while translating from the source to target text? (3) What are the main translation approaches used in translating the distinctive traits of fantasy literature in general?

As a result of the study, it is clear that the translation activities in video games have their own particular challenges and limitations for the translators. The analysis of the localization process in video games requires a multidisciplinary approach and academic research on Turkish localization of the video games are still at an evolving stage.

Regarding the localization of *The Witcher Wild Hunt*, While the use of the translation approaches and strategies I have mentioned in strategies sections such as domestication or cultural translation strategies, I have come to the conclusion that although such strategies contribute a lot to the sense of natural feeling in game experience, it is clearly seen that they may also cause disambiguation in transferring the culture-specific events from the source culture to the target culture. This may also result in losing the authenticity of the source culture.

Another conclusion is that in order to perform an excellency in game translation, the video game translators should at least have a familiarity to the expectations of gaming industry and its audience as well as the ability to process the technical aspects of game development on a fundamental level to comply with the software requirements and limitations while translating. This study also indicates that the

minimum requirement of being a game translator is to be a gamer with a sense of game humour. As being a gamer may help the translator to overcome particular difficulties such as gaming and fantasy terminology translation as well as the technical requirements when transferring the distinctive traits of the RPG genre in particular.

Each type of conversations and dialogues as well as the textual content within RPG genre video games represents specific difficulties in translation, meaning that they are required to be treated by various translation strategies. Based on this analysis, Venuti's very definition of domestication, adaptation as well as literal translation (linguistic equivalence) and borrowing (transcription), are the most commonly found translation strategies in the translation of TW3.

Some of the findings in the NPC's dialogue section, also showed that being exposed to contemporary references related to pop culture and having a broad literature knowledge are very crucial for a video game translator since video games do often refer to canonic movies, popular films or series, songs, novels and in some cases to the other video games. Dealing with such translations requires a broad knowledge and understanding of the specific popular references.

In order to create the same mystic atmosphere and the language of magic in the fantasy literature that is mostly taking place in otherly worlds, the words from Ottoman, Arabic, or Persian words are derived to enhance the feeling of otherness in the players. The made-up words are transferred as they are and mostly transcreation method is used to transfer mythological creatures, beasts or alchemy materials.

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