UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DE CAMPINAS
Instituto de Geociências

MARINA FONTOLAN

Custa €0,10 a palavra! O papel da localização para a indústria de videogames

It is €0,10 a word! The role of localization in the videogame industry

CAMPINAS
2020

Marina Fontolan

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THESIS PRESENTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF GEOSCIENCES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMPINAS TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL POLICIES

TESE APRESENTADA AO INSTITUTO DE GEOCIÊNCIAS DA UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DE CAMPINAS PARA OBTENÇÃO DO TÍTULO DE DOUTORA EM POLÍTICA CIENTÍFICA E TECNOLÓGICA

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ESTE EXEMPLAR CORRESPONDE À VERSÃO FINAL DA TESE DEFENDIDA PELA ALUNA MARINA FONTOLAN, ORIENTADA PELA PROFA. DRA. JANAINA PAMPLONA DA COSTA E COORIENTADA PELO PROF. DR. JAMES WILSON MALAZITA

CAMPINAS

2020

Ficha catalográfica
Universidade Estadual de Campinas
Biblioteca do Instituto de Geociências
Marta dos Santos - CRB 8/5892

Fontolan, Marina, 1988-
F738c Custa €0,10 a palavra! O papel da localização para a indústria de videogames / Marina Fontolan. – Campinas, SP : [s.n.], 2020.

Orientador: Janaina Oliveira Pamplona da Costa.
Coorientador: James Wilson Malzita.
Tese (doutorado) – Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Instituto de Geociências.

1. Videogames. 2. Localização. 3. Imaginário - Aspectos sociais. 4. Indústria de videogames. 5. Ciência e tecnologia - Aspectos sociais. I. Costa, Janaina Oliveira Pamplona da, 1973-. II. Malazita, James Wilson. III. Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Instituto de Geociências. IV. Título.

Informações para Biblioteca Digital

Título em outro idioma: It is €0,10 a word! The role of localization in the videogame industry
Palavras-chave em inglês:
Video games
Localization
Imaginary - Social aspects
Video games industry
Science and technology - Social aspects
Área de concentração: Política Científica e Tecnológica
Titulação: Doutora em Política Científica e Tecnológica
Banca examinadora:
Janaina Oliveira Pamplona da Costa [Orientador]
Marko Synesio Alves Monteiro
Flávia Luciane Consoni de Mello
Ariadne Chloe Mary Furnival
Sayonara de Amorim Gonçalvez Leal
Data de defesa: 28-08-2020
Programa de Pós-Graduação: Política Científica e Tecnológica

Identificação e informações acadêmicas do(a) aluno(a)
- ORCID do autor: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2908-0492
- Currículo Lattes do autor: http://lattes.cnpq.br/3940592362186770

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INSTITUTO DE GEOCIÊNCIAS

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Aprovado em: 28 / 08 / 2020

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A Ata de Defesa assinada pelos membros da Comissão Examinadora consta no processo de vida acadêmica do aluno.

Campinas, 28 de agosto de 2020.

Acknowledgments

This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES) - Finance Code 001 (processes codes: 88882.329775/2018-01 and 88881.188643/2018-01). I also thank the Department of Science and Technology Policy of the University of Campinas (Departamento de Política Científica e Tecnológica da Universidade Estadual de Campinas – DPCT/UNICAMP), and the Department of Science and Technology Studies at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (STS/RPI).

I also would like to thank Professor Léa Maria Leme Strini Velho, Assistant Professor Janaina Pamplona da Costa and Assistant Professor James Wilson Malazita for the supervision of this research. I have learnt a lot. Also, a special thanks to Assistant Professor Raquel Velho and to Assistant Professor Rebecca Rouse for the support and advice during my stay at RPI. I also need to thank Researcher Aline Vieira de Carvalho, who encouraged me to keep going on the scholar career and who also was a major inspiration during my time as an M.A. candidate and undergrad student.

I am also thankful for all the videogame and localization company representatives who took their time to participate in this research. Also, a special acknowledgment to the fellowship received at The Strong Museum of Play (Rochester, NY). My time at the museum's archives was truly inspirational and allowed me to make this research goes even further than I imagined.

I thank Professor Marko Synésio Monteiro and Assistant Professor Flávia Luciane Consoni de Mello for being part of my qualification exam board. Your advice on my research were crucial for the further development of it. I also thank the examination board of this thesis: Professor Marko Synésio Monteiro, Assistant Professor Flávia Luciane Consoni de Mello, Assistant Professor Ariadne Chloe Mary Furnival, and Assistant Professor Sayonara de Amorim Gonçalves Leal. I learned a lot from you during my defense and I thank the time dedicated to read and evaluate this thesis. I also thank Assistant Professor Luiz Ernesto Merkle, Assistant Professor Adalberto Mantovani Martiniano Azevedo, Professor Leda Maria Caira Gitahy, and Assistant Professor Rafael de Brito Dias who accepted the invitation to participate on the examination board as surrogates.

I also would love to thank my family. To my mother, Elisabete Jardim, to my father, Eduardo Fontolan, and to my sister, Andréa Fontolan: without your continuous support, I would not be able to be here today. Thank you for teaching me the value of determination and how important it is not to give up. Thank you also for Marília Conceição da Silva, who also gave me a lot of support and life lessons during this process. Also, thanks for Billy, the Beagle (Billy

Beagle for the closest family members), the dog who made me give him every last bit of each ice cream I had during the revision of this thesis.

I also thank to my dear friends! Stéphanie Caroline Gigliotto Jacinto, we may be separated by miles, but we manage to keep the friendship going. To Natália Ferreira de Campos, Tami Coelho Ocar, and Victor Henrique da Silva Menezes, the Ancient History/Archaeology team who managed to stay strong in troubled times.

To Ana Laura Evangelista, Leticia Graziele de Freitas Lemes, Tarsila Tonsig Garcia Teijeiro, Priscila Salvaia, Míriam Eliane Frassetto Miossi, Cássia Beijo, Liliana da Silva Viana. The Historiadoras Gatas, whose support was crucial for finishing up this thesis.

To Rodrigo Ito, Andressa Bones Flores, Daniela Albini Pinheiro, Luciana de Farias, Éverton Luís de Oliveira, Guilherme Nascimento Gomes, Carla Ladeira Pimentel Águas, Vinícius Muraro da Silva, Beatriz de Aragão Sadalla, Erica da Cruz Novaes Gonçalves Dias, Matheus Gonçalves da Silva Pereta, Erica Siqueira, Iraima Andreina Lugo Montilla, Maria Cristina Oliveira Souza, Manuela de Carvalho Rodrigues, Anna Carolina Lourenço Navarro, Rafaela Marcelly de Andrade, Liz Felix Greco... My many friends at DPCT! Thank you for the support, ideas, help and the liters of coffee made at our study room.

To Dieudonné Kageruka, Anne Hohenstein, Jamie Steele, Mitch Cieminski, Christopher Patrick Caulfield, Rachel Reilly, Misria Shaik Ali, Nathaniel B. Stanton... My many friends from Troy and RPI. Thank you for all your support and friendship during my stay at the Upstate, and after it too!

At last, thank you for my Role Paying Game/Online Videogame team: Daniela Albini Pinheiro (also known as Loro or Urum), Felipe Simiqueli (the DM), Fernando Moura (a.k.a. Zed and his drag persona, Katherine). Becoming Edanna once a week was my favorite pastime in the various stages of the research.

Resumo

Localização de videogames é um processo que traduz e adapta o jogo para diferentes línguas. As pesquisas sobre esse assunto focam, majoritariamente, em dois temas. O primeiro está relacionado à reação dos jogadores em relação à versão localizada do jogo. O segundo, à comparação de ao menos duas versões do mesmo jogo, no qual discute-se como os localizadores fizeram para manter a autenticidade do jogo. Esta tese traz uma nova discussão para o debate, já que tem como objetivo analisar o papel que a localização tem para a indústria de videogames – parte da indústria criativa. Para isto, realizei entrevistas com especialistas em localização, trabalhos de campo em convenções de videogames (onde conversei com outros representantes da indústria, como times de marketing e desenvolvedores) e pesquisa em arquivo museológico. Os dados levantados permitem discutir que o papel da localização na indústria de videogames está crescendo por causa de maior acesso à internet de banda-larga. Isto permitiu que os jogos fossem vendidos e discutidos virtualmente, por meio de fóruns, resenhas e lojas online. Esta nova configuração mudou a relação entre publishers, desenvolvedores e jogadores, deixando-a mais estreita e permitindo que os jogadores tivessem uma voz mais ativa no processo do desenvolvimento dos jogos. Essas novas formas de engajamento permitiram que o processo de localização ganhasse maior importância para a indústria de videogames, que lucra mais com a venda dos jogos que possuem versões localizadas. Esta pesquisa aprofunda nosso entendimento sobre a localização de videogames, já que traz o ponto de vista da indústria com uma abordagem teórica pautada nos Estudos Sociais da Ciência e da Tecnologia, com foco nos Imaginários Sociotécnicos.

Palavras-Chave: Videogames; Localização; Imaginário - Aspectos sociais; Indústria de videogames; Ciência e tecnologia - Aspectos sociais;

Abstract

Videogame localization is the process of translating and adapting a game into different languages. The studies on this subject have focused mainly on players' reactions over the localized version or on comparing (at least) two versions of a game, in which they discuss on how the localizers manage to keep an authentic feeling of the game. This thesis brings a new discussion to the fore, as it aims at analyzing the role and process of localization in the videogame industry, that is part of the creative industry. For this, I did interviews with localization specialists, fieldwork in videogame conventions – where I spoke to representatives of the industry, such as marketing teams and developers –, and archival research. The data retrieved allow to discuss that the role of localization in the videogame industry is growing due to the wider access to the broadband internet. This allowed games to be both sold and discussed virtually, through forums, reviews, and online stores. This changed the relationship between publishers, developers, and players bringing it closer and allowed the players to have a more active voice in the game development process. This empowerment allowed the localization process to grow in importance at the industry, which have increased its revenues as localized games have higher sales than the not localized ones. This research furthers our understanding of videogame localization, as it brings the point-of-view from the industry in a Science and Technology Studies approach, focused on the Sociotechnical Imaginaries.

Keywords: Video games; Localization; Imaginary - Social aspects; Video games industry; Science and technology - Social aspects;

List of Figures

List of Tables

Table of Contents

Hayo!

Introduction[1]

This thesis aims at studying the role of localization in the videogame industry, and its title addresses the average cost charged per word by localization companies. Localization is understood in this thesis as the process of adapting and translating a game, aiming for it to fit better in different markets and allowing for better sales. The main argument of this thesis is that there is a closer relationship between publishers, developers, and players. So, the role of localization becomes essential and needs to be further investigated. Game stories nowadays are becoming more complex, and cultural nuances can change their meanings, demanding videogame companies to make sure that their products are consumed worldwide. Therefore, companies have started to invest higher amounts of resources (both financial and human) in order to ensure that the relationship between those three elements – developers, publishers, and players – is the best possible.

This introduction discusses, first, the concept of localization in the software industry and how this process is different among the videogame and software industries. Then, it presents the scholar debates on the theme, the argument of this thesis, specific goals, and research questions. It finishes with a description of each chapter.

Section I. 1 Rufus, what's that?! Or: Localization definition and process[2]

Localization, as a concept, emerged in the end of the 1980s. The term referred to the software's developers, as they would introduce both cultural and linguistic elements in the software's source code. The result of this was that native English speakers would find some of those cultural and linguistic element developers placed into the software. These elements were used to bring up the sensation of something being odd with the software from the user's perspective (TEIXEIRA, 2016: 102-103).

In 1990, the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) was created and aimed at creating good localization practice standards for the software industry, and[3] its activities ended in 2011. During its existence, the definition of localization used was: "the process of service of product or service modification intending to adapt it into different markets" (*in:*

[1] All the chapters' titles and subtitles are homages to the games I play and love. In this case, it says "hello" in Planco, a language created for the game *Planet Coaster* (Frontier, 2016).
[2] Homage to the *Deponia* franchise (Daedalic Entertainment, 2012 – 216)
[3] For more information on LISA: https://www.w3.org/International/O-LISA-object.html, accessed on Dec, 27th 2018.

TEIXEIRA, 2016: 103 – Own translation)[4]. This thesis will use this definition for localization, as it encompasses both products and services and its use in markets. It is related to the videogame industry, as the product itself (the game) and the services related to it (customer service) must be localized in order for a game to be adapted into a targeted culture or market. However, it is important to notice that this thesis goes beyond the idea that a game is only being localized to guarantee sales and, therefore, profits. In this thesis, we argue that the localization process also deals with identity construction and how it helps to develop new relationships between users and technology. This argument calls for the use of Science and Technology Studies approach, as major discussion on the field is related to identity building around science and technology.

Localization is a practice related to the globalization process and the creation of products that can be sold worldwide. Hence, it is more than a mere translation, as localization aims at adapting a product to a culture different to the one that created it (BERNAL-MERINO, 2015: 35). The products to be globalized can vary from fast-food items to videogames. According to Mangiron (2018:133),

> "Game localisation is a bourgeoning type of translation that is increasingly attracting the attention of scholars due to its hybrid nature. It shares features in common with other types of translation, mainly AVT and software localisation, but also technical and literary translation."

In the software industry, the localization process must be considered from the first steps of the product development, as the first step in the localization is the internationalization process. This means that the new products should be designed so that they can be adapted to different cultures. These adaptations shall not result in major changes into its basic source-code (CORDIOLI, 2006: 14-15).

The internationalization of a product entails several issues. The first one is that localizers and translators rarely have any knowledge of programming. Therefore, the programmers (either from software or videogames) need to create a separate file, usually an Excel table, with the texts that will appear for the end-user. The second major issue of internationalizing a digital product is related to intellectual property and data protection. The step of splitting the program texts from its source code also serves as a protection against program leakage and piracy. The last major issue related to digital product internationalization is that the source code created by the programmers needs to be as malleable as possible. After all, the source-code needs to be

[4] Original: "processo de modificar produtos ou serviços para se adaptar às diferenças em mercados distintos".

able to accept different text sizes, symbols, and formats and work properly (MARANESI, 2011: 8- 15).

After the internationalization is concluded, the second step of the localization process begins. It comprises clear planning, which details what needs to be localized, the targeted markets and languages, as well as the legal and commercial requirements of each country. The planning should also include schedules, software update frequency, known problems, compatibility to the target language, and testing. The localizers, then, can start the translation process by creating a glossary for the software.[5] This will be essential for the translation process, as it will serve as a guarantee that key terms of the software will be translated the same way. From this moment on, the software and its various interfaces are translated, and tested before the product is launched (see CORDIOLI, 2006; MARANESI, 2011).

Translation is, then, just one aspect of the localization process. However, a great deal of a product localization is dedicated to the translation and this can be seen in Figure I.1, which shows the costs involved in software localization.

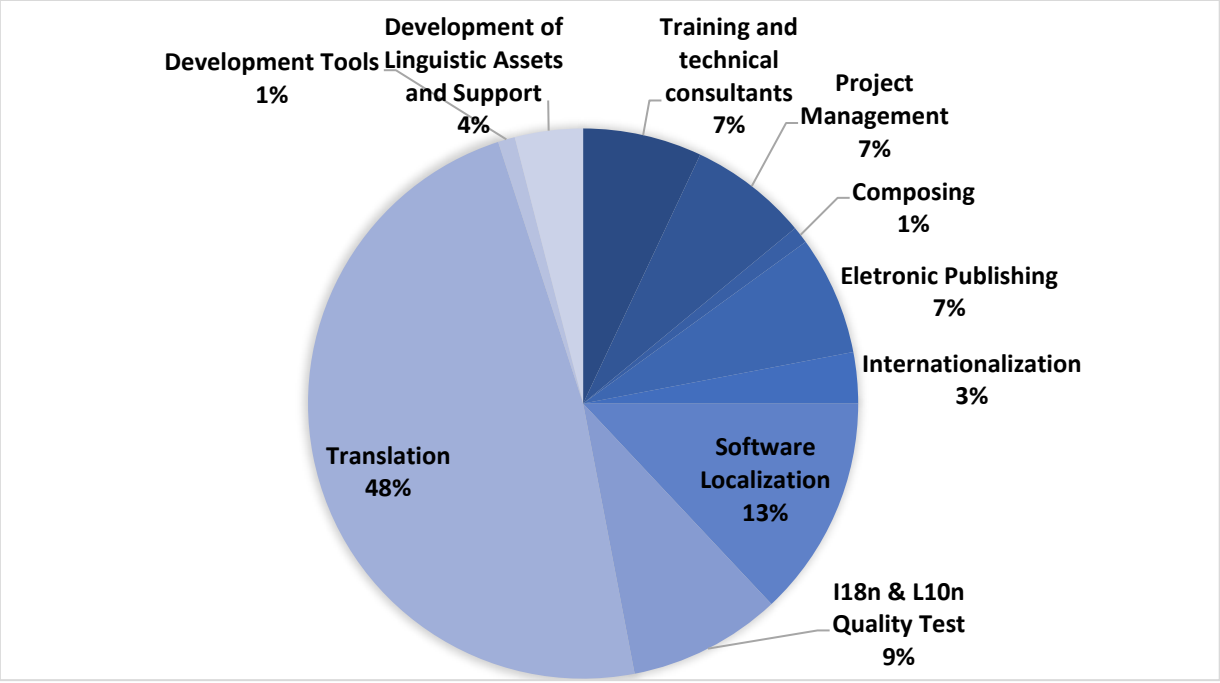

Figure I.1 – Software Localization Services Cost in Percentage
Source: LISA, 2003, *apud* Cordioli, 2006: 23 – Own Translation[6]

[5] Some texts call it "translation memory" (see CORDOLI, 2006).
[6] References: I18N means Internationalization; L10N, Localization (see CORDOLI, 2006; MARANESI, 2011; BERNAL-MERINO, 2015: 35).

Videogame localization has its own specificities when compared to software localization. Magiron and O'Hagan (2006, online) summarized the main differences as the following:

> "Game localization is an emerging professional practice and the translation process involved is characterized by a high degree of freedom and a number of constraints that distinguish it from any other type of translation (...). The reason for this lies in the nature of video games as interactive digital entertainment which demands a new translation approach. Although it shares some similarities with screen translation and software localization, game localization stands apart because its ultimate goal is to offer entertainment for the end-user. To this end, the scope of game localization is to produce a target version that keeps the 'look and feel' of the original, yet passing itself off as the original. (...) In game localisation, transcreation, rather than just translation, takes place".

Hence, one major difference between videogame and software localization is the development of a formal translation memory. This is because videogames tend to use everyday language expressions when the characters speak, changing tone and intention as the game progresses. Of course, for characters'/items' names, characters' catchphrases and titles, translation memories continue to be an important asset to the videogame localization. However, dialogue patterns change considerably depending on the progression of the game itself.

Videogame localization usually takes into account popular expressions that might correspond to what is happening during the game, changing them accordingly to each new context presented. Videogame localization, then, holds more artistic freedom to the localizer than software, but it also poses the challenge in the use of regional expressions use and accents, especially when the game is also dubbed.

Dubbing a videogame is also part of the localization process. A relevant theme in dubbing literature is the legitimacy for using this technique in various products generated by creative industries. Barros (2006: 50) attests the following on this theme:

> "There are those who try to justify the legitimacy of this resource [dubbing] based on the difficulty of reading promoted by subtitles, on small TV sets at home or, even, due to the large number of illiterate people in the country. Regarding this, CAJAÍBA (1997) assures that in developed countries, which have a zero illiteracy rate, films are dubbed since they were shown in the cinema. Therefore, this argument is unsustainable".[7] (own translation)

[7] Original: "Há aqueles que procuram justificar a legitimidade deste recurso [a dublagem] a partir da dificuldade de leitura promovida pelas legendas, nos pequenos aparelhos de TV domiciliares ou, até mesmo, a partir do grande número de analfabetos existente no país. A esse respeito, CAJAÍBA (1997) assegura que nos países desenvolvidos,

Besides this discussion on the legitimacy of using dubbing in several creative industry products, which includes videogames,[8] and how it is not related to the quality of education in each country (Barros, 2006), there are two other discussions on this theme. One is related to how the dubbing process works and its role in the videogame localization process, which will be further discussed in Chapter 6. The other discussion is on how videogame localization processes can be a case study in three different academic fields: Translation Studies, Game Studies, and Science and Technology Studies (STS), the major discussion in the literature review (chapter 1).

Studies on videogame localization usually aim at understanding the relationship built between the gamer and the game, and how localization practices can generate different experiences to players (see BARCELOS, 2017; ESQUEDA e COELHO, 2017; SOUZA, 2015; BERNAL-MERINO, 2015). One of the most commonly used terms when studying this theme is authenticity. These studies debate on how to deliver an authentic experience to the player who lives in a culture that is different from the one which created the game, and are common in Translation and Game Studies. Studying this theme in a STS perspective posits a challenge, for there are a few STS studies that approach this theme. However, if we consider technology as socially constructed, and a sociotechnical imagined artefact, and how it relates to processes such as globalization, imperialism, identity creation, and culture, a videogame localization study under a STS perspective brings a new perspective to the existing literature, aiming at further understanding the role this process plays in the industry.

The role of videogame localization is gaining importance in this industry and it is following a higher professionalization of this practice (BARCELOS, 2017: 13, 15). Localization is not restricted to those markets that grew during the last decade, such as Brazil. In Europe, these processes are already quite common and have been thoroughly studied since the end of the 1980s (SOUZA, 2015: 11). One of the consequences of developing the localization process in the videogame industry was the creation of what is considered to be a minimal set of languages to localize a game. This set is composed by English, French, Italian, German, and Spanish (known for its acronym: EFIGS). Besides that, there are several types of localization a game company can choose. Esqueda and Coelho (2017: 138-1369), and Souza (2015: 30) summarize the possible choices into four different types:

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com índice zero de analfabetismo, os filmes são dublados desde sua veiculação no cinema. Portanto, este argumento se torna insustentável". (BARROS, 2006: 50)

[8] For more information on the relation between creative industries and videogames, see chapter 1.

1. Games without Localization: games that are released and sold in several markets without any kind of localization.
2. Box and Docs Localization: only the game's box and instruction manuals are localized and translated. It is also common to adapt the documents available to local regulations.
3. Partial Localization: the box, documents, and in-game texts are localized and translated. It is important to mention that, in this case, the game's soundtrack and voices maintain the original language.
4. Complete Localization: this is the costliest type. The localization includes box, documents, in-game texts, and sounds are localized, including character and narrative adaptations. This kind of localization might even change some of the game's source code, and is usually restricted to Triple-A (AAA)[9] games.

Game localization is done either by the game's publisher, developer, and/or a third-party company. In the case of Brazilian-Portuguese[10] (PT-BR), it is more common that the game localization is done by a third-party, who also are responsible for dubbing the games.[11] However, it is common for multinational publishers to have their localization team to work with EFIGS and Japanese. These are languages most commonly available for AAA game-releases (SOUZA, 2015).

Videogame localization occurs in seven stages according to Souza (2015) and this thesis' informants.[12] They occur as the following:

1. Internationalization: when a game is still in its early stages of development, but its programming has already started,[13] the game needs to be prepared to receive other versions inside itself.[14] In other words, programmers need to guarantee that the source-code is internationalized, a common feature with software localization. This is a process focused on coding.

[9] Reads Triple-A and this term refers to high quality and cost games (GEDIGames, 2014; IBJD B, 2014).
[10] The PT-BR case was an example here because it is one of the languages that is still not considered a standard for the localization practices in the industry. Other languages include: Latin-American Spanish and Mandarin.
[11] For more information, see Chapter 3 of this thesis.
[12] For more information, see Chapter 2 of this thesis.
[13] For a full description of the videogame development stages, please refer to Chapter 3 of this thesis.
[14] Neither the software nor the videogames are constituted by a single version. Each language available for the end-users is a different version of that product. In this context, these other versions shall be accounted for since the beginning of the programing, as already stated in this chapter.

2. Decision-making process: still during the early development stage, game creators need to decide the amount of investment in localization to be made, and decide the kind of localization to be done and into which languages. This is usually when a schedule is decided and a third-party company is contracted if the publisher/developer does not have their own localization team.
3. Text extraction: when a game is already more developed, but it is still not finished, game programmers extract in-game texts and audio files from the source-codes and put them in separate files. Those new files will be sent to the localization experts. As in the case of software localization, this stage serves, first, as a way to avoid non-coding experts into translating code lines that might result in a malfunction. It also serves as a copyright protection, as it serves to avoid leakages and piracy.
4. Text translation:[15] from this stage on, localization teams, publishers, and developers work as a team. Localization experts translate all texts and adapt the scripts so they can adapt better into the culture which is about to receive the game. The localization team frequently asks questions to the publishers/developers so they can access better the context in which each text relates and give proper translations to each one.
5. Audio recording: if the publisher/developer decided for a complete localization process, then the fifth stage of localization should be audio recording. Here, voice-actors, a voice director, and a recording studio are contracted and new audio tracks are recorded. After having been reviewed and accepted by the voice director, all audio-files are sent to the publisher/developer.
6. Integrating audio and texts: once all the translations are done and audios recorded, the videogame programmers put all translated texts and audio into the source-code.
7. Testing: it is usual, in the videogame industry, for companies to run two kinds of tests: a localization-specific and a functional one. The

[15] From this stage on, videogame localization becomes different from software localization.

> localization-specific one is done by a localization specialist and might require text and audio changes for the publishers and developers. Localization testing serves as quality control.

Therefore, videogame localization is a complex process and embeds translation/dubbing. However, as a major part of this whole practice, it is important to describe in further detail the translating and dubbing process of a videogame and some of its specificities. At the beginning of this introduction, some of the differences between software and videogame localization, including greater artistic freedom of videogame localization, were discussed. The videogame dubbing process, compared to movies, also has its own specificities. The following text summarizes both the dubbing process and its specificities:

> "The process itself just begins after the game has its script written and some of its art developed. Brazilian dubbing companies are contracted by international giants and receive this material from the distributors during game production. They analyze the characters and their dialogs, searching for key elements of each one and "Brazilianizing" them so a Brazilian-speaker would find it natural. There is also an analysis of the original voice-actor's tone of voice for each character, as some secondary speeches – reactions, screams, sighs – are not always translated. From there on, the producers pre-select the actors (…). Then, it's hands-on and they record line-by-line (...). Editing of all these recordings is an equally slow process (…). Recorded and edited, the sounds are sent to the developers, who will spend a good time analyzing what was translated. Rejected speech needs to be re-recorded. Most of the time, the greatest problem is with synchronizing, not acting, as it is a much easier evaluation method for foreigners. The new recordings happen in the same way as the first phase, generally in a more agile and careful manner. Having concluded the second phase, the developers are responsible for inserting the sound and text files in the games – the voice actor participation finishes here".[16] (Own translation)

[16] "O processo em si começa apenas depois que o jogo teve a produção de seu script e parte da arte desenvolvida. As empresas brasileiras de dublagem fecham os contratos com as gigantes internacionais e recebem esse material das distribuidoras ainda durante o produção do game (SIC). Elas analisam os personagens e as falas, buscando os elementos essenciais em cada um e "abrasileirando" o diálogo para que soe natural aos ouvidos tupiniquins. Há também um cuidado com a análise do timbre de voz do ator original de cada personagem, pois algumas das falas secundárias – reações, gritos, suspiros – nem sempre são traduzidas. A partir daí, os produtores de áudio fazem uma pré-seleção de atores (...). O passo seguinte é pôr a mão na massa, gravar linha por linha (...). A edição de toda essa captação é um processo igualmente demorado (...). Gravados e editados, os sons são enviados para os desenvolvedores do jogo, que gastarão um bom tempo analisando linha a linha do traduzido. As falas rejeitadas começam a voltar em pacotes para serem refeitos. Na maioria das vezes, o problema é de sincronização, e não de atuação, pois este é um critério de avaliação muito mais fácil, especialmente por ouvidos forasteiros. As regravações acontecem da mesma forma que as da primeira fase, geralmente com mais agilidade e mais cuidado. Com a segunda fase concluída, fica a cargo das desenvolvedoras colocar os arquivos de som e texto alterados

It is also important to mention that it is not common for the voice actors to know the game's story and they barely receive information about their characters (SOUZA, 2015: 62-63); this is the biggest difference between voice acting in videogames and movies. This is because localization processes (including voice-acting) is done while the game is being developed. Furthermore, there is a concern of game materials leaking to outside the company and being revealed to other actors in the production chain, which allows for the development of pirate copies of the game. The result is that a localized version of an AAA game becomes a challenge for the voice actors, who can be highly criticized for their performance by gamers who do not have a good game experience as the original version should provide (see BARCELOS, 2017; ESQUEDA and COELHO, 2017; SOUZA, 2015; BERNAL-MERINO, 2015).

According to Farias (2014: 17), European dubbing is a process that involves not only the script's translator and the voice actor, but also a professional called a localizer, who adapts and contextualizes the script before it is sent to the translator. Brazil is an example of how the dubbing process in the videogame industry can be different. In that country, the game's distributor is usually responsible for sending the material to the dubbing company. The distribution company sends the material to the translator director, who is responsible for verifying the translation made and directing the audio recording. Once finished, the material is sent back to the distributors.

They are responsible for sending the material to the translation director who is responsible for verifying the translation made. The material is then dubbed and the final product is sent to the distributor again (FARIAS, 2014). Figure I.2 summarizes this process.

dentro do jogo – a participação dos dubladores acaba aí". Source: http://www.techtudo.com.br/noticias/noticia/2014/02/cp2014-conheca-o-processo-de-dublagem-de-um-game-para-o-brasil.html, accessed March, 22nd 2018.

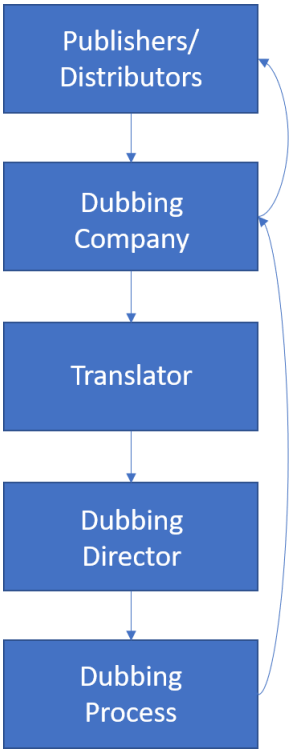

Figure I.2 – Brazilian game dubbing chain
Source: Own Authorship

Using different experts such as a localizer and a voice director to oversee the localization process, and who are the ones responsible for recruiting them is an example of the different forms a process can take. The complexity of localization, in general, and dubbing, in particular, shows that these practices are important tools that reach beyond illiteracy or people who are not familiar with particular languages.

Section I.2 Debating on Localization

Besides the technical discussions on how videogame localization is done and what their best practices are, there is also a discussion on dubbing and localization practices that is related to the process of authenticity when the products are localized and dubbed into different languages. According to Farias (2014: 150), Barros (2006: 49) and Bernal-Merino (2015: 40), several authors debate this matter, as the large-scale use of dubbing and localization techniques might cause an artificiality on the characters' voices. Besides, voice acting is related to the moment and humor the actors bring to their voices, which is impossible to replicate in other environments. The discussion on the importance of authenticity is addressed in Chapter 7.

Videogame localization, as seen, is a highly complex process that involves both translation and adaptations on cultural references and ways of play that might impact the user experience of the game. However, there is already some scholarly debate on the theme. Most

of it is related to the discussion on authenticity and how players react to the localized versions of the games. Bernal-Merino (2015: 40) points out the following on the role of videogame localization:

> "Playability is therefore a crucial concept for the translation and localization of videogames because it affects not only the final feel of the product, but more importantly the players' actual enjoyment of the game experience. (…) At the most basic level, localization must serve a purpose as close to the original as possible in the target language that is substituting. However, due to the tight schedules in game development, the immovable international release dates, and perhaps poor understanding of that game translation and localization entails, the reality is that often the translation of videogames lacks the quality given to other products (…). The result is that many players from different countries continually complain on official game forums and blogs about the distraction and annoyance caused to them by localization bugs and translation mistakes".

Bernal-Merino (2015) does not explicitly discuss the idea of authenticity itself, but stresses that localized games should have the same "feel" as the original. In other words, a game must have some authentic way to be played/enjoyed and it is imperative for the localizers to identify what it is and manage to keep it in the game, as all users should have the same sensations during their play, regardless of which other language/culture the person is playing in.

The authenticity debate on localization studies, however, is far wider than the use of the term authenticity or not. After all, videogame localization opens up the debate on the impact this practice can have on both the industry and the players. On the industry side, considering that AAA games are becoming bigger investments each year, publishers use localization practices as a way of guaranteeing sales and profits in different markets.[17] Moreover, game developers themselves tend to limit the cultural references they can apply to their game even though it will be culturally and historically bounded by the people and society who created them. On the localization side, both localizers and marketers become gatekeepers both on the access of a user to several games but also by the way they will be able to appreciate them. The

[17] As an example, we can compare the Grand Theft Auto (GTA) series. This is an AAA game produced and published by the American company Rockstar. The GTA IV, released in 2010, cost the company US$11,830,493.08 to make, while GTA V (2013) cost US$293,454,650.43. I chose this example because both games were the most expensive ones to produce and market at the time they were released, and both values are adjusted to 2020 inflation. Sources:
- On the cost of GTA IV: https://www.eurogamer.net/articles/gta-iv-is-most-expensive-game-ever-made, accessed March 6th 2020.
- On the cost of GTA V: https://www.ibtimes.com/gta-5-costs-265-million-develop-market-making-it-most-expensive-video-game-ever-produced-report, accessed March 6th 2020.
- Inflation calculator: https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/, accessed March 6th 2020.

authenticity debate is highly important for localization practices, as it brings up the central issue of naturalization of what a global world means (CARLSON and CORLISS, 2011: 62, 66-67) and how identities are built around it. This debate proved to be relevant for the investigation of videogame under the STS perspective, as it relates to the construction of new identities around technology. We can also consider how technologies might be used to create discourses and stories about the world and different societies. In this context, creative industries are major actors.

Disney and other major Hollywood studios are good examples of creative industries that created powerful discourses around the idea of cultural neutralization. This discourse states they reached cultural neutralization, being able to tell stories to anyone who wants to hear them regardless of culture (ALLISON, 2006). However, regardless of this discourse, the stories told both by Disney and Hollywood are really still American-centered, which is easily notable by watching any other movie or television program created outside the US. Even though this discourse of cultural neutralization is debatable, its standards are useful to the videogame industry. Considering the case of Pokémon, the market team used several of those standards and the experience of previous successful franchises taken from Japan to the US. According to Allison (2006), one of the main strategies related to the Pokémon was to completely erase the "feel" that it was a Japanese franchise. To do this, they changed the names of the monsters – giving them a familiar-sounding name for English speakers –, erased cultural references – such as letters in signs –, and changed how the characters were presented. In the first case, there is the Zenigame (ゼニガメ) example. Zenigame is the Japanese game of Squirtle, a turtle-like Pokémon capable of squirting water at its enemies, therefore the English name. The other case is more related to the anime[18] version of Pokémon than the game, but it highlights the idea of authenticity in localization. Regarding anime, Meowth is the only Pokémon who can speak human language and can get very philosophical in its Japanese version. In the US, though, Meowth kept his ability to speak to humans, but he has become much more of a wisecracker.

The localization process in the case of Pokémon highlights the discussion of authenticity in different ways. The first localization process relates to the adaptation process, in which you erase cultural aspects of the origin culture, to adapt the product to another culture. Names, character traits, and behavior and scenery are actively changed to adapt to another culture and society. The other aspect of this spectrum is related to the definition of authenticity itself: something that is in its original form and that might cause feelings of otherness to the population

[18] An animated cartoon produced in Japan.

who does not have the same referential. How, then, do localization practices balance these two interactive elements? Ranford (2017: 145) states that:

> "(…) videogames are created in a time and place as the result of a specific cultural and intellectual legacy, and can tell us about the ideas and attitudes of their creators, making them culturally laden, serious media (…). With this in mind, "localization" becomes a term used by some to refer to videogame translation as a unique process because it connotes the kind of translations that are considered appropriate to them in all instances: adapted heavily for user convenience".

Besides discussing the idea of localization more related to player convenience than to channel authentic experiences to more people than the game was originally produced for, Ranford (2017) also discusses further the levels a videogame localization can take. He divides localization into three different levels: textual, visual, and aural. The textual is related to the preservation of cultural references and to which level/stand a text and/or dialogue seems to be natural. Ranford's (2017) second level of localization, the visual, studies the visual alterations a game had during the localization process. The aural level of localization seems to be the most related to an idea of authenticity, as it relates to way sounds and voices of the game convey meaning and how it might change during the localization process.

The localization process and its discussion on authenticity is usually limited to the visuals and texts within the game. However, it is important to argue that the game codes are equally important. Not just because localizers usually need to localize some of those codes so the videogame can function properly in other languages, but also because they can contain developers' and/or localizers' comments and layers of meanings of their own (SAMPLE, 2013). The construction of authenticity, then, is given in several ways throughout a game and is herein discussed from the perspective of several different fields of studies, such as Game Studies, Translation Studies, and Science and Technology Studies.

Section I.3 Is there anything new, Chipper? Aim, Argument and Research Questions[19]

Debates on videogame localization relate to the debate on how to keep the authentic feel of the original version of the game. Even though this debate is important, there is no evidence of a study which analyzes the role of the localization process in the videogame industry, to the best of my knowledge. In this context, this research aims to analyze the role videogame localization plays in the industry, both today and in the past.

[19] Homage to *Cities: Skylines* (Paradox Interactive, 2015).

Accessing videogame localizers is a challenging task, as most companies are resistant to participate in any kind of research. Considering this, the analysis will involve a more general level for the role of this process today, except for the past experiences chapter, as it will be focused both on the US and Brazil, countries to which I had access to data and information during the development of this research.

With that in mind, the research questions to be addressed during this thesis are:

1. How do localizers perceive their work and their role in the videogame industry?
2. Who are the actors engaged at videogame localization and what are their roles?
3. How does the authenticity debate and cultural elements of the targeted culture play a role in videogame localization and why is this important?

This thesis will argue that localization is becoming an important feature of the videogame industry in general, even though it is not always as discussed as other development processes, such as art creation and programming. This argument was constructed especially while reading the literature review of this thesis. The literature review focused on the challenges of localization in making the localized version of a game to have the same feel and values as the original. It considered that videogames have an authentic feel that needs to be preserved. However, it is almost as if the industry wants to hide it someway. This happens because there is this idea of hiding from the player that she/he is not playing a translated version of a game produced somewhere else; they should feel they are playing a game that was intentionally made for them.

This practice would gain more visibility and the role it has in the industry today because of the growth of broadband Internet. This growth led to the development of online game stores and forums that allowed players to express themselves and their needs to the videogame industry. The result of this was a closer relationship between publishers, developers, and players, enabling the industry to better understand what players wanted from their games (including language availability). In other words, videogame localization is done because there is a market resistance to non-localized games, as if the players themselves accepted to play games produced worldwide, but only if those games were in their own language and reflected their values, resulting in a market growth.

Section I.4 The Book of Unwritten Tales... In other words: Thesis Structure[20]

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The literature review aims at debating theoretical strands that will be useful for the analysis this thesis intends to make, comprising an interdisciplinary debate on localization, including Game Studies, Translation Studies, and Science and Technology Studies. All the debates from this chapter will be studied in more depth and better analyzed in the following ones, therefore the literature review aims more at presenting the debates than arguing them. After that, a chapter dedicated to explaining the research methods is presented.

Chapter three aims at contextualizing the videogame industry on the broader aspects of the creative industry. It also describes how the videogame industry works and is characterized, giving a certain focus on how localization practices are included in the production and role of the Internet and digital game distribution to this process. Having the information on how the industry is organized today and how localization is inserted into the production process, the thesis moves forward to Chapter Four. As the videogame industry took its time to develop and create its processes the way they are today, so did localization. In this sense, this chapter aims to show how videogame localization became the important process that is today.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven are based on the research questions developed for this thesis. They will present the data gathered during interviews and fieldwork. More specifically, Chapter Five will discuss the role of videogame localization, focusing its discussions on localization definition, costs and revenues, and languages. Chapter Six presents all the actors involved in the videogame localization process, describing their roles in the videogame's production chain. Chapter Seven will discuss localization practices and their relation to the authenticity debate.

In the Conclusion, I draw on the research questions, answering them systematically, while also relating the data gathered during the research with the literature review. From that, a more concise and direct discussion on the aim of this thesis– to study the role of videogame localization in the industry today – is presented along with a discussion on the contributions of this research and the possible policies one might create based on the data gathered. Finally, a debate on the flaws and limits of this research, and suggestions for future research are also presented.

[20] Homage to *The Book of Unwritten Tales* franchise (King Art Games, 2009 -).

Chapter 1
I just touched a page... Now I'm in the book![21]
Literature Review

This chapter aims to present and discuss the theoretical concepts of this thesis. The aim is to discuss the main approaches to be used in this thesis, as well as justifying these choices. Hence, the author addresses Game and Translation Studies, showing their roles in localization studies and in this research. This chapter also discusses Science and Technology Studies (STS) and Technological Imaginaries, followed by a debate on Language, Culture and Globalization, which closely relates to this research.

Section 1.1 Game Studies

Game studies is a broad field of study that stimulates several discussions. One of the most discussed topics is related to what is considered a videogame, as they can vary from a pet simulation to brain exercises (CORLISS, 2011: 3). Videogames can also be referred to as computer games, digital entertainment, or even as electronic games. These terms, however, cannot be considered as synonymous. They can also include other kinds of entertainment that are not related to the same type of screen interaction a videogame does (TAVINOR, 2008: online).

Debates regarding the definition of videogames normally refer to whether they are considered as software or not. This debate is an important issue for this study because it supports the understanding of the role of software localization in the videogame industry. However, the particular characteristics and standards the videogame industry holds do not allow one to argue that videogame is a type of software industry. It is considered as a creative industry, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

According to O'Donnel (2012: 31), considering that the videogame industry is just a software industry overlooks important aspects of the industry, its production, and cultural perspectives.[22] He argues that:

> "The wide array of expertise, broad social phenomenon that surrounds games and the technological and political-economic system that surrounds the game industry cannot and should not be collapsed into

[21] This title is a homage to the *Myst* Franchise (Cyan Worlds, 1993-2005). *Myst* games considers that the player can access new worlds by touching pages of specific books.

[22] Some of the details he mentions on videogame production will be addressed in the next chapter of this thesis, such as the array of expertise (that includes programmers, artists, writers, and game designers). The social phenomenon is related to game users having their own social category, the players, which does not exist in the software industry.

> the roughshod category of software. The creative collaborative work that is necessary for the production of games is important enough to understand on its own accord. Indeed, the construction of software systems has always been and will continue to be part of this activity, but it cannot be collapsed into that singular category".

This is an interesting and compelling argument for this thesis. This is because, even though there is an influence from software localization, videogame localization now has its own set of standards and challenges, as discussed in the introduction. However, O'Donnel's argument on the theme is not a consensus. Campos Neto *et al* (2018) and Bernal-Merino (2015) consider this issue from another perspective. According to them, software is a set of instructions given to a computer for it to process that information and bring a result. Thus, a videogame is nothing more than a set of instructions given to a computer that result in the creation of an animated image.

Following the discussion presented in the Introduction, this thesis follows O'Donnel's (2012) argument, claiming that the game industry has its own characteristics (including social and political issues), which should be considered in any analysis of game localization.[23] This is especially the case when considering the role and agency of game players in the demand for game localization, which is not the same between user and software industry. The highly-focused creative aspects of the industry also do not allow one to consider the videogame industry as a software one.

The debate on the role of videogame localization requires a particular definition on videogames, and we follow Bernal-Merino (2015: 18) as the most appropriate for the discussion presented in this research:

> "(...) a videogame is a multimedia interactive form of entertainment for one or more individuals, powered by computer hardware and software, controlled by a peripheral (...), and displayed on some kind of screen (...).They can be used as entertainment or as part of a serious educational or training programme (...).Thematically, they can portray any topic, activity, or parallel universe which the human imagination is able to conjure up (...)".

Bernal-Merino's definition of videogames is complete as it shows several characteristics of videogames: being played on a screen, with some type of controller, alone or with friends (online or not). The most important part of this definition regarding localization studies is related to the uses of a game, either for fun or educational purposes, which promotes

[23] This is not to say that many characteristics of the industry are untied from the software industry in general, but considering the focus of the research, particular characteristics of the game industry need to be taken into account.

the debate over the role of localization in the industry. This is because each country has its own laws regarding videogames and localization practices should be able to address them, as well as social-political aspects of the videogame industry (O'Donnel, 2012).

Game studies as a field of study is recent. According to Mangiron (2018), it started officially in 2001 when the *Game Studies* journal was created. It is devoted specifically to the study of games. This field of study, though, is already developing its own theoretical approach.

Games had already been studied before this journal was published. This was the case of Huizinga's 1938 study on play. He developed the idea of the magic circle, in which every play carries its own rules, and can bend society's ones. A classic example of this is in American Football, in which players are allowed to tackle each other, something not permitted in everyday societies. Of course, this idea can also be translated into videogames, such as Grand Theft Auto (GTA), in which the player is allowed to kill as many people as they wish. This first idea of play and the sociological results of it are essential for game studies, but the approaches have changed, creating new theoretical approaches for game studies.

Tavinor (2008: online) summarizes three of those theoretical strands, which are narratology, ludology, and interactive fiction. In the first one, scholars consider videogames as stories or interactive narratives, analyzing them at their narrative level. However, videogames such as *Tetris* (Alexey Pajitnov, 1984)[24] do not have a narrative component, and therefore they create a challenge for narratologists. The second approach – ludology – emphasizes the game aspect of videogames, with the downside of not differentiating them from other kinds of games, such as boardgames. In the latter, the scholar who focusses on the interactive fiction perspective argues that all games are fiction, but they may not take a narrative form. These are the main approaches to game studies, but are not the only ones, and other approaches discuss different aspects of gaming and its relation to society. On this matter, Corliss (2011) states that this way of describing game studies is too narrow, and identifies several other approaches to Game Studies.

Moreover, according to Corliss (2011), there are at least two more approaches in game studies, one closely related to Economics studies and another to social sciences, especially sociology. The major themes of the former are related to work, labor, and the use of users-created content in games. The latter approach is related to the sociology of interactions in Massively Multiplayer Online games (MMOs). Interactivity would be studied in its many forms, including player-to-game and player-to-player, contributing to understanding "(…)

[24] Game based on different sets of blocks falling on a screen. The aim of the player is to create lines to obtain points. The game ends when the blocks fill the screen.

what, exactly, videogames *are* or *can be*, but at the same time they help us understand how people play games, how games may, in turn, play people, and how elements of play may extend beyond the realm of the game, connecting with broader technocultural subjectivities" (CORLISS, 2011: 8). This approach is also relevant to this study, as localization practices can enable players to relate themselves both with the technology and to other players through interaction, although not necessarily using MMOs.[25]

The sociology approach to Game Studies is essential to this research, as it focuses on the study of game community creation, above all in MMOs. Regardless of the genre of the game studied, those communities are an important asset in videogame localization, as they can evaluate the quality of localized versions and also require a game to be localized. In both cases, localization can serve as a factor for building a relationship between users and technology, a discussion common in STS. Therefore, videogame localization research relates to game studies not only at a more general level of studying a videogame, but also in its theoretical approaches. Translation studies and STS also relate this research to a similar level.

Section 1.2 Translation Studies

Umberto Eco (2011: 7 and 25) defines translation as the act of saying the same thing in different languages, in written or spoken forms. In practice, he states that several translation procedures change the original meanings of the product, and that there is a renewed academic interest for translation studies. Eco (2011: 15-16) gives several reasons for this, such as: the globalization phenomena that put several groups in direct contact with each other who spoke different languages; the development of semiotic interest for the concept of translation; and the expansion of computing and automated translation models.

The relationship between globalization and translation is essential for both creative and videogame industries. One aspect of it is related to the Japanese term Glocalization, which stands for a successful product and service transfer across different regions by modifying its cultural variables (such as language, ethnicity, and gender). Global and local are considered to be mutually constructed, which does not allow one to study them separately (CONSALVO, 2006: 120 – 121). This aspect of Glocalization is closely related to STS, as the process of adapting

[25] Bernal-Merino (2015:39) raised an interesting argument on the relation between interactivity and language: "Game interactivity is particularly relevant when seen from the perspective of translation because a significant proportion of communication taking part between players and games is provided by language, whether in text, audio or video format."

services and products shows how local cultures might adapt (or not) into new technologies brought from other places.

Localization involves several processes and has different types, as seen in the introduction. The same can be said about translation, and the most common translation used for videogame localization is audiovisual translation. This term refers to the translation done to audiovisual texts. In other words, texts that are played in television sets, theaters, and movie theaters (FARIAS, 2014: 13). There are different types of translations (FARIAS, 2014: 13-14; TEIXEIRA, 2016: 90; BARROS, 2006: 64-75):

- Narration: this aims at narrating the character's main actions
- Audio description: the most important information of the piece is described in detail so the spectator has a better understanding of the piece.
- Voice-Over: both the original and the translated audio are played together, but an emphasis is given to the translation audio.
- Surtitle: widely used in theaters, the translated text appears at the bottom of the scene, as the characters speak.
- Subtitles: the characters' speech is translated into text and shown on the screen as it occurs.
- Dubbing: the original voices are substituted by the translated ones, and voice actors must synchronize the emotions, lip movement, and voice tone of the original actor.

Game localization entails more than just translation and dubbing. It also aims to ease possible culture shocks that could compromise the user's immersion to the game (BARCELOS, 2017: 13, 16-17; BERNAL-MERINO, 2015: 40-42). In this context, translation studies are a major field of study in game localization, addressing issues on what is changed from the original game to the translated versions, the reasons behind it, and how users react to it (see BARCELOS, 2017; RANFORD, 2017; SOUZA, 2016; TEIXEIRA, 2016; FARIAS, 2014; CARLSON & COLISS, 2011; SAMPLE, 2013; ALLISON, 2006 and BARROS, 2006). Most of these studies address the major contribution given by Lawrence Venuti in translation studies.

Venuti (1995) deals both with localization and translation from two different perspectives: domestication and foreignization. The former comprises a full adaptation of an art piece to the targeted culture. The latter allows cultural elements from the original to the translated product. This is used to create otherness for the receptor in order for him/her to get into contact with other cultures, recognizing its diversity. Videogame localization should be

considered, then, a mixed form of both domestication and foreignization, as the localizers tend to consider which of those processes would create an authentic experience for the players, enhance their experience with the technology. It is fundamental, then, to consider the contributions of translation studies to the videogame's localization theme, which can go beyond looking into specific case studies and pondering which were the differences and the reasons for it.

This discussion on audiovisual translation, its kinds, and Venuti's concept of domestication and foreignization are fundamental to localization studies. After all, it does not only describe the characteristics of how certain translations are done and their different sub-kinds. It also discusses the idea of what can or cannot be changed during the translation processes and the consequences of each choice. The relevance of the discussion on types of translation (domestication and foreignization) relates to costs and other development steps involved in the process of localizing a game.

Localization practices can significantly change the meaning and the playability of a game, potentially causing frustration to end-users who may start avoiding certain companies and/or genres of games. The localization process is unique to each language a game is localized into. In this context, the changes made to each language are also unique. So, some localized versions can work well with the players, while others result in not being able to comply with player expectation. As it is argued that localization practices are becoming more common in the videogame industry because they potentially guarantee revenue, this consequence might imply to the industry that it can lose an important revenue. Furthermore, from users' perspectives, they might think that those companies and/or game genres do not suit their expectation, which might destroy both their relationship with the technology and/or their constructed identity towards it.

Section 1.3 Science and Technology Studies

Science and Technology Studies (STS) focus on the debate of how science and technology shape society and on the role of society in the construction of new knowledge and artifacts. One of the major paradigms in STS studies, dating from the 1980s, is that science and technology is socially constructed (VELHO, 2011: 142-143). Law and Callon (1988), and Pinch and Bijker (1990), are some of the scholars who support this argument. This means that the construction of science and technology are not neutral processes that will allow the society to progress. Instead, there is a discussion on how these constructions are simultaneous and embedded in each other, and this is one aspect of videogame localization.

Law and Callon (1988) argue that Sociology studies pay little attention to distinctions they create between technology and other aspects of the society (such as economics and politics, and in the case of this study, players wiliness and expectations). However, for the authors, this distinction – which is almost disciplinary – is not a concern for engineers, whose designs have both sociological and technological aspects. These authors argue that an old sociological method should be useful for studying technology and its relation to society. This method comprises of observing and following the actors related to the technology being studied where these people act upon it (e.g., game users). The aim is that, with such observations, the scholar can better understand their social life and their relation to technology. This method for studying technological innovation in a Sociology approach should follow this method:

> "In what follows we use the notion of network to talk about the interconnected character of the social and technical. We use this notion in a way that differs quite fundamentally from standard usage in sociology. Thus we are not primarily concerned with mapping interactions between individuals. Rather, in conformity with the methodological commitment to follow the actors no matter how they act, we are concerned to map the way in which they define and distribute roles, and mobilize or invent others to play these roles. Such roles may be social, political, technical, or bureaucratic in character; the objects that are mobilized to fill them are also heterogeneous and may take the form of people, organizations, machines, or scientific findings. A network metaphor is thus a way of underlining the simultaneously social and technical character of technological innovation". (LAW and CALLON, 1988: 285)

This network discussion will be useful for Chapter 6, in which I identify and describe the roles of each actor in videogame localization. Law and Callon (1988), however, warn that there are three main traps for STS scholars in the investigation of artifacts. The first two are related to reductionism, and these can be either from a social or a technological point-of-view. The results of both reductionisms are that the focus is given to one or other results in using either society or technology to explain changes, leading to an incomplete analysis of the phenomena. The third trap is to consider that the technical and social aspects of a technology developed in separate ways, interacting only sometimes (LAW and CALLON, 1988: 284, 295-296). This study aims to overcome these traps by analyzing videogame localization through the lenses of the both sides of the artifact.

Pinch and Bijker (1990) also consider that both science and technology are socially constructed. However, they argue that dichotomies such as "technology/science" and "technical/social" were the result of the development of science studies and technological innovation. These studies constructed these dichotomies even though – in practice – they do

not exist. Besides, both science studies and technological innovation studies did little to no effort to resolve them. The Empirical Programme of Relativism (EPOR) is one of the efforts that try to address this problem, as it entails sociologists that try to understand the "(...) content natural sciences in terms of social construction" (PINCH and BIJKER, 1990: 27).

The authors, however, argue that The Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) is an appropriate approach to Science and Technology Studies, as it manages to address those dichotomies. For Pinch and Bijker (1990: 28),

> "In SCOT the developmental process of a technological artifact is described as an alternation of variation and selection. This results in a "multidirectional" model, in contrast with the linear models used explicitly in many innovation studies and implicitly in much history of technology. Such a multidirectional view is essential to any social constructivist account of technology".

According to the authors, STS studies should be divided into three steps. The first one aims to show how science and technology are socially constructed through interviews with the people who got involved in that project, a methodology that was implemented in this study (see Chapter 02). The second step is to map how the debate on the technology developed and finished. Finally, the discussions raised in the first two steps should be discussed in a wider context (PINCH and BIJIKER, 1990: 40-41, 44, 46).

The perspectives on methodology, though, differ as Law and Callon (1988) do not address the possibility of separating the social and technological spheres, as Pinch and Bijiker (1990) do. After all, Law and Callon's (1988) methodology enables the scholar to study both the technology and the context it developed as one single entity. Pinch and Bijiker's (1990) method, however, will enable the scholar only to consider the social context in which a technology is created at the end of the study, separating technology and social context during the first two phases of the research. Jasanoff (2015) also discusses this matter, agreeing with Law and Callon (1988) that it is not possible to separate the technology from its social context. The arguments presented both by Law and Callon (1988) and Pinch and Bijker (1990) contribute to the investigation of videogame localization practices. This is because we claim that videogame localization has been increasingly socially constructed by its potential to create new connections between the user and the technology.

Localizing a game is a socially constructed endeavor – one that relates publishers, players and developers –, and as it is a market-related construction. Those are two major reasons for videogame localization to be growing both in importance and in value in the videogame industry. Regarding this, Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006: 2) state that:

> "Videogames (...) is a technology-driven sector and it is constantly evolving with the developers maximising the use of cutting edge technology to demonstrate their creative talents. One of the most recent developments is the technical capability to incorporate human voices for in-game dialogues. This has replaced the use of written text in many cases, in turn giving rise to the need for dubbing and subtitling when games are localised. (...) There are a number of specialised game localisation vendors who provide a full range of localisation services". [26]

The idea that globalization affects local markets takes into account that videogame localization can play a major role in this phenomenon, as localization needs to be regarded from the beginning of the game development (see above and CONSALVO, 2006). For example, Ubisoft is a French videogame publisher that has many developing and selling offices established throughout many countries, including Brazil.[27] Traditionally this company develops its own games, and has its own localization teams, who decide where each game will be released, and which languages they will enable the players to access. The success or failure of a product is usually related to the ability to localize the game properly, making it culturally significant to several cultures. Hence, it is important to consider that videogames are not only a technology-driven sector, as the games also entails experiences to the players and this aspect is not accounted by Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006). This aspect of games is important for the discussion on sociotechnical imaginaries.

Jasanoff (2015: 4) highlights the importance of what she calls sociotechnical imaginaries, defined as "(…) collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology". Sociotechnical imaginaries embrace the idea of a sharing form of sociability – which can be globalized – related to the advancements of science and technology.

The debate on sociotechnical imaginaries shows how expectations related both to science and technology can affect the way we look and study both science and technology today. For instance, Eaton *et al* (2015) analyze the role of collective actions in framing sociotechnical imaginaries in bioenergy discussions and find that the way past discussions are structured can affect the way sociotechnical imaginaries are built. Pickersgill (2014: 28) argues in favor of this idea, and states that "(…) we might view sociotechnical imaginaries as one

[26] The term localization in British English is written with S. Thus, one might find the two written forms in this thesis when quoting a British scholar or a British person who works with videogame localization.
[27] On the Ubisoft's offices: https://www.ubisoft.com/en-US/careers/experience.aspx#world-map, accessed on Sep 27th, 2017.

means through which anticipatory discourse and practices are structured, and thus as a mechanism through which futures are designed".

The role of sociotechnical imaginaries as a way to discuss changes in social practices contributes to the investigation of videogame localization practices. This is because playing a videogame should "look and feel" right for the audience that is currently playing it. This characteristic of the videogame industry brings up the community's discussion on the kinds of gameplay they want to build with the game and which imaginaries might be involved. This discussion fits both past and present discussions on the role of localization practices in the videogame industry. Localization practices both in the past and in the present created imaginaries upon what the relationship between localization and gameplay means.

The discussion on using past and present notions of social practices to build upon imaginaries of the future that foresee what the people involved in the debate want/need from science and technology also include the expert's perception of the general public (BALLO, 2015: 12):

> "Future visions and expectations for what is attainable through science and technology are embedded in social organization and practices, and almost always include implicit shared understandings of what is considered to be 'good' or desirable; such as what constitutes "public good" or a "good" society, or how science and technology could meet public needs. (…) can be used to explore how actors' produce future visions or imaginaries that describe desirable and feasible futures. Studying imaginaries entails being attentive to how they link past and future times, enable or restrict actions in space, and naturalize ways of thinking about possible worlds."

This thesis considers both past and present discourses on localization, as the role of this practice and its standards was built up over the years. Besides considering past experiences, this thesis will also use the discourse of localization experts, such as videogame localizers and localization project managers from videogame publishers. This was chosen as their involvement in the industry gives an insider's perspective from what happens inside the industry and out of it. After all, many of the interviewees have constant contact with players, and the way they shape their idea of what the role of localization is today for the videogame industry is fundamental for this research.

Even though Jasanoff (2015) focus of sociotechnical imaginaries is on policy development, we can be inspired by this concept in the study of videogame localization. Videogame localizers create an imaginary of who are the players and what are their expectations on the game being developed or localized. Although this 'imagined expectations' changes over

the game development (as players try the game in their alpha or beta versions), I do not fully apply Jasanoff's (2015) concept of sociotechnical imaginaries, instead we consider the desirable results that localization are supposed to achieve in terms of allowing individual culture experiences. As will be seen in the following chapters (especially Chapters 5 and 6), localizers aim at localizing a game that suits all the audiences they work with, which allows us to involve the other aspects of the concept. After all, there is a performed vision of desirable futures [a.k.a. who the players are], which has shared understandings of forms of social life attainable through advances in technology [a.k.a. create games able to speak to a large audience]. In other words, even though we do not consider in this thesis a debate over policy development, the notion of sociotechnical imaginaries is still useful.

Section 1.4 Games and Globalization

Globalization has been studied in different areas in social sciences, despite being a poorly defined term (CRANE, 2002). It usually comprises several different related phenomena – for instance - to culture, politics, and economy. Concerning economy studies, it commonly debates the companies' growth and their capacity to enter new markets in different countries. Cultural globalization is usually used as a term to study a one-way relationship between developed and under-development countries, in which the former sends its cultural assets to the later in an imperialist matter (CRANE, 2002). However, if we assume that local cultures are never pure and that they are capable of hybridization, and that culture and social local aspects are mutually constructed (CONSALVO, 2006), other interpretations on Cultural Globalization are required.

Crane (2002: 2-4) identifies three models for studying cultural globalization and contributes with a fourth one, all discussed below. The first model, known as Cultural & Media Imperialism is one of the most common kinds of studies, and brings the discussion on center-periphery relations to the forefront, how the center sends all their cultural references to the periphery that passively accepts it, which can result in a homogenization of culture. As said though, cultures are never pure and can become hybrid with one another (CONSALVO, 2006), which leads to the second model of cultural globalization studies, entitled Cultural Flows model (CRANE, 2002). Cultural globalization flow is not a one-way process, in which culture A sends its cultural aspects to culture B, who receives it passively. The Cultural Flows model understands that culture flows in both ways, leading into a less coherent and unitary process, and also into a more fluid boundary between what is considered center and periphery. This model was criticized, as center and periphery of the world are still easily recognizable even

decades after the end of the Cold War, even though scholars such as Hardt and Negri (2000) and Appadurai (1990) consider that those boundaries are either inexistent – as Hardt and Negri (2000) – or become not much important – as Appadurai (1990) – because cultures hybridize.

The reception theory model (CRANE, 2002 - the third model) assumes that global audiences respond actively to cultural products created in other countries and that each different audience responds differently to it, managing to resist and negotiate the presence of other's cultures' influence in their country. That is the reason why Jones *et al* (2015) argue that a game developer should also consider the users' values and ways of interacting with a game, which are not universal, making globalization a challenge for multinational videogame publishers. In the last model for cultural globalization studies developed by Crane (2002) she argues that nations, cultural organizations, and global cities are institutions that use several strategies to cope with, promote or counter global culturalization.

Considering a videogame both as an economic and cultural product, it allows the study of the practice of localization under the frame of these four models. Localization can be seen as a practice that will establish a center-periphery domination, but also as a way of resisting it, inducing a hybridization of it and also creating new forms of interaction. Hardt and Negri (2000) would call this new form of resistance and subjectivity related to the technology as multitude, which could also be seen as a new form of power. However, as Virno (2004) argues, multitude can be both submission and subversion, and videogame localization might represent both: a way of resisting the imperialistic presence of cultural products from other countries, but also playing an adapted version of them, submitting into other's ideology. It is important to notice that the videogame localization processes are not an exclusive practice between developed countries taking their products to under-developed ones, as we find center-center localization games. There are cases, such as Japanese games which are localized to American audiences and American games localized into several European languages. This, of course, does not question what has been discussed here so far. After all, center-center localization practices indicate that imperialist endeavors do not occur only in center-periphery situations. It is important, though, to consider that resistances to those imperialist endeavors change considerably depending on the countries involved (see also DYER-WITHEFORD & DE PEUTER, 2007).

Although localization can be studied in those four models presented, this thesis considers the reception theory model as the main cultural globalization approach. This choice is based, first on the role game communities can have when verifying the quality of the localized versions of the game. More importantly, however, is to consider game communities as agents to require a game to be localized and made available in the languages they want. This shows

that the process of videogame localization is not a one-way imperialistic endeavor, but it has active audiences that will make requirements to accept products that come from other places. This discussion highlights the relevance of the reception theory.

Reception theory is related both to consumption patterns and to how authorship is regarded:

> "(…) assumes that reading or decoding is involved in the assimilation of a work of art, that subjects take and active not a passive part, though the degree to which readers complete a text or participate in the construction of its meaning is contentious. (…) tends to concern itself with the ideal reader implied by each work (…). Of course, it often happens that those who read a text don't match the ideal reader (…)" (WALKER, 1989: 179).

Although the Reception Theory definition is highly focused on texts, one might consider the same for products, as put by Walker (1989). He argues that customers are capable of reading products and styles of design, and the relation between them and the product is much more active than with the person and a painting. Design and consumerism are intrinsically related to this: they can create differences between products, new desires, and new customer needs. This argument is essential when discussing the role of videogame localization: the agency of players in the requirement of games to be localized in their languages might be related to the creation of a new needs from the industry itself. As it will be better explored later, this might be considered a controlled multitude.

The second aspect of reception theory is related to the view on authorship. There are two approaches to it, either the pragmatic theory or the substantialist theory. The former considers that the reader is the one who gives the total meaning of a text and this changes as the conditions a text being read changes. The substantialist theory focuses on the author intentions' agency. It argues that the author, while writing, would have a limited set of meanings intended for it, and the readers should be able to find them (see THOMPSON, 1993). These two approaches for the authorship discussion in reception theory can be valid for a localization study in videogames. After all, on one hand, the players will give the meaning they want to the games they play. On the other, the developers will try to control, using localization practices to make sure the values and intentions are understood across the different game cultures.

Section 1.5 What are your S.P.E.C.I.A.L skills? Games and Identity[28]

Both aspects discussed regarding reception theory allow for relevant readings in the videogame localization case. They also show that there is a use for imperialist purposes on the videogame industry and this is fundamental to also discuss the ways different people create their own subjectivities and identities. Appadurai (1986) argues that our subjectivities – and identities for that matter – are increasingly being constructed through materials that have global circulation, which include videogames. Carlson & Corliss (2011) agree with this argument and add that videogames both circulate transnationally and serve as interactive platforms, in which players interact with each other regardless of where they come from. This new form of contact between people from different countries creates a new environment both for a new identity's source and appropriation and for contact with the 'other'; those who do not belong to that particular form of identity.

Said's (1978) discussion on Orientalism shows how Europe, especially the French and the British experiences, created their idea of what the Orient was, which led them to shape their own identity in the process (concerning the other, the Oriental) and, then, to argue in favor of imperialist endeavors throughout the world. Anderson (1983) developed the concept of imagined communities, used to describe nationalism. This concept addresses the possibility of creating communities that can only exist in an imagined level, as people could not possibly know everyone else, but still feel part of that community which is an identity agent. Both discussions on identity formation are crucial to STS and also to localization studies. People can create their own identities and subjectivities both in relation to others and between themselves, technology enables contact among different people and localization has the potential to enable access on one hand, but at the same time creates the Other, the ones who cannot fully understand a culture and need it to be translated. The formation of game communities, then, is a process in which those forces are constantly at play.

This discussion on identity building regarding both one's own identity and one's identity in relation to the others is an issue that can be related not only to game communities, but also can be reinforced by the games themselves. Bembeneck (2013) discusses identity roles in videogames that depict Romans and Barbarians, relating the construction of cultural identities as a negotiation both in ancient and current times. The author also argues that:

> "Games are a place where the rules of reality are constructed as temporarily separate from the world outside the game, much like the experience within the walls of the Roman arena. Barbarians as a

[28] Homage to the *Fallout* franchise (Bethesda, 1997 -). *Fallout* is a game which allows the player to build their character based on characteristics that forms the S.P.E.C.I.A.L. acronym.

> conquered or conquerable Other remain today a powerful object reflecting back to us an idealistic and easily identifiable opposite that affirms our own sense of cultural identity and belonging. The myth of the Barbarian Other is a comforting fantasy that temporally removes the beautiful diversity that defines culture in this global age". (BEMBENECK, 2013: 87)

Identity can create an "Other" who is the simplified antithesis of the one holding that identity, removing the complexities both from the identity holder and the other. This discussion is important in localization studies not only related to community creations, as previously discussed. It is also fundamental to debate communities to access the role of the process in the industry. This is because localizers can become gatekeepers of which cultural aspects that belong to the game's creators to show (or not) what should be translated and changed and into what. Localization, then, becomes an important process within the industry, as it not only becomes an important revenue in the industry. It also becomes a question of identity and ways to perceive and relate to playing videogames. After all, localized versions can enable players to play the game understanding it and enabling them to relate both to the technology and the community in different ways. However, it is important to notice that this process is a complex one, as tensions are being built everywhere, as happens in any kind of identity.

Section 1.6 Games and Culture

The identity processes usually lead to the formation of a culture related to it. Culture, as globalization, is a concept that is widely used and its definitions bring different readings about its relationship to videogame localization practices. Said (1993: xii-xiii) uses the term to address two different aspects of culture:

> "First of all it means all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure. (…) Second, and almost imperceptibly, culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevated element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought (…). In time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state; this differentiates "us" from "them" (…)."

Culture, then, overlaps with identity and the process of exclusion. It is also related to arts, communication, and representation, which brings the possibility of people creating their own culture and identity on videogames, as they are also considered an artistic endeavor (TAVINOR, 2009), which can be localized into other cultures.

The definition of culture involves several aspects and needs to be addressed (Said, 1993). The term itself originated from the Classical Latin, meaning to grow and/or to cultivate. A good definition of culture is given by Frans Mäyrä (2014: 293) "culture is not something we are born with, but rather something that we learn and adopt from our environment as we grow up". This definition shows the role of identity formation when acquiring a culture, above all as it addresses a domain of experiences that helps one shape social relations (MÄRYÄ, 2014). If we relate these discussions to videogame and localization practices, one might notice that the practice of localizing a game might also be used to shape social relations as something that belongs to that culture, not an imported product created to be consumed somewhere else.

However, that is not the only definition for culture. Clifford Geertz (1973) uses a metaphor created by Max Weber to define culture. The metaphor starts by considering humans as animals that are suspended in a web of significance sprung by themselves, in which culture would be those webs. This definition is close to Mäyrä (2014), a fluid concept that addresses the domain of human experiences and the creation of relationships among them.

This idea of creating relations among people as part of the concept of culture is common among different scholars. The result of it, according to Sarangi (2009) when debating Kroeber and Kluckhohn's (1952) work, is the creation of different behavioral patterns among different groups, with traditional ideas that are tied to core values. Besides, Sarangi (2009: 84) states the following on Kroeber and Kluckhohn's (1952) definition:

> "(…) (i) the totality implied in the culture concept (every aspect of social life absorbed in culture); (ii) the organizing principle underlying the social structure (culture seen as synonymous with social system); and (iii) the determined and determining aspects of culture as far as individual behavior is concerned. What it does not capture is the relationship of cultural elements to one another and their relationship to what is considered 'noncultural' in a given society. (…) The interrelationship between the individual and the society is a crucial aspect of culture (…). Keeping in the view what properties of culture are stressed in different definitions, it may be helpful to single out three dominant approaches – the mentalist, the behaviorist and the semiotic (…)"

The concept of culture enables discussions from different points of view. However, all the definitions presented seem to have a common feature: culture is socially constructed and it plays a role when an individual creates relationships with others and also between groups. It might be considered a set of behaviors and ideas based on core values.

The notion of culture is present in game studies. According to Kurt Squire (2012), there are five planes of gaming, and they are: the game encoded as a piece of software, the game that

unfolds on the screen, the game being played in the player's mind, the action occurring in the real space, and – most importantly – the game in its social context. In this context, understanding the cultural context in which a game is developed and played is crucial to understand what the role of videogame localization is.

These definitions, however, do not consider another important characteristic of culture: the performance. According to Bhabha (1994), one has two different ways to engage in culture: in an antagonistic or in an affiliative way, especially towards the Other and their culture. In this sense, one might appropriate[29] some or all aspects of another culture or even antagonize it. Of course, these relationships are complex and constantly ongoing, seeking to authorize cultural hybrids. This process of hybridization is important not only to track cultural changes when observing different groups:

Bhabha's (1994) discussion on culture is fundamental to this thesis. This is because players have some level of agency in requiring changes and their games to be localized, and therefore they can purchase and play such games. This agency is subjected to the companies' will and need to listen to what they are requiring. This is one example: videogame companies, when localizing a game, not only localize them based on an imaginary of what is desirable and valued to that targeted culture, while keeping as much integrity of the game authenticity as possible. This also means that the players also create a new imaginary of what it means to be in a metropolis and what modernity is, something that is strongly related to the discussion of sociotechnical imaginaries and the perspective of creating foreseeable futures for the technology and its relation to the society they live in.

Section 1.7 "Would you Kindly?" Games and Language[30]

Another major aspect of a cultural characterization is related to language acquisition and its different accents. Language is a highly discussed theme among scholars (see ALLEN, 2003), it has the property of describing the world and, through that, creating concepts and discourses that can shape our understanding of the world. Nietzsche (1873) argues that one of the uses of words is to develop concepts that, when structured, it creates language and is also related to science as it is used to arrange the empirical world around it. Nietzsche's argument, although not about technology itself, can be applied: videogames are capable of creating

[29] This term 'appropriated' was used by the author himself: "(...) the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew." (Bhabha, 1994: 55)

[30] Homage to the *Bioshock* franchise (Irrational Games and 2K Games, 2007-2016). In the first installment of the game, the phrase "would you kindly?" is used as an experiment on suggestion and conformity.

concepts about themselves and about the empirical and virtual world they address. In this sense, language in videogames is capable of making users create their ideas about the real and the virtual world. Localization practices, then, could be read as a process that enables users to experiment and create ideas about different worlds with the concepts each language is capable of giving.

On this subject, Allen (2003) states that language and the conventions surrounding it are the main way in which we can express our knowledge-claims, actually the only possible-known way. Language, then, instead of a medium for representing ideas, becomes a tool to deal with the world and can be used to redescribe ideas and concepts, allowing the speakers to express themselves in different ways. Videogame localization practices are a great example of this, as they can play and redefine knowledge-claims in several other ways than the original language in which the game was created, enabling the user to express their knowledge-claims about the real and the virtual world into different ways.

On one hand, both Nietzsche (1873) and Allen (2003) have a more general reading of language and its uses. Spivak (1994), on the other, has a more socially bound analysis, in which she analyses the possibilities that the subaltern can (or not) speak. The subaltern is the person who is from a colonized world and analyzes their possibilities of speaking and being heard. She argues that both Foucault and Deleuze recognize that the subaltern can speak and that the person knows their conditions for doing so, but they do not take into account the imperialist violence and international division of labor, which would not matter too much if both scholars would not address third-world issues (SPIVAK, 1994).

According to Spivak, there are moments in which the subaltern can and will speak, however, it is not usually a free-form speech, even in contexts which are designed to make them to do so. This depends on the relationship between the subaltern and the colonizer world, and also on the theme of the speech. Localization practices might be related to this argument: the user, an actor that can show subaltern features, can speak and have their voice heard as long as it fits into the videogame companies' agenda. This applies to two levels. The first one is related to localization practices being considered an important revenue to the industry. Therefore, in situations where companies and users are from countries in different socioeconomic development stages, it might align the first and third world agendas (and also the agendas among first world countries) intertwining global capitalism search for profits overseas. The second level is related to which languages the publishers will invest in to localize their games. This will depend on the authenticity of the users (showing some level of subaltern features)

requiring it, and also the relationship between the contexts of users and producers (frequently located in the first world).

This reading on language, and the possibility of being heard, converge with our understanding of videogame localization practices. Although Spivak's (1994) contribution is for postcolonial studies[31] and her reading on the subject entails a violence inherited in the colonial system, we are inspired by her concept to investigate localization on videogames and the roles of actors who have different agency in the industry. Her idea on who is the subaltern and their ability to be heard in certain situations can be somehow transferred to the analysis of videogame localization (as discussed in the empirical Chapters). This is because a vast majority of games are developed in western developed countries that still control the discourse on what can and cannot be said in an entertainment environment (see Chapter 3 for more details). Such control is extended to the localization of videogames: the companies will give voice to players who they imagine to have the potential of becoming customers and a new revenue.

Hence, we are inspired by Spivak's (1994) discussions on the subaltern to refer to actors who assume a lower status in the localization process and have lower agency capacities. This means that the localization aspects enable players to speak their wills and to resist certain types of discourse. However, their voice will only be heard if that means more revenue to the game publisher or developer. In other words, at the same time a localized videogame can enable the user to pursue further exploration of the game and its several discourses, there might be some resistance from players to the content of videogames produced in other cultures. It is also a system for domesticating and controlling ways of play and ways of interaction between the virtual and the real world. Localizing a game is more than just translating it. It means inserting cultural and other identity references to the game, changing how characters are portrayed and how the story is told.

Section 1.8 "Hi! My name is Guybrush Treepwwod, and I want to be a Pirate!": Games and Language[32]

Language, culture, identity, and globalization are issues strongly related to authenticity. However, authenticity has not been fully addressed by Science and Technology, Games and Translation studies within the same framework. For instance, two chapters published by Salvati and Bullinger (2013), and Köstlbauer (2013) in the book entitled "Playing with the Past",

[31] There are studies in STS and postcolonialism. Law and Lin (2017) provides a wide discussion on the topic.
[32] Homage to *The Secret of Monkey Island* Franchise (Lucas Art, 1990 – 2009). Guybrush Treepwwod is the series' main character, who wants to become an authentic pirate by all means possible.

discuss authenticity in videogames set in different historical periods. The chapters debate over the portrayal of wars and discuss how these games construct a narrative about themselves of being an authentic 'representation of the past', but Köstlbauer (2013) never discussed the concept of authenticity. However, Salvati and Bullinger (2013: 154) debate briefly over the concept of selective authenticity:

> "Selective authenticity may be understood as a form of narrative license, in which an interactive experience of the past blends historical representation with generic conventions and audience expectations (…) we identify three categories of selective authenticity (…) technological fetishism (…) cinematic conventions (…) documentary authority".

The authors do not define the concept of authenticity in itself. Instead, they present authenticity as a pursuit of truth, providing the players with an authentic experience of what actually happened in the past. This discussion focuses on how videogames are marketed towards the idea of the player being able to relive what happened in the past. However, it does not explain why the scholars on the theme would not address the discussion on what the concept of authenticity means.

This is not an issue exclusive to the scholars in game studies. Other scholars also do not debate the concept itself. That is the case of Potter (2010), a philosophy scholar. He argues that authenticity is something that we look at in modern societies, as the search for something real or genuine. However, he pledges that the concept is a hoax, as there is not such a thing of something being real and genuine to everyone in our society. Gilmore (2007), an economist, argues that authenticity is related to our current way of organizing and understanding the economy. He states that today's economy is based on experiences and consumers will only buy what they perceive as a real and authentic product.

The discussion on meanings of authenticity as a concept is not always held. However, the scholars who do discuss the concept show how important this debate is, especially for this research. The concept originated from ancient Greece, and it transmitted both the idea of an original, authoritative text, and also having authority over someone or something (Cobb, 2014; Umbach & Humphrey, 2018).

The recent discussion on authenticity that might contribute to the investigation of videogame localization relates to two ways of understanding the concept of authenticity. The first is related to the self, and the second to society, as a political concept to be addressed in Sociology and Anthropology.

Erickson (1995) is one of the main scholars who debates authenticity within a philosophical approach, focusing the discussion on the self. She argues that authenticity cannot

be considered an opposite to the idea of inauthenticity, as no one is completely authentic or inauthentic, but people are both at the same time to one degree or another. This debate is important considering the relationship it has with identity, as the self has a set of identities in which the degrees of authenticity vary over time. Even though Erickson's (1995) philosophical approach on the self and authenticity need to be acknowledged as an important debate on authenticity as a concept, this thesis will not address this discussion on this approach. It will focus on authenticity as a political and sociological concept.

Fillitz and Saris (2013) state that the modern search for authenticity is related to the consumer-capitalist society, allowing people to seek it in products, experiences, and ways of being. It also implies in nation-states' production of homogenous national cultures, as minority groups advocate for diversity in their claims. This resulted in the idea that authenticity is a "(…) particular form of interconnecting and combining cultural elements within spaces of interstices in order to produce a specific particularity, be it at an individual level or at the (…) collective entity" (FILLITZ & SARIS, 2013: 10). This idea of a produced authenticity can be used even for mass consumption culture according to the authors, and can be easily relatable to localization practices in the videogame industry. As videogames are something entirely artificially created, the meanings conveyed by them are related to the developers and they want to make sure that these meanings can be localized into other languages.

The discussions raised by Fillitz and Saris (2013) can be complemented by Cobb's (2014) piece on authenticity and globalization. According to the scholar, the discourses on globalization at the end of the Cold War were related to flatten political differences and homogenize cultural ones. However, the result of the process was rather different. The digitalization process along with globalization enabled people to have easier access to cultural products, but people started to look for authentic and original products. Therefore, according to Cobb (2014), authenticity is not only a way to evoke time and space, but it is also an added feature of being a synonymous word to truth.

Considering that authenticity has this relationship tied to the idea of something being true, it can become a concept that can be politically used and also help to operate other political concepts. Umbach and Humphrey (2018) argue in favor of this argument and add that the concept of authenticity is evoked as a form of contest ideologies in political arguments. The concept can also retain its ideological power, even though it is used in new contexts and ideologies. This discussion relates to the localization debate because videogame localization is expected to keep the authentic feel of the game, which always contains ideological discussions.

To summarize the authenticity debate, it is important to address how the term will be defined throughout this thesis. Vanini and Williams (2009: 3) defined authenticity:

> "(...) as some sort of ideal, highly valued and sought by individuals and groups as part of the process of becoming. Alternatively, authenticity is often something strategically invoked as a marker of status or method of social control. Authenticity is not so much a state of being as it is the objectification of a process of representation, that is, it refers to a set of qualities that people in a particular time and place come to agree represent an ideal or exemplar. As culture changes – and with it, tastes, beliefs, values and practices – so too do definitions of what constitutes the authentic. Authenticity is thus a "moving target" (…)".

This definition summarizes the debates over the concept of authenticity presented above. Authenticity is a concept used to signify a way to convey meaning to someone or something. The reason why localization practices discuss this theme is related to the developers needing to convey their ideas through their games and also the need to make sure that those ideas are the same in the localized version. Besides that, there is an idea that the game conveys something authentic that cannot be broken, otherwise the players will not get invested enough in it and abandon the game before it has finished. This leads back to the discussion on the role of localization being used as a form of obtaining more revenue for the game.

Section 1.9 Final Thoughts

Even though Spivak (1994: 90) states that "Whatever the reasons for this specific absence, what I find useful is the sustained and developing work on the *mechanics* of the constitution of the Other; we can use it to much greater analytic and interventionist advantage than invocations of *authenticity* of the Other", authenticity in videogame localization is an important feature. The debate on the theme is not only related to constructing an identity in relation to oneself and the other. It is also a concept of maintaining the original feel of the game in all the versions it was localized for.

Localization is about authenticity, receiving products from other countries, resistance, and identities. Of course, it counts on the industry as a process that helps to explore different markets, increasing its sales. However, it is more than that. It is a complex process that involves many actors from the industry, from the developers to the end users, as will be seen in the next chapter.

Chapter 2
This War of Mine
Or... On Methodology[33]

For this research to be carried out, several different methodologies were used. The first one was doing part of the research within the archives of The Strong National Museum of Play, in Rochester, New York, United States (US). Working in their archives was fundamental to enable the researcher to write about the history of videogame localization in US, as the Museum holds several collections on development companies and videogame publishers. The documents show importing and exporting software throughout the world.

In addition to consulting documents from videogame publishers and marketing material, scholar books on the history of videogame development, some games were played and the content of their boxes was analyzed. The games were chosen based on their availability in different languages. This was an important experience for me, so as to remember how it was when playing without knowing the language of the game.

The second methodology used in this research was ethnographical field research. Fieldwork was conducted in four different game conventions, two in Brazil and two in the US. They were carried out on Brasil Game Show (BGS - São Paulo, 2017), Campus Party (São Paulo, 2018), PAX East (Boston, 2019), and Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3 - Los Angeles, 2019). This fieldwork aimed at: getting in contact with industry representatives, in order to get contacts with the localization teams and managers, and find out the developers' and publishers' point of view on localization practices during conversations that were noted with their consent.

The third and last methodology used in this research were interviews. After each fieldwork, I would contact the companies found in the fieldwork, asking them if they would like to participate further in the research by giving a semi-structured interview. Those interviews were the main source of information for this research.

The following table (2.1) summarizes the research methods used and which chapter the data gathered is presented:

[33] Homage to *This War of Mine* (11 bit studios, 2014).

Method	Where it was carried out	Chapter that presents Data Gathered
Archival Research	The Strong Museum of Play (Rochester, NY)	Chapter 4
Fieldwork	Brasil Game Show (São Paulo, SP) - 2017	Chapters 5, 6 and 7
	Campus Party (São Paulo, SP) - 2018	
	PAX East (Boston, MA) – 2019	
	E3 (Los Angeles, CA) – 2019	
Interviews	Skype	Chapters 5, 6 and 7

Table 2.1 – Research Methods Summary
Own Authorship

Section 2.1 Archival Research

As mentioned, an archival research was conducted at The Strong National Museum of Play. This museum is located in Rochester, New York and it is home to several archives related to toys, dolls, and other artifacts of play.[34] The videogame collection at the museum comprises hardware, software, and also written documents produced by several videogame companies, videogame magazines, published articles on papers and marketing materials.

The choice of which archives, books, and games to consult during the one week I researched at the museum was done in two different steps. The first one was consulting their website,[35] choosing the books on the history of videogame development and archives that were broader in scope, as the search for the terms videogame and localization did not bring up any results. The second step taken for choosing the documents to be analyzed at the museum were brought up during an informal conversation with Dr. Jon-Paul C. Dyson, responsible for the research area of the museum, who suggested other archives I could research.

The result of those steps was that the following archival materials were consulted:

- Collection Title: Chris Kohler papers
- Website: http://archives.museumofplay.org/repositories/3/resources/151
- Abstract: "This compilation of fanzine materials exhibit Chris Kohler's role in video game culture as well as provide a unique and unfiltered view of video games, the gaming industry, and culture from a community of players passionate about video games. The bulk of the materials are dated between 1994 and 1998".

- Collection Title: Leonard Herman press kit and marketing collection
- Website: http://archives.museumofplay.org/repositories/3/resources/90

[34] For more information on the museum: https://www.museumofplay.org/, accessed February, 26th 2020.
[35] To access the museum's collections, please visit: https://www.museumofplay.org/collections/access-collections, accessed February, 26th 2020.

- Abstract: “The Leonard Herman press kit and marketing collection includes six CDs containing digitized press kit materials for various paper and electronic gaming companies from 1981-2003”.

- Collection Title: Michael Newman journal articles collection
- Website: http://archives.museumofplay.org/repositories/3/resources/66
- Abstract: “This collection of 431 journal/magazine/newspapers articles on early video games, the home video game market crash of 1983, home video game companies, and other related topics was shared with staff at The Strong by Michael Newman in 2014. Advertisements and some photocopied book chapters are also included in this resource”.

- Collection Title: Brøderbund Software, Inc. collection
- Website: http://archives.museumofplay.org/repositories/3/resources/37
- Abstract: “This collection contains a sample of corporate records from Brøderbund Software, Inc. Document types in the first series include correspondence, meeting minutes, publicity materials, memos, sales reports, financial information, product development notes, news articles, software diskettes, artwork, photographs, conference programs, internal newsletters, and other reference materials. Two large bound scrapbooks of publicity and product information are also part of this collection. The bulk of the materials are dated between 1980 and 1998, the duration of Brøderbund’s existence under Doug Carlston. The second series in this collection showcases Carlston’s involvement in the early years of the Software Publishers Association (SPA). Additional scope and content information can be found in the “Contents List” section of this finding aid”.

- Collection Title: Series II: Sierra On-Line gaming magazines, 1981-1999
- Website: http://archives.museumofplay.org/repositories/3/archival_objects/9140
- Abstract: “This series contains a variety of Sierra On-Line’s paper publications. Sierra On-Line’s first official magazine, The On-Line Newsletter, was published in 1981; only one issue of this newsletter was printed. It was revived as the Sierra Newsletter six years later in 1987, running until Spring 1989. Then, the magazine was again expanded and renamed to Sierra News Magazine (Autumn 1989-Spring 1991). The Summer 1991 issue was called Sierra/Dynamix News Magazine, incorporating recent acquisition Dynamix, Inc. In Fall 1991, the magazine was renamed once more to InterAction Magazine, which operated until Sierra ceased product

development in Spring 1999. The “Bright Kids Club” newsletter was a short-lived venture promoting Sierra’s educational and child-focused games”.

- Collection Title: Ken and Roberta Williams’ Sierra On-Line collection
- Website: http://archives.museumofplay.org/repositories/3/resources/18
- Abstract: “Ken and Roberta Williams’ Sierra On-Line collection contains materials from 1979-1999, with the bulk of the materials dated between 1988 and 1995. This collection holds a sampling of Sierra On-Line’s corporate records and textual information that supplements the video game and software collection of Sierra On-Line games in the International Center for the History of Electronic Games at The Strong. Materials in this collection include corporate annual reports, press releases, game catalogs, newsletters, gaming magazines, correspondence, photographs, bound materials (such as game strategy and player’s guides), and more. Additionally, the materials on loan to The Strong consist of original Sierra On-Line game production books, script ideas, notes, drawings, flow charts, and other game design-related papers”.

In addition to the archival research, some games were also consulted and some were played. The time restrictions did not allow me to play all the games, so priority was given to playing those games available in more than one language. The table below (Table 2.2) shows all the games chosen to be seen and the ones that were played are marked with an *.

Title	Creator	Creation date	Local	Keywords	Type	Collaborator	Medium	Object ID	Credit Line	Other Info
Video game: Windows 2000 The Longest Journey*		2000	United States	electronic game, video game	PC Games		printed paper, plastic	117.7185	Gift of Marilyn and Ray Brongo	Played in English
Video game: Super Famicom Viking no Daimeiwaku (The Viking's Large Nuisance) - The Lost Vikings - Japanese Edition		1993	Japan	video game, electronic game, Blizzard Entertainment	Console Games		printed paper, plastic	115.265		
Video game: Windows Donde Esta Carmen Sandiego? Buscala por Todo el Mundo!* (Where is Carmen Sandiego? Search the World)		1996	United Kingdom	video game, electronic game	PC Games, Educational Software		printed paper, plastic	114.2262		Played in Spanish
Video game: MS-DOS Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego? - Review Copy*		1990	United States	video game, electronic game	PC Games, Educational Software		printed paper, plastic	114.2445		Played in English
Handheld video game: Nintendo Game Boy; Pokémon Red Version	Nintendo	1998	Japan	electronic game, video game, Nintendo, Game Boy	Handhelds		printed paper, plastic	115.3219		

Title	Creator	Creation date	Local	Keywords	Type	Collaborator	Medium	Object ID	Credit Line	Other Info
Video game: Commodore 64 Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?		1985	United States	video game, electronic game	PC Games, Educational Software		printed paper, plastic	114.2446		
Video Game, "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial," Recovered from Landfill, Alamogordo, New Mexico, April 26, 2014, Site of the Atari Video Game Burial of 1983	Atari, Inc., Warshaw, Howard Scott	1982	United States, New Mexico, Alamogordo	Video games, Covers (Overlying objects), Manuals (Instructional materials), Dumps (Refuse areas), Excavation (Process), Landfills, Refuse and refuse disposal, Urban folklore	Objects	The Henry Ford		2015.13.1	From the Collections of The Henry Ford. Gift of the City of Alamogordo, New Mexico.	Original Source: http://collections.thehenryford.org/Collection.aspx?objectKey=403754 Image ID: THF159970
Video game: Fujitsu FM Towns Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego? - Japanese Edition		1993	Japan	video game, electronic game	PC Games, Educational Software		printed paper, plastic	114.1762	Gift of Doug Carlston	

Title	Creator	Creation date	Local	Keywords	Type	Collaborator	Medium	Object ID	Credit Line	Other Info
Handheld video game: Nintendo Game Boy Advance Blizzard Classic Arcade: The Lost Vikings	Nintendo	2003	Japan	video game, electronic game, Blizzard Entertainment	Handhelds		printed paper, plastic	115.3969		
Phantasy Star Video Game	Sega Phantasy Star video game	1987		video game						Editor: Sega
Video game: Nintendo Famicom Disk System Yume Kojo: Doki Doki Panic	Nintendo	1987	Japan	electronic game, video game, Famicom	Console Games		plastic, metal, printed paper	110.1536		
Handheld video game: Nintendo Game Boy Pokémon Blue Version*	Nintendo	1998	Japan	electronic game, video game, Nintendo, Game Boy, electronic game, video game, Nintendo, Game Boy	Handhelds		plastic, printed paper	115.833		Played in English
Handheld video game: Nintendo Game Boy Pocket Monster Training: Blue Version*	Nintendo	1996	Japan	electronic game, video game, Nintendo, Famicom, Game Boy	Handhelds		plastic, printed paper	110.2173		Played in Japanese

Title	Creator	Creation date	Local	Keywords	Type	Collaborator	Medium	Object ID	Credit Line	Other Info
Video game: Nintendo Zelda II: The Adventure of Link	Nintendo	1988	Japan	electronic game, video game, Nintendo, Nintendo Entertainment System	Console Games		plastic, metal	109.6435		
Handheld video game: Nintendo Game Boy Pocket Monsters: Red Version	Nintendo	1995	Japan	electronic game, video game, Nintendo, Famicom, Game Boy	Handhelds		printed paper, plastic	110.21711		
Handheld video game: Nintendo Game Boy Pocket Monster Training: Green Version	Nintendo	1995	Japan	electronic game, video game, Nintendo, Famicom, Game Boy	Handhelds		printed paper, plastic	110.2172		
Handheld video game: Nintendo Game Boy Pocket Monster Training: Yellow Version - Special Pikachu Edition	Nintendo	1998	Japan	electronic game, video game, Nintendo, Famicom, Game Boy	Handhelds		printed paper, plastic	110.2174		
Video game: Nintendo The Legend of Zelda	Nintendo	1987	Japan	electronic game, video game, Nintendo, Nintendo Entertainment System	Console Games		plastic, metal	109.6434		

Title	Creator	Creation date	Local	Keywords	Type	Collaborator	Medium	Object ID	Credit Line	Other Info
Video game: The Ultimate RPG Archives: 12 Award-Winning Role-Playing Games*		1998	United States	electronic game, video game	electronic game, video game		printed paper, plastic	111.46.18		Played in Englsih
Video game: Sega Saturn Croc! Pau-Pau Island - Japanese Edition	Sega	1997	Japan	electronic game, video game, Sega, Sega Saturn	Console Games		plastic, printed paper	114.6213		
Video game: Super Nintendo Entertainment System Final Fantasy III	Nintendo	1994	Japan	electronic game, video game, Nintendo, Super Nintendo Entertainment System, Final Fantasy	Console Games		printed paper, plastic	111.2682		
Video game: Sega Saturn Elf wo Karu Monotachi (Those Who Hunt Elves) - Japanese Edition	Sega	1997	Japan	electronic game, video game, Sega, Sega Saturn	Console Games		plastic, printed paper	114.6017		
Video game: Sega Saturn Elf wo Karu Monotachi II (Those Who Hunt Elves II) - Japanese Edition	Sega	1998	Japan	electronic game, video game, Sega, Sega Saturn	Console Games		plastic, printed paper	114.6018		

Title	Creator	Creation date	Local	Keywords	Type	Collaborator	Medium	Object ID	Credit Line	Other Info
Video game: Nintendo GameCube The Legend of Zelda Collection - Japanese Edition	Nintendo	2004	Japan	electronic game, video game, Nintendo, GameCube	Console Games		plastic, printed paper	114.3113		
Video game: Ultimate Ride: Disney Coaster*		2002	United States	electronic game, video game	PC Games		plastic, printed paper	109.11994		Gift of Warren Buckleitner Played in English

Table 2.2 – Games consulted at The Strong Museum of Play
Own authorship

The research at The Strong National Museum of Play also included search on other types of archives, such as books and reference guides that were focused on the history of videogame development. This material is not commonly available in regular libraries and was crucial for the contextualization of videogame localization. The following table (Table 2.3) of books were consulted:

Title	Author	Call Number
All your base are belong to us: how 50 years of videogames conquered pop culture	Harold Goldberg	GV1469.3 .G65 2011
Bit by bit: how video games transformed our world	Andrew Ervin	GV1469.3 .E78 2017
The video game industry: formation, present state, and future	Peter Zackariasson and Timothy L. Wilson (eds)	HD9993.E452 V53 2012
Before the crash: early video game history	Mark J. P. Wolf (ed)	GV1469.3 .B44 2012
Behind the scenes at Sega: the making of a video game	Nicholas Lavroff	GV1469.33 .L38 1995
Classic home video games, 1972-1984: a complete reference guide	Brett Weiss	GV1469.3 .W47 2007
Console wars: Sega, Nintendo, and the battle that defined a generation	Blake J. Harris	HD9993.E452 H37 2014
Early modernity and video games	Tobias Winnerling and Florian Kerschbaumer (eds)	GV1469.3 .E27 2014
Extra lives: why video games matter	Tom Bissell	GV1469.3 .B55 2010
Finnish video games: a history and catalog	Juho Kuorikoski	GV1469.3 .K83 2015
Game on!: video game history from Pong and Pac-man to Mario, Minecraft, and more	Dustin Hansen	GV1469.3 .H357 2016
History of digital games: developments in art, design and interaction	Andrew Williams	GV1469.3 .W56 2017

Table 2.3 – Books and Reference Guides consulted at The Strong Museum of Play
Own authorship

Section 2.2 Fieldwork

Considering that localization is strongly related to languages, this research aimed initially to investigate videogame localization in two different countries, Brazil and the US, aiming to provide a comparative case study. This strategy has not proven feasible, mainly because the access to actors who are involved in videogame development and localization is very strict. Hence, the fieldwork conducted in Brazil by the participation in two major events, Brazilian Game Show (BGS – São Paulo) in 2017 and the Campus Party (São Paulo) in 2018, focused on describing the Brazilian videogame industry. It is important to highlight that the talks and panels attended in those events were recorded, transcribed and translated into English. Participation in the two events in the US, Pax East 2019 (Boston, Massassuchets) and E3 2019 (Los Angeles, California) focused more specifically on the role of localization for the videogame industry.

Section 2.2.1 Brasil Game Show (São Paulo, 2017)

Brasil Game Show (BGS) is an annual videogame convention held in São Paulo, Brazil. It is considered the biggest one in Latin America in this industry and several publishers and indie developers present their latest releases. The panels on this Convention are usually on videogame industry in a more general sense, but they also offer talks on videogame dubbing and localization. In 2017, BGS happened between October 11th to 15th at the Expo Center Norte, São Paulo. It was the biggest version of this Convention so far, which counted with participants from all over the world, including Hideo Kojima (a famous game developer) and Nolan Bushnell, the creator of the Atari 2600.

During this fieldwork, I conducted the first interview of this research, which focused on gathering the main features of the videogame industry in Brazil, and included questions about localization (the questionnaire is in Attachment I).

This was the only interview conducted during a convention, and there are two reasons for that. The first one was related to accessing important actors during this type of Convention proved to be unfeasible, actors are mainly looking for new business opportunities and are not available for academic interviews. The second one is that the amount of noise from people, machines, and games being played all over the place not only challenges a person to talk to another, but also hinders the microphone capturing ability, impairing any further interview transcriptions.

Attendance to two important panels occurred in the convention. The first was entitled "Successful Cases in Brazil"[36] and "Dubbing Games (Destiny 2's voice actors)".[37] The former occurred on October, 11th 2017, and gathered three representatives from different indie game development studios (CatNigiri, Behold Studios, and Among Giants). They discussed the challenges faced to develop games in Brazil, including the highly technical focus of our undergraduate courses, as well as tax rates, and acceptance of the games from a Brazilian audience. One point highlighted by panelists was that Brazilian players would usually accept a Brazilian game if it had been successful outside Brazil. The second panel (October, 14th 2017) discussed videogame dubbing, presented by the team of voice actors who dubbed the characters from the Destiny game franchise. On this panel, the voice actors presented each character of the upcoming game installment and discussed some of the challenges faced when dealing with videogame dubbing. The major issued raised in this panel was presented in the Introduction of this thesis.

Therefore, the researcher managed to engage with the following actors involved in videogame localization:

Code	Name on Thesis	Role	Company	Origin Country
BGS - 1	Winter	Game Designer	Indie Game Design Company	Brazil
BGS - 2	Tatum	Game Designer	Indie Game Design Company	Brazil
BGS - 3	Carson	Game Designer	Indie Game Design Company	Brazil
BGS - 4	Avery	Localizer	Localization Company	Brazil
BGS - 5	Taylor	Localizer	Localization Company	Brazil

Table 2.4 – Respondents contacted during Brasil Game Show (São Paulo, 2019)
Source: Own Authorship

Section 2.2.2 Campus Party (São Paulo, 2018)

The Campus Party (São Paulo, 2018) fieldwork took place from January, 31st to February, 4th of 2018 at the Anhembi Pavilion, in São Paulo. Campus Party is a convention dedicated to discussing technology in its several aspects, from startup business models, to hacking culture, and videogames. As BGS (São Paulo, 2017), it is also considered the biggest of its kind in Latin America.

During this fieldwork, several panels on the videogame industry were attended, along with some workshops on 3D-Printing and videogame development. Two of them should be addressed in more detail, as they discussed characteristics of the Brazilian videogame industry

[36] Original title: Casos de Sucesso no Brasil
[37] Original title: Dublagem em Games (Dubladores do Destiny 2)

and its potentials. The first panel was entitled Game Development in Brazil.[38] This panel hosted four representatives from indie development studios (Skullfish Studios and Indie WH), and game development schools (GameAudio Academy and Universidade Tecnológica Impacta) discussing videogame development in Brazil. The panel focused on the need of professional training to become a game designer, on the problems faced by indie developers with several game platform algorithms, and the need to address what the player wants in a game instead of creating our own game styles and identities. The panel entitled The Market for Development of Serious Games in Brazil[39] discussed how this niche is still fairly unexplored in Brazil, even though it has potential for it. The panelist discussed how society's gamification is an ongoing process and the development of training and educational games in the country should be addressed more seriously.

Considering the constant noisy and busy environment (similar to the BGS), interviews with on-site videogame localization representatives were not feasible. Therefore, this convention was used both to experiment in game development and also to approach future contacts who work in the industry. The experience in coding and videogame development was fundamental for the analysis of the role of videogame localization in the game development process. In addition, the participation in these two events drew the conclusion that videogame localization and its process is not an issue addressed in such environments.

The other two pieces of fieldwork were at PAX East (Boston, 2019) and E3 (Los Angeles, 2019) and showed to be different to the ones in Brazil. One issue relates to the stage of the research, which was more advanced, and included a resigned questionnaire (see Attachment II). As a result, the data were gathered in this fieldwork.

Section 2.2.3 Pax East (Boston, 2019)

PAX East (Boston, 2019) occurred between March 28th to 31st, 2019 in Boston, Massachusetts. Due to budget constraints, the researcher could only be in the field during the first day. It is important to notice that all the fieldwork done in conventions had the tickets paid by the researcher, as the organization of those conventions refused to provide a ticket. Several videogame publishers that participated in the event brought their employees to work at PAX East (Boston, 2019), which enabled access to them and querying about videogame localization, as well as getting possible contacts for future interviews.

[38] Original title: Desenvolvimento de Jogos no Brasil
[39] Original title: O Mercado de Desenvolvimento de Serious Games no Brasil

For the convention, it was decided to focus on contacts on the publishers available at the convention. It does not mean that I did not have contact with indie developers, as I wanted to know if the scene of indie development in Brazil and US were alike regarding localization practices. Moreover, because two indie developer companies from Brazil - who were contacted at BGS (São Paulo, 2017) - were at PAX East (Boston, 2019) and the contact was done in order to give them some feedback on the research development. The people contacted during this fieldwork were asked the following questions:

1 – Does your company localize its games? If so, to which languages?

2 – Do you have your own localization team or do you use third party companies?

3 – How do you assure the quality of the localization, as both publishers and developers not always know the language the game is being localized in?

4 – Can you describe to me how the localization process is done?

5 – How does one manage to keep the authenticity of the game on its localized versions?

Not all those questions were always asked, as it depended on the willingness of the respondents to talk to me during the convention. All of them were asked, at least, the first two questions, along with one asking for the contact both of the respondents and from the third-party localization companies, if they could send them to me. If the person seemed to be engaged in the conversation, the other questions were asked. As those were informal conversations, none of them were recorded, but all the information given was noted just after the conversation ended, when the researcher was already away from the respondent.

The industry's actors were approached by engaging with the games' developers who were presenting, and by the booth's information desks. This allowed access to 13 respondents, following the strategy to contact small companies and then large ones. The results of these approaches were that it was managed to get 13 respondents during the convention.

The respondents from PAX East (Boston, 2019) were the following (Table 2.5):

Code	Name on Thesis	Role	Company	Origin Country
PAX - 1	Parker	Manager	Videogame Publisher	US
PAX - 2	Phoenix	Game Designer	Indie Game Design Company	US
PAX - 3	Marin	Manager	Videogame Publisher	Germany
PAX - 4	London	Manager	Videogame Publisher	Germany
PAX - 5	Winter	Game Designer	Indie Game Design Company	Brazil
PAX - 6	Quinn	Manager	Videogame Publisher	Japan
PAX - 7	Ricky	Game Designer	Indie Game Design Company	US
PAX - 8	Shannon	Consultant	Videogame Publisher	US
PAX - 9	Shay	Manager	Videogame Publisher	Germany
PAX - 10	Tanner	Manager	Videogame Publisher	US
PAX - 11	Whitney	No information given or found	Videogame Publisher	US

Table 2.5 – Respondents contacted during PAX East (Boston, 2019)
Source: Own Authorship

Section 2.2.4 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) (Los Angeles, 2019)

E3 (Los Angeles) occurred from June 11th to the 13th of 2019 and it is a business-oriented event dedicated to the latest releases. It was a difficult convention to talk to people, as they were already involved with business meetings. Even with this challenge, several contacts and short conversations were held during the event, opening up the possibility for future interviews. Table 2.6 lists the respondents contacted at E3:

Code	Name on Thesis	Role	Company	Origin Country
E3 - 1	Kai	Manager	Videogame Publisher	Japan
E3 - 2	Jackie	Manager	Videogame Publisher	Japan
E3 - 3	Joe	Manager	Videogame Publisher	United States
E3 - 4	Leslie	Data Scientist	Videogame Publisher	Sweden
E3 - 5	Morgan	No information given or found	Videogame Hardware Producer	United States
E3 - 6	Adrian	No information given or found	Videogame Publisher	Japan
E3 - 7	Blair	Manager	Videogame Publisher	Poland
E3 - 8	Owen	Producer	Videogame Publisher	Poland

Table 2.6 – Respondents contacted during E3 (Los Angeles, 2019)
Source: Own Authorship

As in the case of Pax East (Boston, 2019), I created a series of pitch questions[40] to be able to talk to the respondents in a more structured way. The pitch questions were now based

[40] Short, but open-ended questions that allows one to remember them by heart and manages to gather all the information needed.

on both questionnaires designed for the research (see Attachment 2) and the following questions were formulated:

1 – What is your work experience in the field?

2 – What is videogame localization? What is its role in the industry? (today and past)

3 – Can you describe to me the localization process and the decision-making process?

4 – To which languages do you localize? Do you use freelancers? How is quality assured?

5 – Can you tell me which cultural elements are important for localization? Are there changes in-game? Role of laws?

6 – What is the role of the user's review on localization? Do you update localization work?

7 – Do you discuss questions of authenticity of the games during localization? What is the role of it when localizing the game?

Compared to the pitch questions asked at Pax East 2019, these were more related to semi-structured interview questionnaires, and allowed longer conversations with the respondents, as more time was available.

During this convention, only one panel was attended to. The following information describes the summary:

Gaming Inside the Story: Single-Player Narrative in VR, hosted by Troy Baker[41]

Join us for a conversation on single-player narrative and its evolution in gaming. Drawing on insights from their various roles as game developer, creative director, publisher, and voice actor, Jason, Ru, and Troy will reflect on how virtual reality is reimagining the genre with breakthrough titles like Lone Echo and the upcoming sequel, Lone Echo II.

This panel was chosen after a conversation I had with Assistant Professor James Wilson Malazita, who stated that localization panels were rarely made, but the theme was usually discussed on the narrative ones. Of course, more panels were chosen to be attended, but they were either canceled last minute or I was talking to a new respondent at the time they began.

In this context, it is important to discuss some of this field's limitations, as it might have influenced its results. First, the researcher managed to acquire only a Gamer's pass as a ticket for the convention, as the Industry badge costs more than US$ 600.00 for the event. The

[41] Source: https://www.e3expo.com/e3-coliseum, accessed June 20th 2019.

Gamer's badge allowed access to the convention only for three days and for a limited time, besides not allowing access to all parts of the convention.

Second, studying the size of the venue where the convention is held and knowing from following YouTube channels that address the E3 Convention, it was known that there were booths outside this venue. Therefore, it was decided that the fieldwork would require some strategizing and organization on where the research would be by each day

Third, some formal interview kits were also taken to the convention. This decision was made when a complete floor plan of E3 (Los Angeles, 2019) was released and, according to it, the convention would feature eight localization companies. Unfortunately, when the researcher arrived at E3 (Los Angeles, 2019), those companies were nowhere to be found and the publishers did not bring their localization staff, except for Sega.

The last limitation of this field was the availability of people willing or who could talk. Most of them claimed that they were fully booked for the convention. The majority of small and medium-sized publishers seemed interested to participate in my research. The big publishers had different approaches to the research request. Most of the big companies only took the researcher's business card and stated that they would send it to the ones responsible. By the time this thesis was written, none of them had been in touch with the researcher.

Section 2.3 Interviews

The last methodology used for this research was conducting skype interviews with videogame localizers and localization managers from the companies that responded to my email contacts. The interviews were semi-structured and designed according to the role of the interviewee. The Ethics Committee approved it with the process number: 84249818.4.0000.8142. The questionnaires are available in Attachment 2 of this thesis and the Consent Forms were translated into English and signed by all the interviewees. During this research, there were seven interviews, as shown in Table 2.7.

Code	Name on Thesis	Role	Company	Origin Country
INT - 1	Addison	Game Designer	Indie Game Design Company	Brazil
INT - 2	Archer	Localizer	Localization Company	Belarus
INT - 3	Bailey	Localization Manager	Videogame Publisher	Germany
INT - 4	Evan	Localization Manager	Videogame Publisher	United Kingdom
INT - 5	Finley	Localization Manager	Videogame Publisher	Sweden
INT - 6	Hayden	Localizer	Freelancer	Spain
INT - 7	Jaime	Localizer	Localization Company	Russia

Table 2.7 – Interviewees
Source: Own Authorship

The interviews were conducted via Skype, which was also used for recording them. All interviewees chose the date appropriate and time for the interview, which lasted 45 minutes on average, and all the recordings were fully transcribed. The transcriptions were sent back to the interviewees upon request and included in the analysis of this thesis after their consent. The data analysis followed the criteria of sorting interview answers into the research questions, the same applied to reports for fieldworks.

It is important also to say that Hayden's interview was not as formal as the other ones. The localizer did not have enough time but wanted to participate in the research. In this case, I sent them the questions and they were answered in a .doc file. Moreover, Archer, Bailey, and Finley requested me to send both the question and consent forms beforehand so they could discuss their participation in the research with the companies' lawyers and intellectual property responsible. This request was attended followed by the approval of their companies to participate in the research.

Finally, all the names of people changed into gender-neutral ones and companies' names were suppressed during the anonymization process. There was also some editing in the interview's extracts, aimed at excluding only speech pauses, content was kept identical.

Chapter 3

Are Dunwall's industries working or were they consumed by the Plague?[42]

Creative Industry and Videogame Industry

This chapter aims to introduce the videogame industry as a creative industry. It discusses the definition and organization of creative industries, and how the videogame industry corresponds to them. It also highlights the main characteristics of the videogame industry, focusing on the role of localization.

Section 3.1 The Creative Industry

Society nowadays is increasingly based on knowledge, which makes creativity a strategic resource for its development (DEFILLIPI *et al*, 2007: 11). The creative industry concept was used for the first time in 1999 by the British Department of Culture, Media and Sports in a document entitled Creative Industries Mapping Document.[43] According to this report, creative industries are those which use talents, creativity, and individual skills, and have the potential of exploring Intellectual Property Rights (HARTLEY *et al*, 2013: 58-59).

The concept was developed and used in a public policy. This policy aimed at mapping an industry, and it also generated an academic debate concerning its theme. It is related to the definition of creativity. According to Jones *et al* (2015: 2), creativity is the process of generating something new from what already exists, an experimental and highly uncertain activity. This definition ties the concept of creativity to spontaneity, creating a paradox for creative industries. After all, an industry would require a constant flow of new products and, as creativity is a spontaneous process, creative industries would paradoxically need a constant flow of new, creative ideas (COHEDENT *et al*, 2014; DEFILIPPI *et al*, 2007).

Another scholarly discussion on the concept of creative industry focuses on how to characterize and identify its related sectors. The Creative Industries Mapping Document (1998) includes 13 sectors, which are: architecture, arts and antiquities, software, electronic games, marketing, design, crafts, fashion, movies, music, TV and radio, performing arts, and publishing (HARTLEY *et al*, 2013: 59). According to Jones *et al* (2015: 5), the debate on which industries

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[42] This title is an homage to the *Dishonored* franchise (Arkane Studios & Bethesda Softworks, 2012), a game which is set on a fictional city called Dunwall, that was devastated by a plague. However, it is also a memory: this PhD thesis is being revised during the COVID-19 outbreak, when many people are quarantined, and while Brazil's Pantanal and Amazon burst in flames due to criminal fires started by plantation farmers.

[43] Documents available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-mapping-documents-1998, accessed on March 20th, 2020.

are part of creative industries address mainly fine arts, cultural heritage, and information technology, as they base their value on exploring intellectual property.

According to Jones *et al* (2015), videogames belong to this broader concept in two different ways: using creativity to create new products and also the way this industry changes. These changes have two dimensions, comprising semiotics and its material base. The first one is related to the symbolic nature in which artists can give meaning to their jobs and the audience interprets it. As seen in Chapter 1, this discussion is crucial for this research. After all, meaning and intentionality of a game are tied to authenticity discussions and to how localizers can understand, adapt and translate them. The second way in which the videogame industry changes is called the material base. It is not only restricted to the materials used to produce the products, but it also includes technology and social-technical systems that allow the consumption and production of those goods. Changes in the creative industry are given by the interaction among those two dimensions and categorized into four groups.

Regarding videogames, Jones *et al* (2015) classify its changes as Transformations, in which there are fast changes at the material base – related to advancements in hardware and software technology - and slow ones in the semiotic one. The scholars address four factors that explain those characteristics:

1. Audience expectations are restricted to certain accepted genre, making companies produce games in those genres and creating franchises with a low risk of being unsuccessful.
2. Entertainment companies tend to focus on projects with a lower budget and quality to fill market needs, pressuring peripheral members of the industry to work harder, faster, and at lower costs.
3. The benefits of hybridization, a consequence of globalization, has become a challenge for mass markets, as semiotic symbols are not equally received in all countries.
4. Different government policies can change market development, which does not effectively evolve.

Creative industries are characterized by engaging in the experimental use of technology, by developing new content and applications, and by creating new business models. It might not be the main source for the economic growth of a country, but it can be considered a way to change what is considered normal in business practices, fostering economic growth. It also enables changes in a society, as it coordinates social and individual structures that are formed when those industries grow (HARTLEY *et al*, 2013). It is important to notice that not only the

industry as a whole allows the society to reshape itself, as every process in the industry also contributes to it. This is the case of videogame localization, as it is a process inside the videogame industry that can allow users to create new views of their worlds and subjectivities.

Section 3.2 Videogame Industry as a Creative Industry

Videogames are, therefore, part of the creative industry. Regarding changes at the material base, one can consider the fast development of consoles from the end of the 1970s to the announcement of the eighth generation of consoles, with Xbox One X (2017). In almost 50 years of development, games evolved from a few pixels and sounds on a screen – as in River Raid (Figure 3.1) – to games with digital sounds, human voices, and realistic graphics, such as in the Uncharted franchise (Figure 3.2) (MENDES, 2013).

Figure 3.1 – River Raid (1982) Printscreen
Source: http://www.atari2600.com.br/Midia/Atari/Roms/000675.gif, accessed March, 11th 2017

Figure 3.2 – Uncharted 4: A Thief's End (2016) Printscreen
Source: https://img.game.co.uk/ml2/5/0/0/3/500321_scr2_a.png, accessed March, 11th 2017

However, one cannot argue the same on the semiotic codes involved in videogame narratives. After all, there are games such as *Mario Bros.* (Nintendo, 1988 -) and *The Legend of Zelda* (Nintendo, 1991) that always have the same narrative: the damsel in distress trope.

Indie games[44] have more freedom when dealing with semiotic codes, as they are creating their own games as they are not related to either big publishers or big franchises. However, their market is not as wide as the big franchises.[45] This is the case of *Stardew Valley* (Sickhead Games, 2016), an indie game released in 2016, which allows your character to get married both in a straight and in an homoaffective relationship. In this sense, changes into semiotic codes in videogames are usually tied to the success of games that are not in the mainstream lore – such as Triple-A franchises. Some of these indie games become great successes that enable big game publishers to rethink the semiotic codes they include in their games. The localization of these codes plays a major part in the industry, as localizers, developers, and publishers need to assure that the semiotic code they are addressing in the game is well received in the targeted culture's realms.

Section 3.2.1 Value and productive chains in the videogame industry

It is important to contextualize the structure and main features of the videogame industry and what the role of localization is. The concept of dynamic capabilities is introduced and explores how the industry changes. It is followed by a discussion on how the videogame industry is structured.

The videogame industry has highly specific characteristics and demands. This pushes companies to developed dynamic capabilities, which relates to how companies achieve and maintain competitive advantages (TECEE *et al*, 1997). In other words, dynamic capabilities are "(...) the firm's ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments" (TECEE *et al*, 1997: 516).

There are many steps used to study the strategic management of a business through the dynamic capabilities approach. The first step is to identify which are the distinct and difficult-to-replicate advantages that can be built, maintained, or improved by a company. A basic method for doing so is to identify what is considered strategic for a certain company, which is it unique, difficult to replicate, and useful for the end-user (TECEE *et al*, 1997). There are several dimensions of a firm to be acknowledged in order to identify its distinct capacities and, according to Tecee *et al* (1997), those dimensions should be categorized into: process, positions,

[44] Indie games are those created by developers not contracted by big publishers. It is an acronym that stands for Independent Development.

[45] Stardew Valley 92016), for example, is an indie game that sold 3.5 million copies (Source: https://venturebeat.com/2018/01/19/superdata-stardew-valley-is-an-indie-success-with-over-3-5-million-copies-sold/, accessed May, 7th 2018). AAA game franchises are sold on a greater scale: Uncharted – as a franchise – sold more than 40 million copies (https://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2017-12-11-uncharted-series-sales-passes-41-million, accessed May, 7th 2018). Therefore, indie games' spread is much more restricted than the AAA.

and trajectories. Process refers to the organizational and managerial procedures carried out by the firm, and have three main goals: coordination/integration, learning, and reconfiguration/transformation. Positions are defined by the assets of a firm related to knowledge difficulty to be shared, relational and reputational assets – such as technologies, financial and structural assets.

A company that manages to build a competitive advantage can only profit from it if the assets, routines, and abilities are difficult to imitate. In this context, processes such as replication[46] and imitation[47] must be difficult to replicate (TECEE *et al*, 1997). Dynamic capabilities, then, is a relevant concept for studying the videogame industry. After all, characteristics that are difficult to replicate are related to playability, art style, and narrative available in the games produced. Those characteristics are used to create brands by publishers and developers. However, one might also include localization practices in these features, as each company can use them to decide where each of their games will sell, in which language, and can also create their own styles for localizing a game, making it a difficult-to-replicate practice that can ensure market success to companies.

The videogame industry production chain can be divided into two parts. On one hand, there is hardware development, responsible for developing and producing the consoles and accessories, such as controllers, memory card, and virtual reality (VR) sets. On the other, there is software development, which not only develops games, but also the operational systems which can make the games playable (see IBJD, 2014 B; LIMA, 2016).

[46] Transferring competences to another economic context (TECEE *et al*, 1997).
[47] When a competitor imitates what one company is doing (TECEE *et al*, 1997).

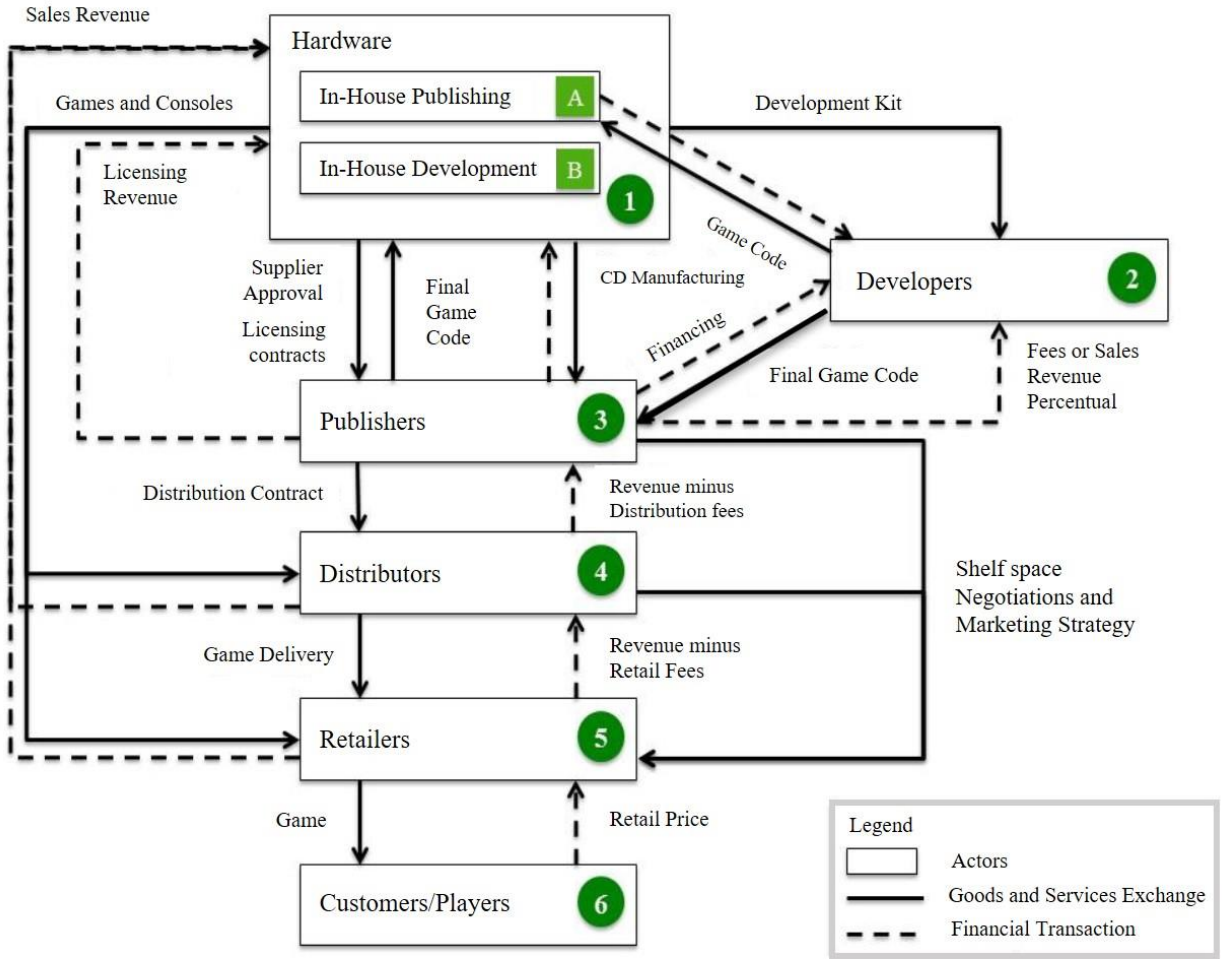

Figure 3.3 – Videogame Industry Production Chain
Source: IBJD, 2014 B: 53- Translated by me

Figure 3.3 represents a chain in which the arrows in bold show exchanges in information, products, or services, while the dashed ones represent financial transactions. Sales are related to physical media, such as games on CDs and cartridges. These sales represesented 40% of the total sales in 2006 (IBJD, 2014 B: 54).

Videogame development starts by developing hardware and software for the consoles (Number 1 in Figure 3.3). This development aims at establishing the market differentiation[48] of the product and also creates networks among console producers, publishers (Number 3 in Figure 3.3) and game distributors (Number 4 in Figure 3.3). Publishers, then, start the developing process for the new console, using development studios (Number 2 in Figure 3.3), creating their own distribution chain. Both publishers and developing companies are responsible for marketing their games. The distributors are responsible for contacting and distributing the

[48] This means both the graphics and sound quality a console can have, but also the kind of experience the console can provide to the user. E.g. Virtual Reality headsets used for the PlayStation 4 (2013), or the use of augmented reality and console handheld portability, as the Nintendo Switch (2017).

games among retailers (Number 5 in Figure 3.3), which sells the games and consoles to the final customers (Number 6 in Figure 3.3) (IBJD, 2014 B: 53-54; LIMA, 2016: 58-109).

In a more detailed discussion, the videogame productive chain begins by hardware development, which develops and produces the material part of the videogames, such as consoles and accessories. Hardware also develops the operating system of the console, which is responsible for creating an interface for the end-user's interaction with the console, allowing it to execute the games developed for it. Besides that, a newer generation of consoles[49] allow other media to be played on it (such as movies in DVDs and Blurays), as well as allowing music and video streaming applications to run on it. However, game compatibility is still something that maintains old consoles still relevant, as games released will only work in specific consoles, with rare cases of retrocompatibility[50] (LIMA, 2016: 64).

Publishers have a crucial role in the videogame industry, as they are responsible for creating bridges between the game developers[51] and console manufacturers. They are also responsible for licensing intellectual properties with the companies who hold the rights to commercially explore characters from other media, such as movies, TV series, and animation.[52] Publishers, then, hold a large and complex role in the videogame industry. As summarized by Lima (2016: 70):

> "a) managing the relationship with platform owners (…);
> b) Funding, with resource for developers (…);
> c) Intermediate for using intellectual property (…);
> d) Royalty payments to developers per unit sold (…);
> e) Managing and marketing, including pricing, payment for translation and adaptation of videogames to other countries and cultures (called localization), storage management, and creation of graphical elements such as box design (…);
> f) Market study (…); and
> g) Negotiating with distributers and retailers (…)". (Translated by me)[53]

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[49] Here considering consoles from the sixth-generation on, such as the Xbox (Microsoft, 2002), PlayStation 2 (Sony – 2000) and Dreamcast (Sega – 1998).

[50] Retrocompatibility is a term used to address the possibility of games designed to run in platforms different than the the newer ones. In this sense, a game developed for the Xbox 360 (2005) can work in its successor, the Xbox One (2013), since this second one has the compatibility for this.

[51] The developers that publishers use to produce their games can be either their own developing team, called in-house development, or they can negotiate and contract a third-party company (LIMA, 2016: 67-68).

[52] For example, Take Two Entertainment which uses the Lego franchise and several other pop-culture characters – such as Harry Potter, Start Wars and the Avengers – in its games. Source: http://www.ttgames.com/games/, accessed April, 18th 2019.

[53] Original: "a) A gerência dos relacionamentos com os donos das plataformas (...); b) O financiamento, com antecipação de recursos para os desenvolvedores (...); c) O intermediação (SIC) para uso da propriedade intelectual (...); d) O pa*gamen*to de *royalties* por unidade vendida aos desenvolvedores (...); e) O gerenciamento e o marketing dos jogos, incluindo a precificação, o pa*gamen*to da tradução e da adaptação de jogos para outros países e culturas

Considering governance in the videogames production chain, one might consider that the publishers act as a link that ties together several actors in the industry. This grants the publisher a good deal of decision power, as it becomes the company who will decide which games will be released, where, in which language, and who will be able to sell them (LIMA, 2016: 80). Besides this, publishers are also responsible for redistributing revenues in the production chain, as retailers send their revenue to the publishers who redistribute them to the console producers, content distributor, and the developer team (IBDJ, 2014 B: 54).

Game retailing is characterized in two ways. The first one is through physical media, in which a game can be acquired in different media, such as CDs, DVDs, Blurays, and cartridges. The second type of retailing is digital distribution. In this case, gamers acquire a digital copy of the games, which are downloaded into their consoles and PCs before being played. Digital sales in gaming are more common, both because of a wider broad-band internet access and also because the digital copies of the games are cheaper. Digital game distribution is also changing the relationship between developers, publishers, and console producers, as developers can now release their games independently on game selling platforms such as Steam[54] (LIMA, 2016).

Developers are companies responsible for game development, from the original concepts to programming and final testing so the game can be released. According to Tschang & Vang (2008), game development can be done by the publisher's own developing team, and this is called in-house development. Publishers can also hire third-party development studios to develop their game ideas. The opposite is also true, as developing companies can create ideas for their games and they search for a publisher to fund it. According to Lima (2016: 68), developers have two different sources for revenues. The first of them is a publisher financing a game to be developed. The second one is related to royalties and licensing games that were released and sold.

Finally, distributors are responsible for distributing consoles and games to retailers to make them available to consumers (IBJD, 2014 B: 53-43). Although the production chain is present in the videogame industry, still valid in some aspects, changes are happening to it. After all, "(...) the progressive shift to online gaming has introduced new methods of distribution and has begun to recognize the functions and dynamics of interaction between actors on each of the

(chamada de localização), a gestão de estoques, e a criação dos elementos gráficos como o design da embalagem (...); e) A condução de estudos de mercado (...); e g) A negociação com distribuidores e varejistas (...)".

[54] Steam is a game selling platform created in 2002 by Valve game publisher. Gamers buy the games available and they are accessible through a library. To play them, those games needs to be downloaded and installed at the computer. Console productors such as Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft now all have their own selling platforms.

different levels of the value chain" (GONZÁLEZ-PIÑERO, 2017: 23). The change in game distribution has created changes in the production chain, as shown in Figure 3.4:

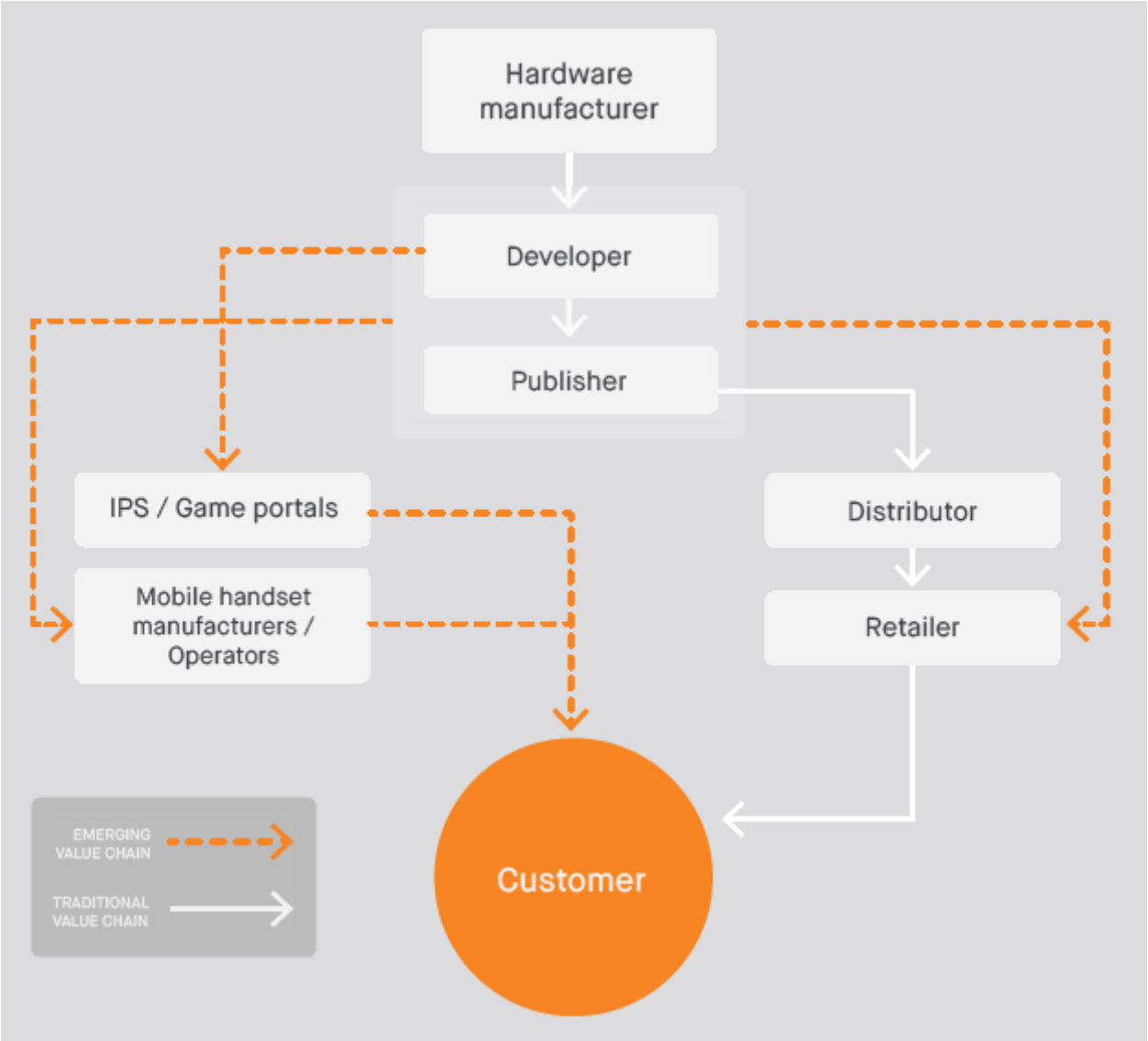

Figure 3.4 – New configuration of the productive chain in the videogame industry
Source: González-Piñero, 2017: 24

When comparing Figures 3.3 and 3.4, the role of the distributors and retailers has changed from a central to a peripheral position. At the same time, game portals, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and mobile services are competing for a more central role in the production chain. This process, as González-Piñero (2017: 23) stated, is called re-intermediation. It is characterized as the videogame distribution being carried by ISPs and game portals. This new form of distribution is changing the relationship between developers, publishers and end-users.

This change in the production chain is crucial to understanding the expansion of localization in games. Customers/Players now have a different way to create relations with publishers and developers, as the contact between them is more direct, both because players use

the internet to provide feedback, criticize and require changes in games (including language) and also because retailers lost their central role in the production chain. This has made publishers and developers pay more attention and have wider access to critics, requirements, and evaluations of their products, allowing them to better adapt to local needs where the player/user is located.

These recent changes and new dynamics at place in the videogame industry brings the main argument of this thesis to the fore: considering the closer relationship between publishers, developers, and players, the role of localization becomes essential and its role needs to be further investigated. This relationship is given in different forms: i) Reviews, in which players analyze several aspects such as game content, enjoyment, localization efficacy; ii) Forum participation, which allows the player to report game bugs, and localization problems, and the publisher usually use this data frequently (see Chapter 5); and iii) Quality Assurance test, in which game companies pay players to play unreleased games in order to test them and report any kinds of problems. Game stories nowadays are becoming more complex, and cultural nuances can change their meanings, and companies need to make sure their products are consumed worldwide. Therefore, companies have started to invest higher amounts of resources (both financial and human) in order to ensure that the relationship between those three elements – developers, publishers, and players – is the best possible.

This idea corresponds completely with the discussions held in the previous chapter. Hence, the capacity of developing complex narrative games today can potentially have cultural nuances that can either break the player's immersion in the game or make her/him misunderstand the meaning of the game due to cultural differences. In this sense, the question of localizing meanings, while still keeping the authentic "feel" of the game, is a challenge imposed by the new dynamics of the industry. The "controlled multitude" and Spivak's (1994) discussion on subaltern speaking are both inspiring in this argument. After all, resistance from players and their demand in getting the products that exactly fit their expectation and needs have forced companies to rethink their developing processes, adding localization as an essential part of them (E3-2, INT-3, INT-4, INT-5). Chapter 4 will discuss in more detail how publishers realized the potential of this new relationship between them, the developers and players, and used localization as a way to cope with it.

Section 3.3 Beyond the production chain: videogame industry's product characterization

The industry was characterized by its production chain, dynamic capabilities, and through a wider context of the creative industry. However, it is still important to consider the

videogame industry through the products it creates and to discuss how localization practices are related to it. We first discuss the nature of the products created by the industry, this is followed by the debate on revenue sources at the videogame industry.

Regarding videogames, we find more than one classification: the hardware used to play, difficulty level, genre, and game mode are definitions used to characterize the products from the videogame industry. However, it is important to highlight that games can be characterized in more than one category, which creates other categories than the ones presented here. The M.O.B.A category is one of them. It stands for Massive Online Battle Arena and it is used to describe games such as *Fortnite* (Epic Games, 2017) and *Player's Unknown Battlegrounds* (PUBG - Bluehole Studio, 2017). The already cited *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End* (Naughty Dogs, 2016) is an exclusive game to PlayStation 4, of the action/shooting genre, played by only one person. Therefore, it is important to present at least the basic categories. The following figure (Figure 3.5) systematizes several possibilities used to describe a game:

Figure 3.5 – Videogame Categories
Source: LIMA, 2016: 93 – Translated by me)

There are seven basic categories for a game. They are (LIMA, 2016: 94-109):

1 – Connectivity: if a game has to be connected to the internet to be played or not;

2 – Distribution: a game can be acquired in several ways, using different media. Therefore, a game can be sold in a physical media (Blu-Rays, DVDs, Cartridges) at a local or internet store, or buy it in an internet-based retailer and obtain a key that will allow you to download the game to play it (as already discussed in Section 3.2.1 of this thesis);

3 – Difficulty Level: it is related to how difficult a game is and, commonly, the players her/himself can alter in games' settings. This empowers the users into choosing if the experience they want to have in their game is easier or more difficult, but also allows them to adjust the game according to their abilities;

4 – Game mode: this is how a game can be played, if either a single-player, two local or more players in a cooperative (Co-Op) or competitive modes, Online and Massive Multiplayer Online (when several players play the same online game, also known as M.M.O.);

5 – Parental Rating: the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) was funded in 1994 to establish a new way to sort games based on their contents, allowing the consumer to know about their contents – such as violence, guns, blood, etc. - before acquiring them; they also indicate the age appropriateness of that game;

6 – Game Genre: as in the movie industry, videogames can be categorized into different genres that categorize the main aspects of them;

7 – Platforms: this describes where a game can be played, whether consoles, handheld consoles, PC Games, Mobile (for Tablets and Smartphones), Cloud Games and Digital TV;

It is common for a game to be categorized in more than one of those groups, which can also include other categories, such as the languages (sound and/or subtitle) a game is available in. In this case, localization practices are acknowledged even before a game is purchased, and, as will be seen in the following chapters, it helps the games to be sold. This is useful for a consumer to have a better idea of what kind of product she/he is acquiring, even though the contents of the game itself are not disclosed. Besides that, a game can also be characterized in more than one of the subgroups presented in Figure 3.5, as it is common for AAA Games to be released into more than one kind of platform (IBJD, 2014 B).

Taking these characteristics into account, we find data on what types of games are played and where, in which language and/or difficulty level and at which profile. This is widely used by developers and publishers for decision-making processes to keep or discontinue franchises and in which areas to invest. The I Censo da Indústria Brasileira de Jogos Digitais (2014 – 1st Brazilian Digital Game Industry Census) provided relevant data, as presented in Figure 3.6.

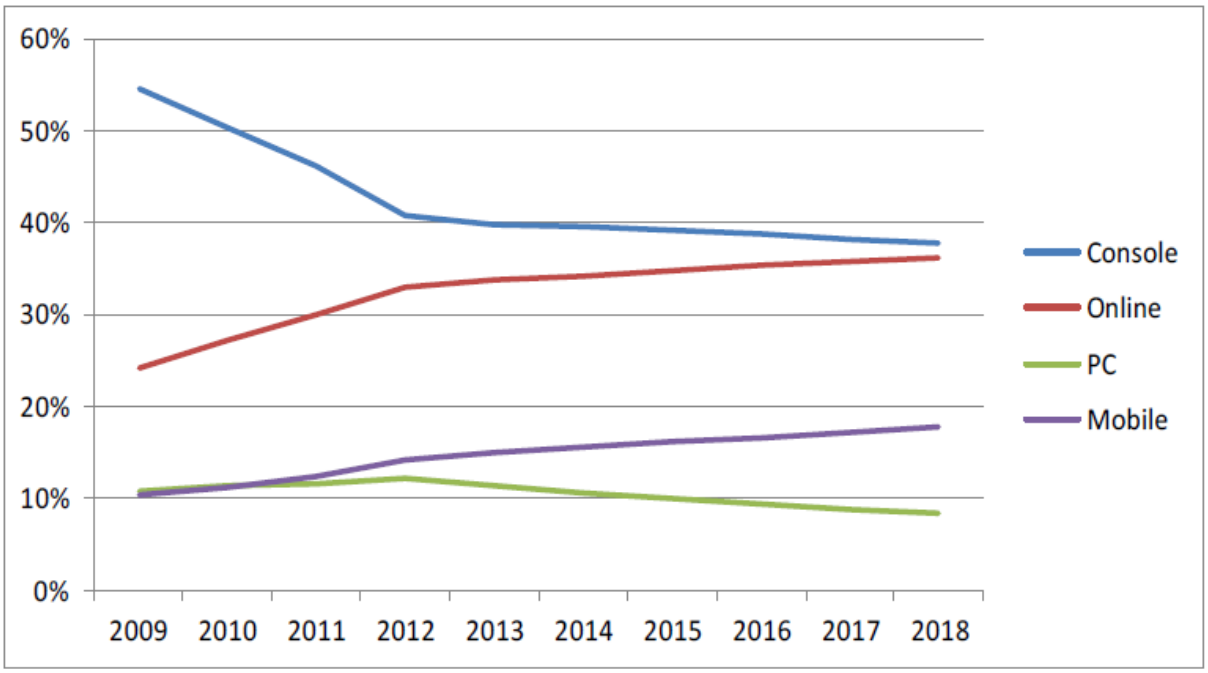

Figure 3.6 – Income Evolution on Different Game Platform in the World
Source: IBJD, 2014 B: 37

We have found an increase in revenues for online and mobile games in recent years, which does not mean necessarily that the traditional markets in the videogame industry (such as console and PC gaming) are in decline (see Section 3.4 for a further discussion on this). First, because several online games are played in consoles and PCs, and also because the games played in these systems are usually the most complex and expensive to be developed. This results in a more costly product to the consumer and creates a limited player base that is committed to play, differently from causal games[55] (IBJD, 2014 B: 37-38). Considering these main features of the industry, this research will focus on videogames released for consoles and PCs. They are games that are the most complex and this usually requires the publisher to invest in localization practices to guarantee sales around the world.

The discussion on the economic growth of the videogame industry can also be related to the localization process. According to Chandler and Deming (2012:1):

> "The computer and video game industry continues to grow each year, and much of this growth can be attributed to the availability of international versions of the games. These versions include games localized for distribution into a variety of regions, including the United States, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East".

[55] Casual games are games developed for users to play in casual situations and do not require a great deal of investment of time or money for one to enjoy the game. Source: https://www.computerhope.com/jargon/c/casual-gaming.htm, accessed on March, 23rd 2020.

In addition, it is important to characterize the products of the videogame industry accordingly to its market structure. Firstly, hardware sales such as consoles, PCs, and other gaming accessories were responsible for less than one-fifth of videogame sales in the US. In 2018, from the US$ 36 billion dollars consumed in the videogame industry, approximately US$ 7 billion were for hardware and software and US$ 29.1 billion for content (ESA, 2018: 10). Besides the hardware market, the market for the games themselves have two possible income models, summarized in Figure 3.7.

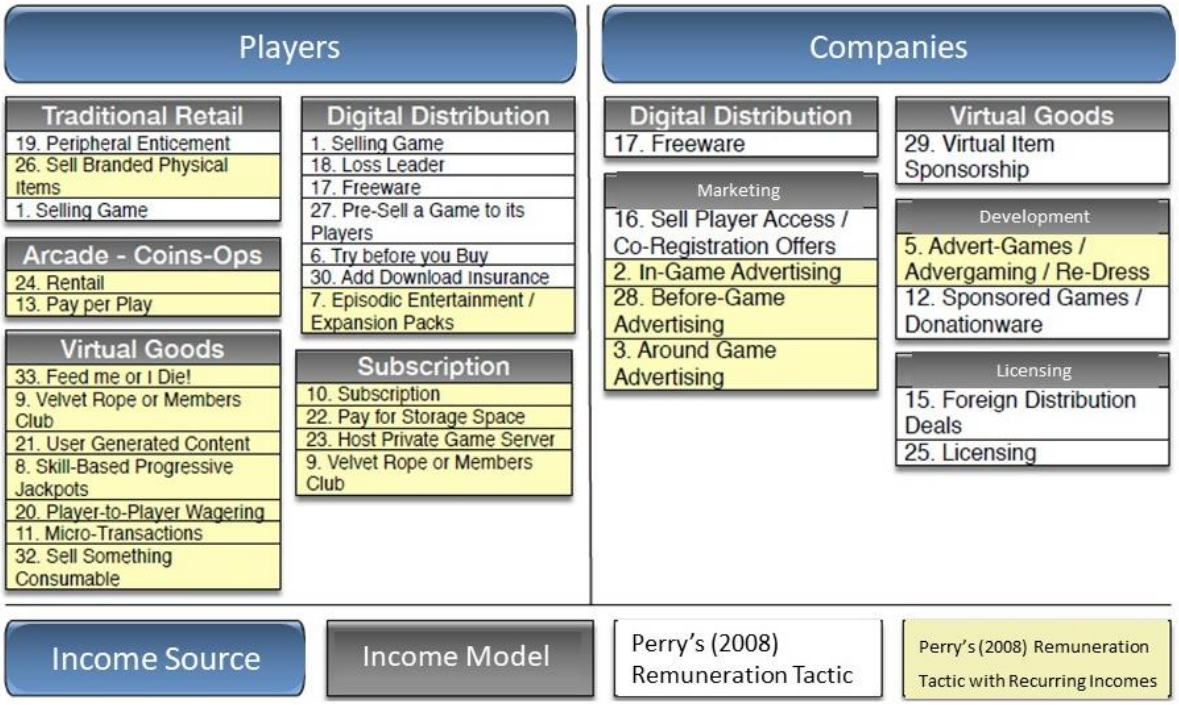

Figure 3.7 – Income Models
Source: LIMA, 2016: 84 – Translated by me

Income in the videogame industry has two different sources: the players themselves and the companies. In the first case (LIMA, 2016:84-91), games can be acquired traditionally, by buying a copy of them in physical media, along with accessories that vary from special edition controllers to t-shirts (items 1, 19 and 26 of Figure 3.7).

The videogame industry's income with a player-based source has five different models. The first one is the arcade income model. It has two different income possibilities: either the players pay for each time she/he plays or they rent for the games they want to play for a limited period (items 13 and 24 of Figure 3.7). Regarding the case of digital distribution of games, consumers can buy an original and digital copy of the game, and also acquire other downloadable content, such as expansion packs and special skins for the game's avatars (item 7 of Figure 3.7); they can also get a free demonstration version of the game before deciding to buy it or not (item 6 of Figure 3.7); or the developers can opt for the Loss Leader strategy (item

18 of Figure 3.7), in which they sell the game for a very low price so the profit comes from other sources such as selling toys and accessories attached to the game's brand.

Still considering the income models based on the players, there is a subscription model, in which players pay monthly fees so they are able to play (item 10 of Figure 3.7). There is also the possibility of creating environments, more data space, or game items that can only be accessed by users who pay for the game (items 9,10, 22, and 23 of Figure 3.7). Finally, there is also the possibility of selling virtual goods (items 8, 9, 11, 20, 21, 32, and 33 of Figure 3.7). These models allow the players to sell goods to each other, create new content for the game, and the publisher or developing company would charge a small fee for these transactions. Some games have consumable items that can be exchanged among the players either for in-game currency or by other items, and publishers/developers create online trading forums for them. Players might also create content for the game. This practice is called modding and happens in two different ways (PORETSKI & ARAZY, 2017). Creators create mods for games independently, changing game files to create different assets for a game (e.g. different character skins or non-official translations) or publishers/developers create development tools that allow players to create. The use of these creations might be charged by the publishers/developers. *Doom* (id Software, 1993) is a good example of the former model, and *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Bethesda Game Studios, 2011) exemplifies the second model.

Regarding the income originated for companies (LIMA, 2016: 91-93), they can distribute some free copies of the games to market their brand. Besides, they can also order a game to be developed by a professional team so they market their brand through a videogame – as the case of Sneak King, a Burger King game released in 2006 for Xbox 360 – or the companies can also pay game developers to market their brands in games that are being developed by them. Companies can also become local distributors games in physical media and hardware, profiting with licensing fees.

Section 3.4 Industry Data

Understanding how the industry works nowadays is fundamental to understand the role localization practices have, therefore analyzing industry data that is available is essential for this thesis. Therefore, in this item, we present some of its data available, including revenues, the main publishers and developers, finishing with an analysis of the state of the art of the industry nowadays.

The first data analyzed here is a list of the main publishers and developing studios they work with, which give us an idea of how the dynamics of the industry are nowadays. Data on

major publishers were gathered at Newzoo's database,[56] a company specialized in games, mobile, and e-sports markets.[57] [58] From this database, the website of each studio was visited, looking for the developing studios the publishers worked with. Then, each development studio's website was visited in order to identify which is the country of origin.[59] The data was summarised in the following table (Table 3.1).

Publisher	Country of Origin	Developer	Country of Origin
Zenimax Media	United States	Bethesda Game Studios	United States
		It Software	United States
		Arcane Studios	France
		ZeniMax Online Studios	United States
		Tango Gameworks	Japan
		Machine Games	Sweden
		BattleCry Studios	United States
		Escalation	United States
Konami Holdings Corporation	Japan	Konami Digital Entertainment, Inc.	Japan
Square Enix Holdings Co.	Japan	Square Enix	Japan
		Taito	Japan
		Eidos Interactive	United Kingdom
Valve Corporation	United States	Valve	United States
Take Two Entertainment	United States	Rockstar Games	United States
		2K	United States
Sony Interactive Entertainment Inc	Japan	Naughty Dog	United States
		JAPAN Studio	Japan
		Guerilla	Holland
Eletronic Arts	United States	Bioware	Canada
		Firemonkeys Studio	Australia
		Criterion Games	United Kingdom
		Maxis	United States
		EA Digital Illusions Creative Entertainment	Sweden
		EA Motive Studios	Canada
		Ghost Games	Sweden
		Respawn Entertainment	United States

[56] On Newzoo: https://newzoo.com/about/, accessed June, 4th 2019.
[57] Database used is available at: https://newzoo.com/insights/rankings/top-25-companies-game-revenues/, accessed June, 4th 2019. The mobile companies were not considered.
[58] Mobile is a term used for games that were released to mobile platforms, such as smartphones. E-Sports are competitions based on vídeo games.
[59] Each website visited is presented in the references.

Publisher	Country of Origin	Developer	Country of Origin
Nintendo	Japan	Retro Studios	United States
		Camelot Software Planning	Japan
		Intelligent Systems Co., LTD.	Japan
		Game Freak	Japan
		Genius Sonority	Japan
		The Pokémon Company	Japan
		Creatures Inc.	Japan
		Level – 5	Japan
		HAL Laboratory	Japan
		Nintendo Entertainment Analysis & Development	Japan
Bandai Namco Entertainment	Japan	Dimps Corporation	Japan
		Sunrise	Japan
		D3 Publisher Inc.	Japan
Ubisoft	France		
Sega	United States	Relic Entertainment	Canada
		Demiurge Studios	United States
		Amplitude Studios	France
WB Games	United States	Rocksteady	United Kingdom
		NetherRealm Studios	United States
Tencent	China	Riot Games	United States
		Supercell	Finland
		Epic Games	United States
Capcom	Japan		
Microsoft Game Studios	United States	Rare	United Kingdom
		Ensemble Studios	United States
		Lionhead Studios	United Kingdom
		343 Industries	United States
Activision Blizzard	United States	Blizzard	United States
		Actvision	United States

Table 3.1 – Main publishers and developing companies[60]
Source: Own development based on the sources cited in the text

As seen in Table 3.1, even the hardware companies – such as Microsoft, Sony, and Nintendo – engage in game development and publishing. Some publishers do not have any developing partner studios, such as Capcom and Ubisoft. These are the cases for what is called

[60] The data collected for this table was based on information of the Newzoo's database (https://newzoo.com/insights/rankings/top-25-companies-game-revenues/, accessed June, 4th 2019). From this data, each publisher site was visited, searching for both the origin country and its main developer partnerships. The publishers exclusively related to mobile publishing were not considered.

in-house development, in which companies have their development teams and rarely partner-up with other developers. Table 3.1 also shows that the developing studios used by the biggest videogame publishers are concentrated in US and Japan, which can be related to the development of both industries in those countries, a discussion presented in Chapter 4.

The relationship between how long an industry took to develop and its market maturity is not exclusively dependent on the companies developing themselves during certain periods, but it also requires that companies have an adaptive capability to get to new markets (STORPER, 1995). Regarding the cases of the companies listed in Table 3.1, we notice that publishers work and can also buy developing studios based around the world. This strategy is noticeable in the case of Electronic Arts (EA Games). This American Publisher acquired several studios and has partnered with several others from different places around the world. Even though the strategy of partnership and acquisition of game developing studios is an important feature for the game industry, localization practices also became just as important. After all, if the industry depends on its capacity to adapt to different markets, then the strategy to partner up with several developing studios across the world might not be enough to guarantee its survival on the market. Adapting the products and providing users with customer services in their language can be a fundamental asset to hold and increase market-shares.

Now that the main actors involved in the videogame industry were identified, an analysis of their role is required by the investigation of their market-share. The data was gathered at *GamesIndustry.biz* website which conducted research on the global videogame industry,[61] and also used the market-share data published by *NPD*, *GfK Chart Track* and *Nielsen*, comparing the years 2011 and 2012. The data were summarized in Table 3.2.[62]

Company	Country	2011	2012
Activision Blizzard	United States	15.7%	19.5%
EA Games	United States	19.7%	18.4%
Ubisoft	France	8.8%	11.2%
Nintendo	Japan	12.4%	10.8%
Take Two Entertainment	United States	4.8%	6.4%
Microsoft Game Studios	United States	4.8%	5%
Sony Interactive Entertainment Inc	Japan	5.3%	3.5%
WB Games	United States	3.7%	3.3%
Capcom	Japan	1.2%	2.4%

Table 3.2 – Market Share of the largest publishers
Source: Own development based on the sources cited in the text

[61] On *GamesIndustry.biz*: http://www.gamesindustry.biz/about, accessed June, 4th 2019.
[62] Source: http://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2013-05-16-activisions-market-share-climbed-to-almost-20-percent-in-2012, accessed June, 4th 2019.

As seen in Table 3.2, most of the market share was concentrated in American videogame publishers such as Activision Blizzard and EA Games, holding 37.9% of the videogame market in 2012.[63] Although this data dates back to almost a decade, one could state that this dynamic did not change considerably, as the data on console and top game sales from 2018 (Figure 3.8) shows.

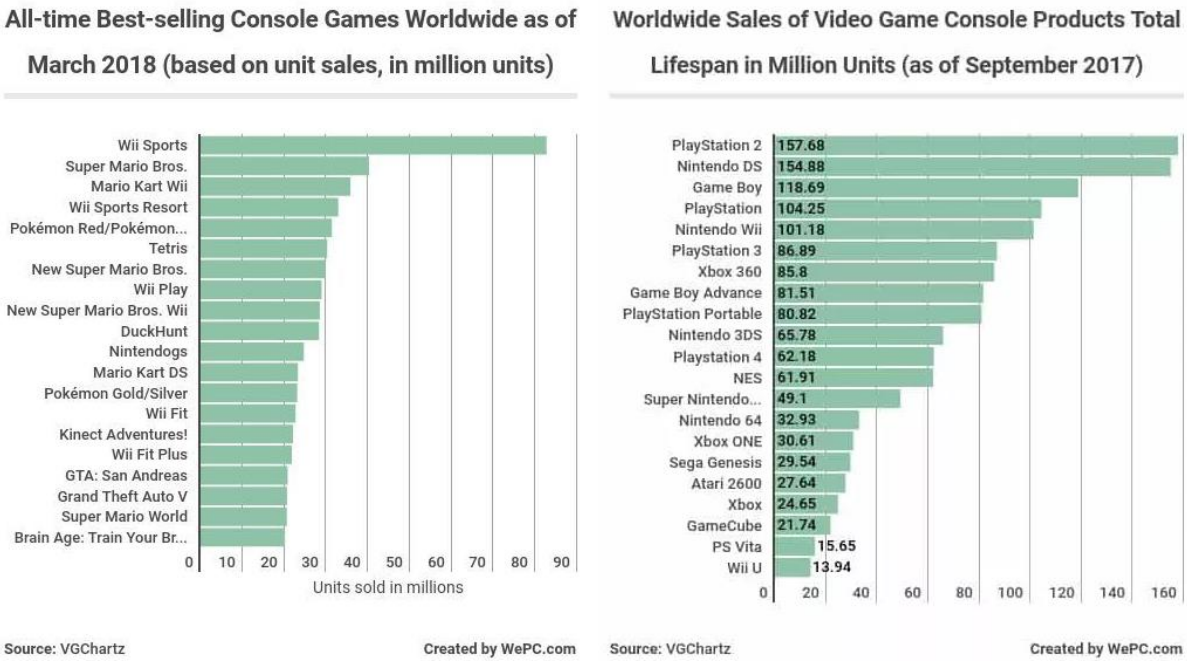

Figure 3.8 – Console and Top Games Sale Charts in 2018
Source: WePC website[64]

The 2018 data shows a major concentration on sales of Nintendo games, followed by Rockstar's. On consoles' sales, Sony and Nintendo still hold their higher positions. Although these data do not present the current market share for each company, they show that there was a small change in terms of the most companies success. Besides, according to Newzoo (2018), the top 25 game companies secured 77% of US$121.7 billion total of the industry. It is important to consider that the release of a new title on renowned franchises can be a major factor in changing the market-share presented. This is the reason why analyzing other data available in the industry is also important.

According to a Super Data Report on the videogame industry of 2018,[65] the industry revenue was US$ 119.6 billion, including games and related media (game devices and also

[63] Those are the most recent data published by the industry.
[64] Data available at: https://www.wepc.com/news/video-game-statistics/#console-gaming, accessed September 9th 2020.
[65] The Super Data Report is a branch from the Nielsen Company dedicated only to study the videogame industry. They provide users with some free summary reports and weekly newsletters from the videogame industry, typically pointing-out the best-selling games divided by platform. For more information: https://www.superdataresearch.com/our-team/, accessed June, 4th 2019.

streaming channels). Concerning videogames, most sales came from mobile games, totalizing US$61.3 billion, followed by PC Games (with US$ 35,7 billion) and by Console Games (US$ 12,7 billion) (SuperData, 2018). This is an interesting new set-up for the industry. After all, the prospective for the global growth of the PC Gaming presented at the Brazilian Digital Game Industry Census (2014) showed that PC Gaming would start to retract over time.

However, this growth in the industry might be related to three different factors. The first one is the rise of e-sports, which is usually PC-based. The second one is also the growth of digital game retailers, that allowed independent developers (also known as indie developers) to create and sell their games, which was acknowledged by console makers. The result is a recent availability of indie games to be downloaded in recent-opened digital stores from different console-makers. And last, but not least, PC Games also allow players to create their own experiences within a game, which can also be commercialized. This is the case of *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Bethesda, 2011), which allowed players to create new items for the game and also some new levels and experiences to other players to download and enjoy.

In 2018, the videogame industry grew 11% and became mostly based on Free-To-Play games. This sort of games usually provides revenue to their companies using in-game advertisements that allow the players to get extra lives, for example, or by allowing players to buy the currency of the game to have access to avatar skins, new abilities, weapons, etc. *Fortnite* (Epic Games, 2017) had the highest revenue for the year, and is one of the many examples of free-to-play games that define the industry nowadays. This kind of revenue for the videogame industry is based on impulsive shopping and, for sure, customer support in different languages and being charged in different currencies supports this kind of game development. In other words, localization practices are also important for these games, even though players can choose to play in servers other than the ones allocated to their origin country.[66] In general, the revenue distribution in the videogame industry was the following:

[66] For example, Steam is an online game store for PC. It allows players to change and choose their location and currency: https://support.steampowered.com/kb_article.php?ref=6627-QSNM-5276, accessed September 8th 2020.

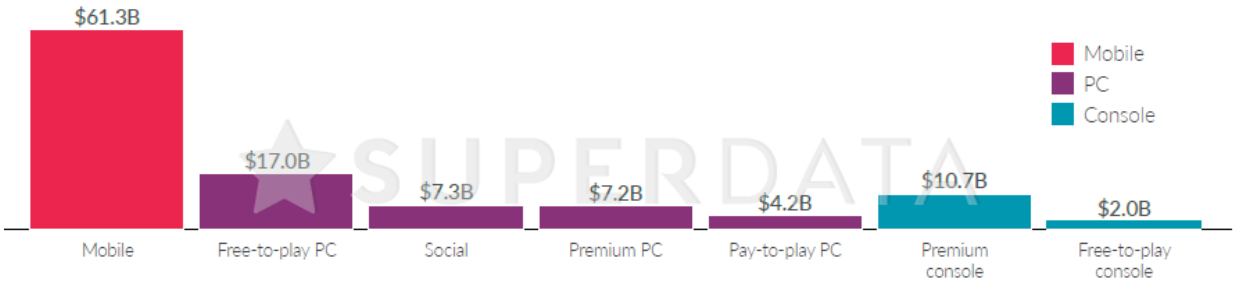

Figure 3.9 – Digital Games Revenue 2018
Source: SuperData Report, 2019: 7

As seen in Figure 3.9, Mobile games are those responsible for most of the videogame industry's revenue, followed by free-to-play PC games and premium console games (also known as AAA Games). However, according to SuperData Report (2019), the distribution of game modes is not equal throughout the world. Even though Asian, North American, and European countries show a videogame revenue based on a free-to-play market (Figure 3.10), access to premium games is highly concentrated on the European and North American markets (Figure 3.11).

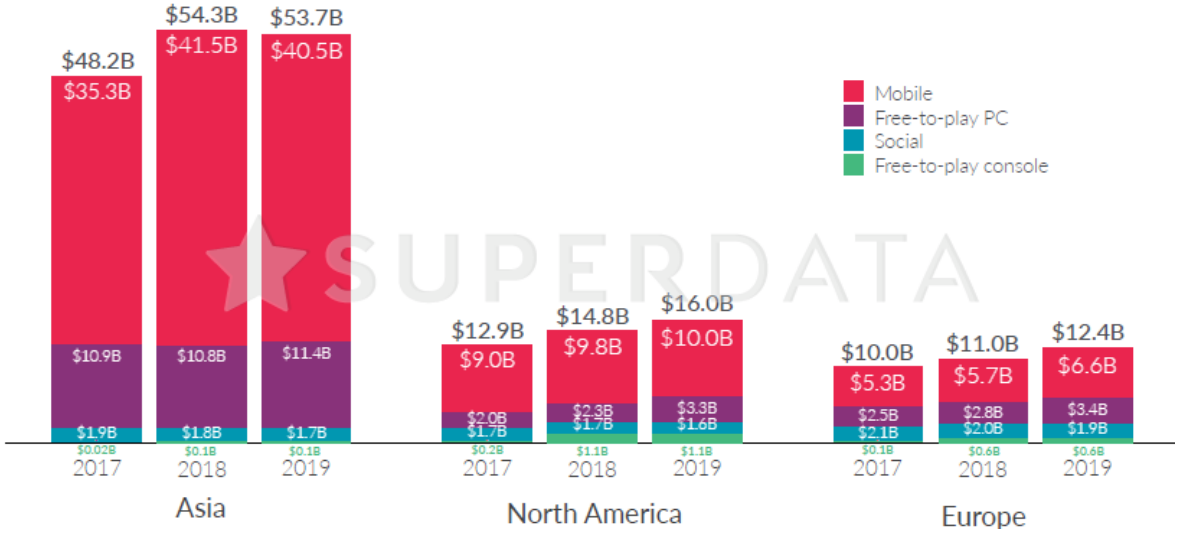

Figure 3.10 – Free-to-Play Market with 2019 forecast
Source: SuperData Report, 2019: 8

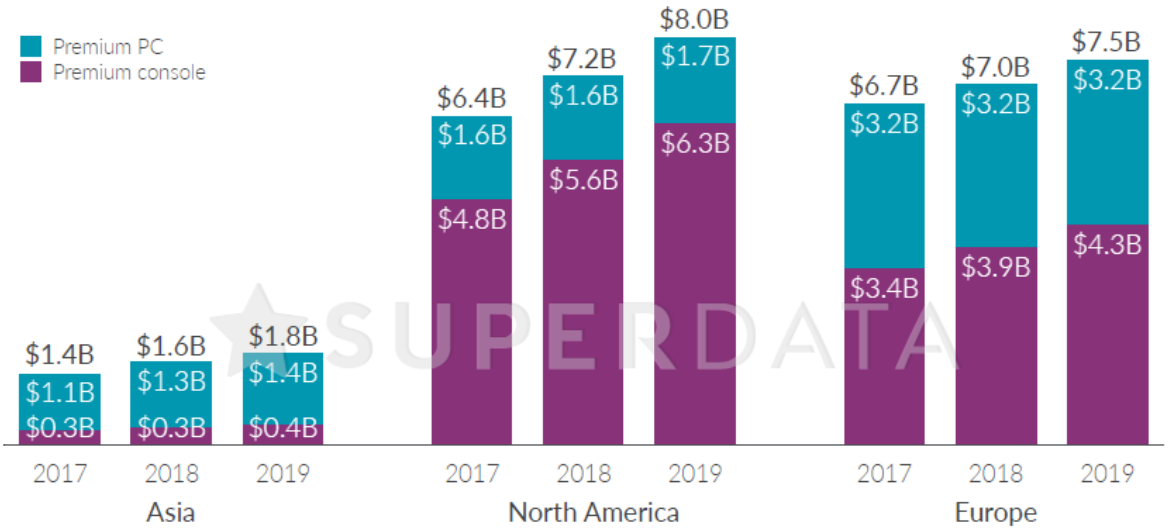

Figure 3.11 – Premium Games Market with 2019 forecast
Source: SuperData Report, 2019: 10

Access to AAA Games, as seen in the previous two figures, are still concentrated in markets where consumers have higher incomes, which relates to the investment of US$ 60.00 minimum for purchasing the starter pack of this type of game upon its release. However, this does not mean that players who only play free-to-play games do not invest in them. For instance, 70% of *Fortnite* (Epic Games, 2017) players buy in-game content, totalizing an average expenditure of US$ 85.00 per player,[67] indicating why free-to-play games have a higher grossing revenue when compared to premium games. It is important to notice that most free-to-play purchases are to acquire in-game currency, and the cost of this currency is low, allowing players to spend money on the game several times without noticing how much in total she/he has spent on that.

Section 3.5 Final Thoughts

The videogame industry is part of the creative industry, as it explores intellectual properties as part of its revenue. Besides that, it is an industry that needs to show some level of dynamic capability, to adapt to market changes and to access new ones. The change provided by the digital games distribution allowed a better exchange of reviews and criticisms between publishers, developers, and players. This allowed the localization process to gain importance and enter the structure of a game's production chain.

Localization practices usually happen during the development of a game (see Chapter 6 for details). The final testing of a game, called Quality Assurance (Q.A.), happens both for

[67] Source: http://www.businessofapps.com/data/fortnite-statistics/, accessed on June 5th 2019.

technical issues of the game and for localization. After all, localization, on one hand, might support sales increase, but a poorly performed localization might lead to a loss of customers. This happens as users who play the localized version of these games might not be able to appreciate the game for what it should be, breaking the immersion of the game or even to communicate their problems to the companies.

This also enables us to discuss the second research question presented in the introduction of this thesis: who are the actors presented in videogame localization and what are their roles? Videogame publishers seem to play a major role in the decision-making process of localizing a game. After all, they are the ones who decide where the game will become available to the players and to which languages. However, writers and developers also become actors in the localization process, as they need to prepare the game to receive the localized texts. Videogame localizers are the ones responsible for translating the text, always considering that this translation is not a word-for-word one, but also a translation that needs to happen on a deeper level, the meaning one. Localizers also participate in the Q.A. tests. All these roles will be further discussed in the upcoming chapters.

Finally, it is important to discuss the rise of the free-to-play games and its probable impacts on localization practices. Even though the companies localize and offer their player customer services in several languages, the playability of the games themselves can be a challenge. After all, the players can log into different servers to play with different users. The result is that users will interact with each other, making the localization practice a challenge. After all, it is common for the meanings of the games to be localized, and simple translations in everyday conversations might not be enough to get the meaning across, resulting in possible misunderstandings among players. This discussion shows the localization limits, as few users know that this is a process of the videogame industry.

Chapter 4
It's not just Lucca who can Travel in Time![68]
A History of Videogame Localization

This chapter aims at debating and understanding some of the past cases of videogame localization. Studying the past of videogame localization is fundamental for understanding its role and practices today, as the development of videogame localization shaped and created its standards over time. However, there are many histories on the development of videogame localization and it changes significantly depending on the country where it was developed. Even though the focus in this chapter will be on US (where most of the fieldwork was developed), there are different histories of localization practices throughout the world. When possible, these differences will be addressed, highlighting the role they had in videogame localization.

Section 4.1 The 1970s

The beginning of the home-console videogame industry at the end of the 1970s also marked several changes in the videogame industry. It enabled players to have their own games at home, and also allowed console producers, such as Atari, to start allowing third-party developers to create games that could be played on their consoles (DYER-WITHEFORD & DE PEUTER, 2007). This new form of chain production of videogames was described in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

The home console development was also crucial for videogame localization as videogame development companies started to emerge in many countries and aimed to sell their products worldwide. Companies such as Hudson Soft (Japan, 1973 -), Enix (today Square Enix, Japan, 1975 -), and Games Workshop (United Kingdom, 1975 -) were created at this time as third-party videogame developers.

However, language barriers could become a problem for gamers to get involved in the games or even to play them. Even though most games would feature little-to-no text, game manuals that explained both the game's story and how to play the games would impose an extra challenge to the gamers. They would not be willing to face this language barrier challenge, as other game options would be available. This new configuration of the videogame industry urged the industry to take matters at hand, guaranteeing games could be sold and consumed

[68] This title is a homage to *Chrono Trigger* (Square Enix, 1995). Lucca is one of the characters of the game, who invents a time machine.

worldwide. However, it took years for videogame localization to become a professional endeavor in the industry.

The beginning of videogame localization draws much inspiration from the software industry,[69] but those who did the localization were not professionally trained for this role. They instead used to work in the developing team and were knowledgeable about other languages and got involved in this activity, with varying results. It is also important to notice that independent developers (also known as indie devs) still keep up this practice. The case of a Brazilian indie-developer company is an example. This company was contacted both at BGS in 2017 and in PAX East (Boston, 2019), when the company's informant reported that they do part of the localization by themselves.[70] According to the informant, both he and his business partner localize their games to English, Italian and Spanish. They also count on relatives to help them with the localization of their games to German.

In the 1970s, information on the targeted culture's needs and the videogame policies[71] were more challenging to access. Therefore, these needs and policies were barely addressed for the people who were localizing the game. The low amount of in-game texts also allowed several game developers and publishers to opt for the box and docs localization.[72] However, this is not the only feature during this time in videogame localization history. Figure 4.1 shows a PrintScreen from an arcade game called *Ozma Wars* (Shin Nihon Kikaku, 1979):

[69] The introduction shows a more detailed discussion on this subject.
[70] This is not considered in-house localization. After all, in-house localization means that a company hires professional localizers to deal with the localization process inside the company and not to outsource it. In this case, the developers themselves are the ones who deal with localization as a way to cut game development costs.
[71] A set of rules and laws consisting of what videogames can depict or not and how they should be sold in a country.
[72] See the introduction of this thesis for a full description of this kind of localization.

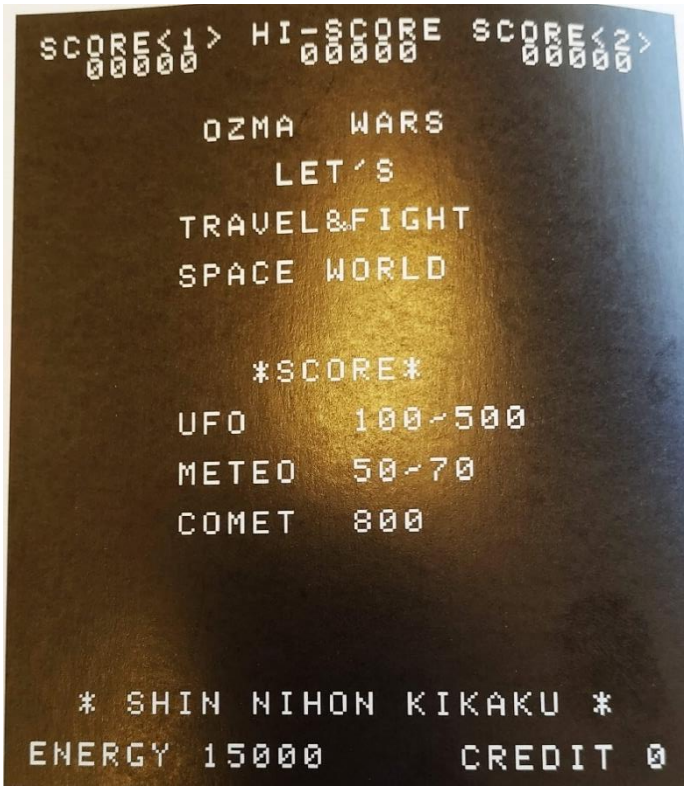

Figure 4.1 – *Ozma Wars* (Shin Nihon Kikaku, 1979)
Source: Mandelin & Kuchar, 2017

This arcade game was developed in Japan, but its texts are in English. The choice of making the games in standard English during this decade is explained by Mandelin & Kuchar (2017: 8):

> "Few Japanese games in the 1970s featured any text at all, but English was a common sight among those that did. Because primitive CPU speeds, memory constraints, and other technological limitations kept these English phrases very short and simple, any usual wording was usually minor enough to be overlooked by players outside of Japan. This gave rise to a sort of "game English" that is so common today that gamers rarely even notice it".

This concept of "game English" is directly related to the discussion on sociotechnical imaginaries and identity.[73] If hardware cannot deal with 2-byte characters, such as the one presented in several Asian languages, why choose English specifically? Why not any other European language? This is part of the sociotechnical imaginary in the videogame industry: with the Cold War reaching its peak, marking the position of each industry towards URSS or US would be fundamental to guarantee sales. Japan, then, would feel compelled to make its alliance to US, making sure its products would fit the American market. In this sense, they created an imaginary of a need for a software to be in English either to be sellable or either

[73] Seen in chapter 1.

because of hardware constraints. This imaginary would, as any sociotechnical imaginary, perceive a future in which all the games should be available in different languages to be more easily sold. The result, one might consider, is that it was the beginning of videogame localization.

Besides that, the end of the 1970s had two more important developments in the videogame industry. The first one was the first game market crash in 1977. According to Williams (2017), this market crash happened for two main reasons: the inability for the machines to offer new content, and the novelty of playing games on a screen wore off. This slowdown in the videogame industry was not the only one, but was important, as it would show to the creators that the reaction of customers would matter more, giving the players more agency on the products than would be considered before. A little before this crash, though, two companies started to rethink videogames and their home consoles.

Those were the cases of Fairchild Semiconductor and Atari, which in the mid-1970s decided to change the approach to home consoles. “This approach took inspiration from computers as a single program could be switched into and out of the console’s memory, potentially allowed for an infinite library of games” (Williams, 2017: 91). This new approach not only allowed a new production chain to develop in the videogame industry, as already discussed, with several developers and publishers being created in this process. It also marked an important new relationship between videogame consoles and the computer industry. Such interaction was crucial for the further development of both industries and localization practices.

Section 4.2 The beginning of the 1980s

The 1980s were really important for the videogame industry, as it not only consolidated the production chain created in the late 1970s, but it also consolidated videogame localization as practice for the industry, even if with specific features. The 1983 market crash for videogames was also an important feature for it, and Section 4.3 will explain the reasons for this.

As in the 1970s, in-text localization was rare and usually done by the programmers themselves, which could result in some translations considered strange or grammatically incorrect for native-English speakers. Mandelin & Kuchar (2017) summarize how some of those translations resulted in some weird and/or over the top in-game texts. Figure 4.2 shows one of those examples:

Figure 4.2 – Printscreen *Boso Tokkyu SOS* (Hudson Soft, 1984)
Source: Mandelin & Kuchar, 2017

Although the example seen in Figure 4.2 was not one of the most common ones during this time, it shows how problematic a bad localization can be. It might lead the gamer out of the immersion the game supposedly gets the person into, which can result either in becoming something funny to a native English-speaker (case of Figure 4.2) or either result in frustration. In either case, it might result in the game getting bad reviews and sales by users.

However, as said, changing in-game texts was rare in the videogame industry during its early days of development. The most common kind of localization would be box and docs[74] or having a partial localization of its materials. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show both these cases:

[74] Box and docs localization: when only the box and its contents are localized, not the game.

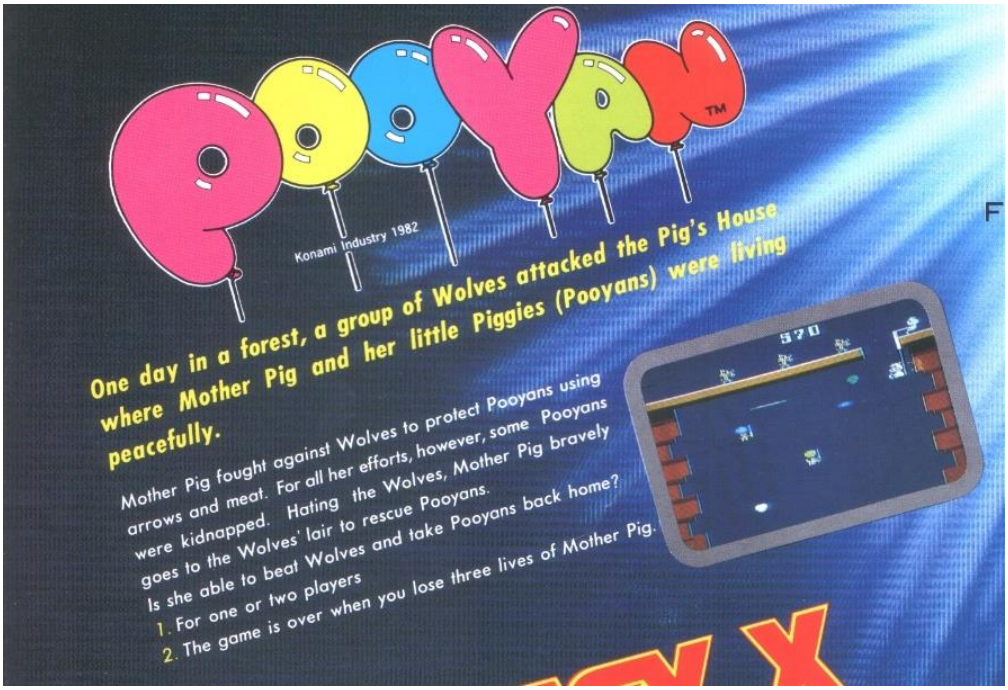

Figure 4.3 – Konami Product Catalog 1982
Source: Leonard Herman press kit and marketing collection, disk 2
The Strong Archives

Figure 4.4 – Bandai Product Catalog 1983
Source: Leonard Herman press kit and marketing collection, disk 1
The Strong Archives

Figure 4.3 shows a market campaign for Pooyan, a Japanese game in which the localization process did not even involve translating the name of the game into English. The text from the catalog explains what the game is and also translates that Pooyan is a little pig. That kind of localization was much more common during the beginning of the videogame

industry. Figure 4.4 shows how videogame localization was a rare and difficult process. This Bandai tabletop videogame catalog shows and explains the game in Japanese, even though the game itself had an English title "BurGer Time" and also had the copyright/production company in English. This partial localization matters for the videogame localization history, as it shows possible forms of localization presented during the development of the videogame industry as a whole.

However, those were not the only cases in which a game was either partially localized or just had its box and docs translated into different languages, even though character names were kept and had to be explained to the user. There were cases in which the localization of the game was used to match other entertainment media from the targeted country, guaranteeing sales even though the game was not intentionally created for it. *Pick Axe Pete* (Magnavox, 1982), a game released for the Odyssey 2, was one of those cases. This game was the first ever game localized in Brazil and called *Didi in the Enchanted Mine* (Didi na Mina Encantada, 1983). Its premise was of a miner who needed to find gold while running away from boulders and other enemies. The choice for this new theme for the game was influenced by the Brazilian context at the time: gold was found at Serra Pelada[75] and its fame made the government intervene in the region. In order to take advantage of this, the Brazilian comedian group Os Trapalhões released a movie in 1982 named Os Trapalhões na Serra Pelada. As, at this time, the games' graphics were not too detailed, the game localization was done on the box and in its manual (SOUZA, 2015: 64-67). Figures 4.5 and 4.6 show the boxes of both games.

[75] Serra Pelada was the largest open gold-mining field of the world, located in the state of Pará, Brazil. It is currently closed for exploration, but it attracted more than 100,000 people to the region in search of gold found for the first time in 1979. Source: https://globoplay.globo.com/v/8167485/, accessed March, 24th 2020.

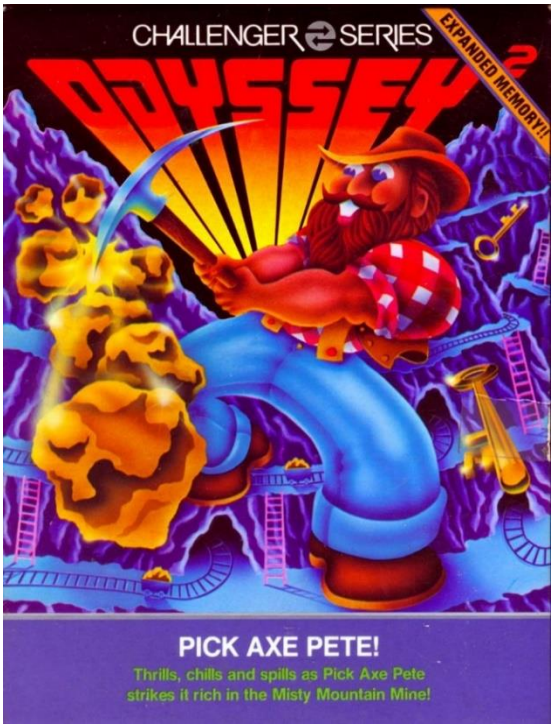

Figure 4.5 – Box Art for *Pick Axe Pete* (Magnavox, 1982)
Source: https://www.mobygames.com/game/odyssey-2/pick-axe-pete/cover-art/gameCoverId,93714/, accessed July, 8th 2019

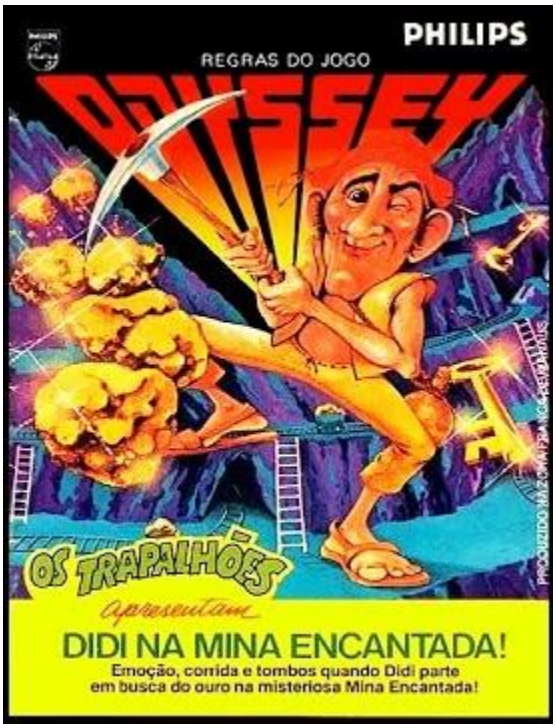

Figure 4.6 – Box Art for *Didi na Mina Encantada!* (Magnavox, 1982)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MHKMe5uQoM, accessed July, 8th 2019

These cases are an outstanding example of how videogame localization, at its beginnings, did not have any kind of standards and how the same game could be used in

different contexts, taking advantage of low-quality graphics for that. This shows in several ways a game was presented and sold: it might be in a partial box and docs localization, in changing the entire context of the game or just trying to sell it without localization.

In the PC Gaming market, localization was not so different. In the Brøderbund archives (folder 5) consulted at The Strong Museum in Rochester, NY, there are some notes and a schedule for the Future Computing's Home Computer Market Forum, which took place on December 6th, 1982. These documents are important for two reasons. In the first one, they do not address any kind of role of translation/localization for the industry as a whole. The second are the notes on one of the talks in the sessions entitled "how will home computers impact videogames? Is there room for both products? Presentation from Software Publishers".

The notes on Future Computing's Home Computer Market Forum's session also do not discuss anything on translation or localization of videogames. At the time they were having problems with the sales of PC games, as they did not sell in the same quantity as consoles because of the price. The prices were considered too high for the product being just games. The notes consider that computers could deliver better graphics and interactivity with the games than console games, but they still had some issues: they did not have an end-user base large enough to guarantee revenue, good programing tools for games, a supply of programmers who could make games, and access to the market – which considered hardware prices.

These notes are important for two reasons. The first one is the construction of console videogames, which is different from PCs as if they would have different audiences. Even though these discussions still exist in the industry regarding the platform a game is going to be released on, it is very common to see games released for several consoles and PC selling platforms. The idea of a different audience for each kind of game does no longer seem to be based on platforms, but is restricted to the game genre, as will be seen in the following chapters of this thesis. The second reason relates to the discussion on market access. At this time, language accessibility did not seem at all to be a way of guaranteeing new markets, which shows a diminished role of localization practices during that period. The focus of the discussion was price, accessibility and the possibility of more users acquiring PCs instead of videogame consoles.

Section 4.3 The 1983 Market Crash

This phase of videogame history would not last long, as in 1983 the industry crashed and console games sales dropped, leading Atari into bankruptcy. This crash is the most known one in videogame history and, according to Williams (2017: 110-111), it was caused by:

> "The development and marketing fiasco of Pac-Man and E.T., while extremely damaging to Atari, was not in itself sufficient to cause the market crash. The introduction of affordable home computers, like the 1982 Commodore 64, persuaded many customers to purchase something with an application beyond playing. (…) It is important to keep in mind that the crash of 1983 was confined largely to North America. The console industry in the early 1980s was not as developed in other parts of the world (…)".

Even confined in areas in which the industry was more developed, the 1983 videogame console crash made several companies abandon their videogame division, such as Mattel and Warner Communications. At that time, it was imagined that virtual play would be something from the past, as the crash led to bankruptcy videogame companies such as Atari (DYER-WITHEFORD & DE PEUTER, 2007). This prediction proved to be wrong for two reasons. Firstly, even though console game sales crashed, the same could not be said about PC games, with masterpieces of PC gaming, such as *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* (Brøderbund, 1985), which was released around this time. The second reason is a company called Nintendo, a Japanese card game developer that decided to enter the videogame industry.

What did the crash mean for videogame localization? On one hand, it meant that PC gaming was responsible for keeping the development of games, which included different licenses for worldwide sales in several languages. On the other, PC Games evaluated the experiences of the software industry and started to use third-party companies to localize the games. This does not mean, however, that the challenges of localizing were not present, as it has its specificities when compared to software localization. For instance, Esqueda and Coelho (2017: 145 – Own Translation) also state that "Game translation operates through a complex variety of forces: on one hand, the need to meet technical and cultural specifications of the target territory and, on the other hand, the pressure to maintain the original game experience".[76]

Section 4.4 After the crash: the end of the 1980s

The relationship between console videogames and PC games would come closer once again. The analysis of accessed documents at The Strong Museum's archives shows that companies that were specialized in computer software got into PC games as a way to increase their market. In the beginning, there seemed to be a focus on educational games, but it was soon to be diversified. The diversification of PC Gaming included hiring new programmers to

[76] Original: "A tradução de games opera sob uma complexa variedade de forças: por um lado, a obrigação de atender às especificidades técnicas e culturais de cada território alvo e, por outro, a pressão para manter o mesmo potencial de experiência do jogo original."

publishers such as Brøderbund and Sierra. These companies also made sure to acquire licenses for games from Japan, in order to localize and sell them.

The two cases to be presented in this section shows how PC game publishers were starting to connect to other publishers to bring different titles and experiences to their catalog of products, increasing its sales. It also brings relevant issues for discussions on videogame localization.

Brøderbund was an American PC game created in 1980. It also had educational software and print shop products and published many famous game titles such as *Prince of Persia* (Brøderbund, 1989), *Myst* (Cyan Worlds, 1993), and *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* (Brøderbund, 1985). The company was sold to The Learning Company[77] in 1998. Its 1985 Business Plan states the following:

> "Brøderbund has several sources of software programs, including software authors, in-house development and licensing of software from other (usually Japanese) publishers. (…) The company has also licensed and distributed domestic programs originally developed for the Japanese market" (Brøderbund Business Plan, 1985; source: Brøderbund Archives, Folder 13, The Strong Archives).

This case illustrates how Brøderbund operated and distributed its products among different countries. Licensing software to be sold in different places usually required at least an adaption of the software's user agreement to the policies of the targeted country. This fostered the growth of the role of localization practices in the videogame industry.

Another interesting aspect of this plan is that they disclose their selling ratios: 85% domestic sales, 5% to Canada, and 10% other foreign (Brøderbund Business Plan, 1985)[78]. This shows that, even though Brøderbund made an effort to get software and PC Games from other parts of the world (mainly Japan), their main goal was to sell their products in US, suggesting that they were not willing to expand worldwide, at least at that time.

Localization-wise, it shows that PC game publishers were the ones that held the localization practices for games, while the console industry crashed. However, localization was performed in order to only fill up domestic market expectations not because the companies felt that it was an important process. Brøderbund was not the only case in which this happened. Sierra, an American PC game publisher established in 1979 (closed in 2008), also had the same strategy, according to the documents consulted.

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[77] From United States.
[78] Brøderbund Archives, Folder 13, The Strong Archives

Its 10th-anniversary celebration magazine[79] (Sierra Tenth Anniversary, 1989)[80] shows how the company was constantly in contact with Japanese PC game developers. It also shows that Sierra hired a Japanese programmer called Mickie Lee. According to this magazine, this programmer supported Sierra on the localization of the games imported from Japan, including *Silpheed* (Sierra, 1989). This shows how localization, at that time, was still an afterthought[81] and was not done by professionally trained localizers. These findings reiterate the discussions made by Essenlink (2006: 22):

> "Initially, software vendors dealt with this new challenge in many different ways. Some established in-house teams of translators and language engineers to build international support into their products. Others simply charged their international offices or distributors with the task of localizing the products. In both cases, the localization effort remained separated from the development of the original products. Development groups simply handed off the software code and source files for supporting documentation to those responsible for localization".

In the case of the documents analyzed, both Sierra and Brøderbund used those different approaches. The former hired engineers to deal with the products they imported from Japan at the time. The latter created foreign offices that should deal with distribution and language-related issues.

A 1989 Sierra's Press Release,[82] however, shows some signs of change in the localization practices. This document is on the release of the American version of a game titled *Silpheed* (Sierra, 1989) and states the following:

> "Supertramp musician Bob Siebenberg, who wrote and performed the music for *Space Quest III,* has added a rhythm track and American beat to the Japanese music that will drive you on the next level just to hear a new song. Add to this sound effects that prick-up your ears and you'll be hooked on *Slipheed*" (italics in the original)

The use of a famous singer to compose songs for games is a known effort not only for the videogame industry, but for the creative industries in general. This case highlights that the game was not only being localized language-wise. It showed a deeper level: changing the soundtrack for adapting it to local tastes. Other games, such as *Sonic CD* (Sega, 1995) had an

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[79] "A publication that is issued periodically, usually bound in a paper cover, and typically contains essays, stories, poems, etc., by many writers, and often photographs and drawings, frequently specializing in a particular subject or area, as hobbies, news, or sports". Source: dictionary.com/browse/magazine?s=t, accessed in March 25th 2020.
[80] Sierra Archives, Folder 2, The Strong Archives
[81] "something added, as a part or feature, that was not included in the original plan or design". Source: https://www.dictionary.com/browse/afterthought?s=t, accessed in March 25th 2020.
[82] Sierra Archives, Folder 3, The Strong Archives

entire overhaul of its original soundtrack when the game was brought to US.[83] Silva (2016) also discussed some of these cases, and concluded that:

> "The game culture of a specific niche of players can also shape development teams' decisions when delivering products to different markets. A common practice of this process involves altering some of the original setting of the game mechanics in order to meet the expectations of gameplay for different audiences" (SILVA, 2016: 50)

Hence, the author finds that the conception of what is localization and its meanings started to change at this time. If a company decided to change the soundtrack for a game for it to become more sellable in another country, it shows how local culture and identities might be already playing a part in the practice of videogame localization.

The end of the console videogame crisis was done by Nintendo, today a Japanese console producer and videogame developer (but, at the time, a card game developer). The company thought, seeing the growth of the PC Gaming scene, that virtual play was still not over. Therefore, they released a home console in Japan in 1983, called Famicom but its sales were not as good as expected and the console presented many technical problems. However, the company decided to localize the console to US, and they released the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1985. The release of this console in US proved to be an enormous success, guaranteed by the games brought to US and was translated and localized into English.

The huge success of the console in US not only allowed other console companies to emerge – such as Sega -, but also allowed Japanese games to be more regularly exported to US. This, according to Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter (2007), generated a panic to American capitalists, who feared the flood of Japanese products to their country. However, it meant that games could be played worldwide, making localization practices more common.

However, from 1985 to the beginning of the 1990s videogame localization was not still a professionalized endeavor. Some publishers would still do the localization themselves or hire a translator, but weird and off localizations were still common, due to the specificities of videogame localization. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 show examples of this.

[83] For a comparison, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sf9VQ5AqilY, accessed July 9th 2019.

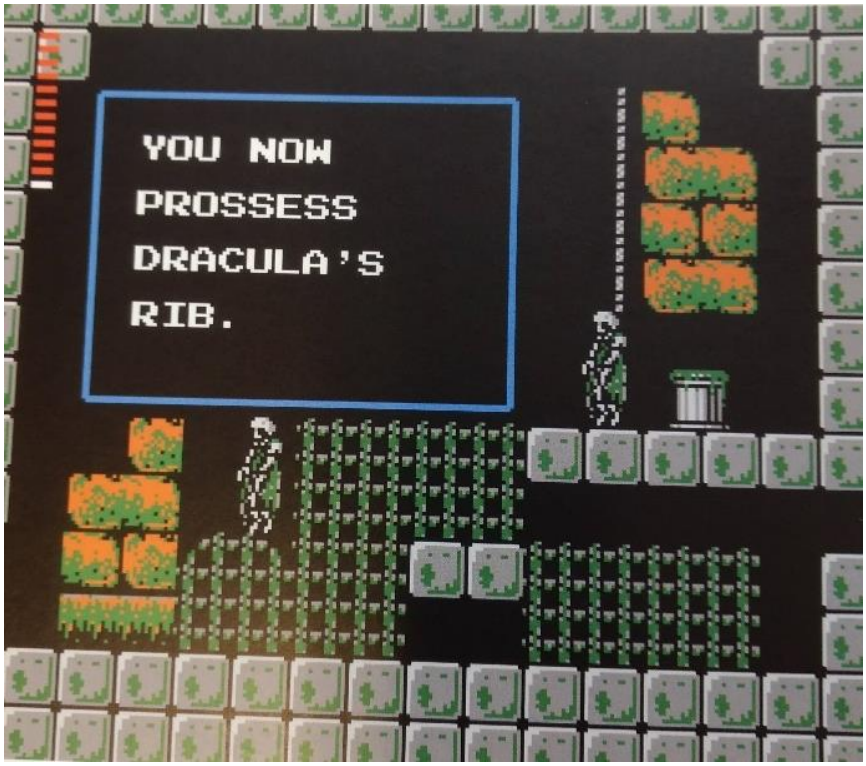

Figure 4.7 – *Castlevania II: Simon's Quest* (Konami, 1988)
Source: Mandelin & Kuchar, 2017

Figure 4.8 – *Super Mario Bros. 3* (Nintendo, 1990)
Source: Mandelin & Kuchar, 2017

Both examples above are from famous videogame franchises: *Super Mario Bros.* (Nintendo, 1983 -) and *Castlevania* (Konami, 1986 -). These games were developed by large videogame developers at that time, but localization, even though something imperative for

selling the games outside Japan, still seemed to be a production afterthought and something not done by professionals, with a Quality Assurance test after. However, it is important to notice that those cases, as compared to the one in Figure 4.2, seems to be more of a typo than to actually bad translated texts. In other words, it seems that localization, at this time, was gaining more importance, and improved the definition of what it was, and how it is defined today.

Section 4.5 The Beginning of the 1990s

The strong presence of a Japanese company in US started to change important features in the videogame industry. In the first one, even PC game publishers would go after Nintendo to figure out a way of publishing their games for Nintendo's consoles, which not only consolidated the production chain discussed in Chapter 3, but also shows how the industry, in general, found a new need to search for new markets. The result was a new connection between PC game publishers and videogame console ones, in which a game could be released into several different platforms.

This is shown in the Sierra's 10th-anniversary celebration magazine (Sierra Tenth Anniversary, 1989).[84] The document states that Ken Williams went to Japan trying to sell Sierra games for Nintendo in 1986. Even though this happened before Nintendo's boom in US, it showed how PC game publishers started to look forward to expanding the market by increasing the number of platforms the games could be played. It is important to notice that the different specifications of each platform usually required a game to be completely reprogrammed and, in several cases, the game could be different from one console to another. That is the case of games such as *Alladin*, a game that was released both for Sega Genisis (Virgin Interactive and Sega, 1993) and for Super Nintendo (Capcom, 1993).[85]

The second major change after Nintendo entering US market relates directly to localization practices. Bringing games to US from Japan became a more common practice, which started to spread among other companies. A Sierra's Press Release from January 6th, 1990[86] states that:

> "(…) By translating *Police Quest II* into Japanese, I feel we are opening up a whole new audience that will enjoy our programs," said Ken Williams, President and CEO of Sierra. (…) while playing the game you can switch back and forth between the two languages and Japanese

[84] Sierra Archives, Folder 2, The Strong Archives
[85] For a comparison on the differences of both games: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BO3XHCV8cRQ, accessed July, 9th 2019.
[86] Sierra Archives, Folder 3, The Strong Archives

> players will be able to learn English while they play. (…) Sierra also has plans for the translation of games into German and French."

This citation brings relevant issues to the fore. The first one is related to this new move of localizing American games to different audiences, even if not in all games. This strategy might be related to the previous discussion, in which games started to be released into different platforms. One may conclude that not only investment for the release of games in several platforms was a new key for success in the videogame industry, but the games should also be localized to attract new audiences. This highlights the increasing importance of localization in the industry.

Another interesting aspect of this citation is related to language availability in-game. According to this Press Release (Sierra's Press Release from January 6th, 1990)[87], *Police Quest II* (Sierra, 1988) would be available both in English and Japanese, allowing the player to change its language as she/he wished, opening up the possibility of learning another language. The possibility of changing languages at the player's will is a feature to be discussed in the following chapters, but the author wants to highlight that such a possibility appeared in the documentation analyzed. This shows, on one hand, that hardware was becoming more powerful and capable of running various tasks at once. On the other hand, this became a common feature in the games today.

The possibility of the players learning other languages while playing is relevant. Because this was never considered for American audiences as I, at least, did not encounter any kind of document stating that Americans could play a game in other languages to learn them. This discussion closely relates to culture and identity formation presented in the literature review (Chapter 1). Said's (1993) discussion on the creation of an "us" versus "them" is emphasized in this excerpt. This is because Japanese gamers are the ones who should learn a second language, allowing videogame companies to avoid programing another language into a game. People whose native tongue was English never seemed to be requested that.

The second aspect to the Sierra's Press Release from January 6th, 1990[88] citation (also related to the former) is the formation of the EFIGS acronym. It stands for English, French, Italian, German and Spanish, the most common languages to which videogames are localized. Evan's interview also discussed the exact same aspect for this time:

> "Yeah, it has definitely changed over the last few decades. So, I think that one of the main changes is, as I've already hinted, is that a lot of emerging markets, as previously the game development was dominated

[87] Sierra Archives, Folder 3, The Strong Archives
[88] Sierra Archives, Folder 3, The Strong Archives.

> by US and Japan, and the main target languages for localization, were the FIGS languages. These days, depending on the genre, but we definitely have to take it in China, Russia, Brazil, of course, into account. So, there is an increased diversity in, in the markets, and also their importance has increased. So previously, just getting a German or French edition for any US game was an afterthought, and it probably didn't mean that much in the revenues, I have no way to prove this..."

The documentation analyzed in this chapter confirms this statement. For instance, the localization of *Police Quest II* (Sierra, 1988) seems to be an afterthought, as the game was originally released in 1988 in US and only two years later did Sierra consider releasing it in other countries and languages. Another issue is the formation of the EFIGS concept, as it can change depending on who is considering it. As seen, this informer works for a British company, therefore English is not considered a localization language. However, Sierra's analyzed documents suggest the possibility of releasing games in several European languages, in search of new markets. It is also important to notice that Sierra would open an office in Europe in 1991 to introduce its programs and games in other languages, including French, German, and Spanish (Sierra Press Release August, 25th 1990; Source: Sierra Archives, Folder 3, The Strong Archives).

The discussions on videogame localization at the beginning of the 1990s were not exclusive for Sierra. Brøderbund is also an example of game localization to different languages, even though this process was not clearly discussed on the company's documents as was in Sierra. However, Figures 4.9 and 4.10 below show two localized versions of the same game: *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* (Brøderbund, 1993). Those games were released in 1993 and are in Spanish and Japanese, respectively.

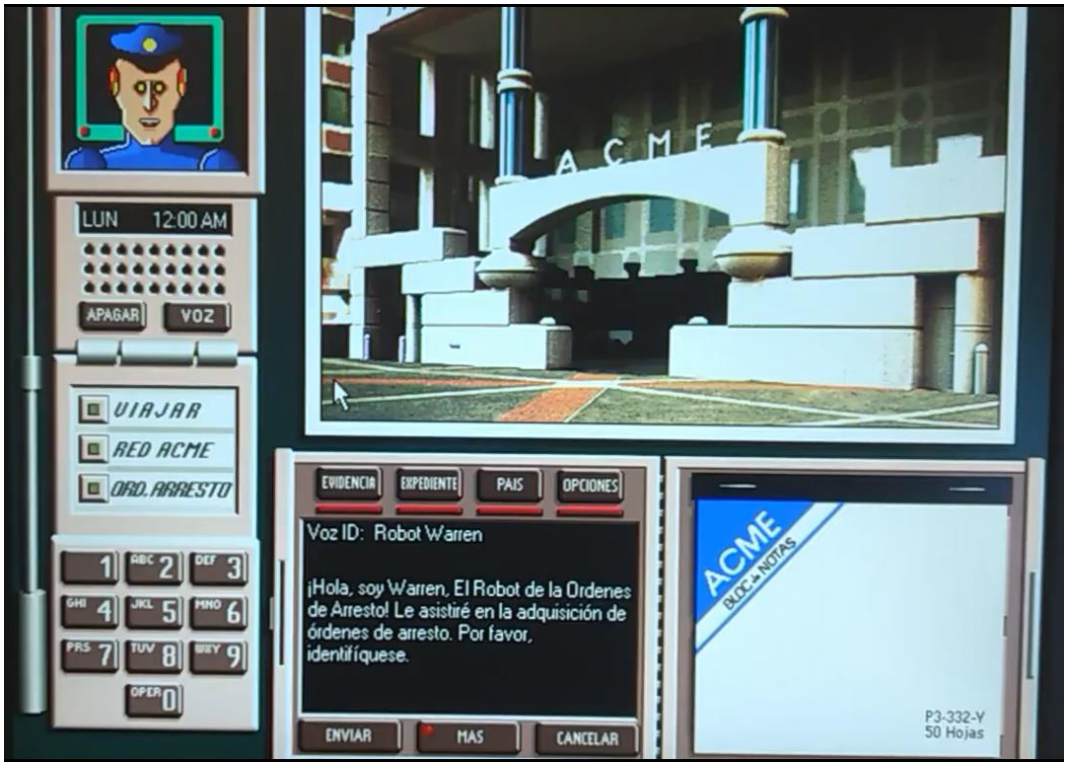

Figure 4.9 – Print Screen of *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* (Brøderbund, 1993) Spanish Version
Source: The Strong Archives

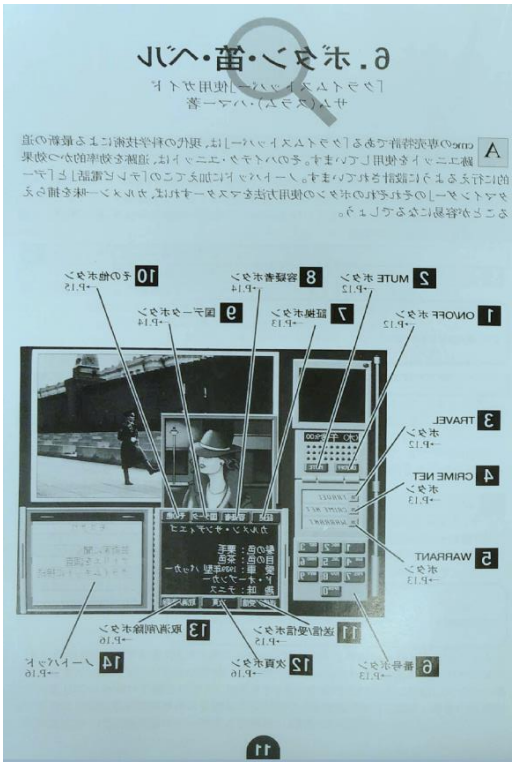

Figure 4.10 – Scanned Image from *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* (Brøderbund, 1993) Japanese Version Manual
Source: The Strong Archives

As seen in those images, the former is the print screen of the game in its Spanish version, played by myself.[89] Figure 8 shows that the game is fully localized into Spanish, including game titles, game texts, and voice acting. I did not manage to play both of these versions, only this one. However, gameplay videos show that this is a standard.[90] Looking at the manual page of the Japanese version, it is clear that the in-game texts are in Japanese. Even though this is considered an educational game, *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* (Brøderbund, 1993) is considered a classic game today. As it was considered an educational game at the time, though, it might have pressured the publisher to localize it to be sold as such. Therefore, educational policies might have an impact on localizing this game, and the publisher would feel pressured to do so, to guarantee new markets for it, as the cases of Nintendo and Sierra.

One might ask about the reasons for many changes in videogame localization in the 1990s. One possible answer in this context would be LISA. In 1990, the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) was created. This association was fundamental for establishing standards for localization in the software industry, some of which might also have been used in videogames. Unfortunately, this association was closed in 2011, so there is almost no information about its works and standards.[91]

Although the focus of the Association was on software localization (and not videogames), its standards definitely had an impact on the game industry. The documentation analyzed not only shows that game publishers sought to localize their games in different languages, but also that they opened overseas offices that would be responsible for making their products available in other languages. Another impact the association had to the videogame industry was the definition of localization as a concept.

A July 12th 1995 Press Release from Sierra[92] states the following: "Sierra Pioneer, Inc. will immediately begin *localizing* over twenty of Sierra's current titles for the Japanese market".[93] This was the first time the term "localization" appeared in the documentation analyzed. Before that, localization used to be addressed only as translation. The term translation is still used in the industry, mainly from game developers, as the ones I contacted during the Brasil Game Show (São Paulo, 2017), Campus Party (São Paulo, 2018), and PAX East (Boston,

[89] Please, refer to Chapter 2 to the methodology for choosing the games.
[90] For instance, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfyO1b9z_no, acessed July, 7th 2020.
[91] For more information on LISA: https://www.w3.org/International/O-LISA-object.html, accessed in April, 27th 2019.
[92] Folder 5, Sierra Archives, The Strong Archives
[93] The italic is an emphasis given by this thesis' author.

2019). Developers tend to consider localization a major challenge for them, as they need to create a source-code stable enough to support several languages.

Another aspect of videogame localization during the 1990s is related to release dates. As localization processes take a long time, and it was an afterthought, this usually meant that a game would be released on different dates. Even though Japanese games were commonly brought to US, this process could take a long time, something that could lead to some games not even being released in US because of it. This was the case of Final Fantasy, for example. It is important to notice that those release delays could be harmful to the publishers, as gamers could either buy original versions of the games or play a pirated, modified version of them. This tension between players and publishers was shown in games magazines.

On this theme, Chris Kohler – editor of the Video Zone Magazine -, wrote the following on the case of *Final Fantasy V* (Square Enix, 1992) which was not released in US:

> "First off, I would like to scram in all caps about Final Fantasy 5. For those of you who did not hear, it will not be released in the U.S. Square U.S.A. takes so darn long to translate things, so they are skipping FF5 and only bringing over FF6. (…) The only reason they are skipping FF5 is because they take too long to translate! (…) The other thing they do is take out pieces of the game so U.S. players can beat it more easily, and taking out objectionable parts of the game!" (Video Zone, Volume 1, Issue 7).[94]

The citation also discusses videogame localization being a possibility of censorship to games' content, which is relevant. As seen in the theoretical debate, localization practices aim to release and offer a game in another language to users of different countries and cultures. In that sense, the issue related to the authentic feel of the game must be addressed. The debate of which aspects of a game need to be changed in a game in order to fit the targeted audience has two major aspects to it. One is to make the game suitable to pass the targeted country's laws and policies. The second one related to what is considered censorship is an interesting debate and deserves to be researched further. However, many games have something altered when localized, especially to adapt the game to the policies and laws, and the Japanese games that were imported by US market are no exception, as shown in Figure 4.11.

[94] Chris Kohler Archives, Box 1, Folder 1. The Strong Archive.

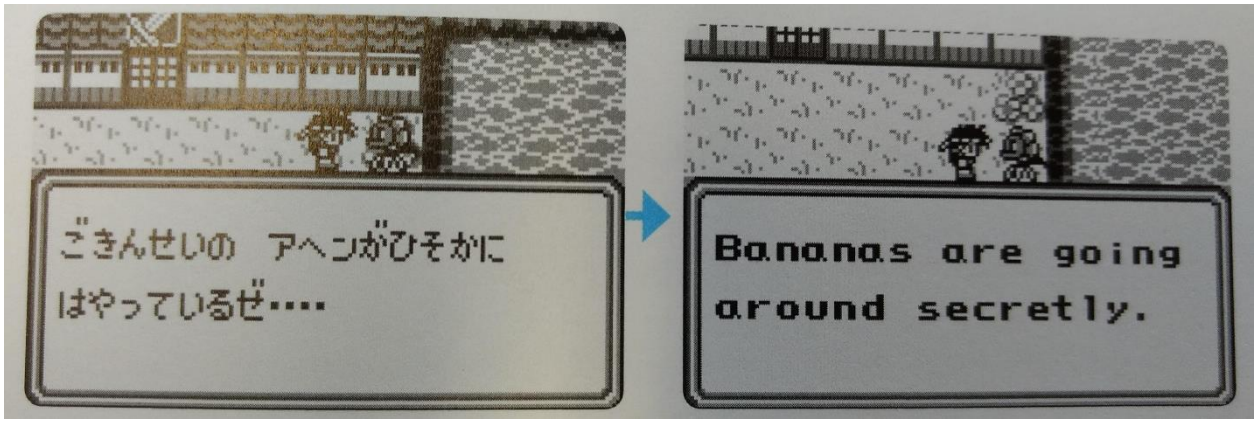

Figure 4.11 – *Final Fantasy Legend II* PrintScreen (Square Enix, 1990)
Source: Mandelin, 2017: 33

Analyzing Figure 4.11, one might question the reason the game's protagonist talk about bananas for a flower, and why the localizer of this game decided that it was the best option. Localization processes are more than mere translation, as the game needs to comply with laws and policies of the targeted country. This is a good example of that: the flower in which the protagonist is talking to is a poppy, a flower known for being used to extract opium, and the Japanese dialog states that the flower is a poppy. As US regulations prohibit videogames to show or reference any kind of drugs, localizers had as an option to change the conversation between the protagonist and the flower (see MANDELIN, 2017). Aiming to comply with local laws, videogame localization takes extra time, as it needs to ensure that all requirements are fulfilled before the game is released in the targeted country.

There is also another detail to be addressed in Figure 10. Looking at both pictures, one might notice that the English version has more graphic details than the Japanese one, showing more grass and an extra bunch of flowers. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Asian language characters usually take 2 Bytes of memory, while occidental ones just 1. On consoles with short memory power such as the arcade game in Figure 4.1 or a handheld device such as the Game Boy shown in Figure 4.11, the use of occidental characters might save memory, allowing the games to have different sets of details, depending on the version one is playing.

However, it was not only this discussion of when a game should be localized and what kinds of changes would be allowed to it. Chapter 3 discusses the role of broadband internet and how it is a major factor for reshaping an entire production chain in the videogame industry. At this time, though, internet access was very limited and videogame sales relied mainly on physical media, as mentioned in Finley's (INT - 5) interview:

> "But let's say in the 90s, people didn't have access to good internet, which meant that... Patching it with a new language or bug fixes was

> really hard. Maybe you were lucky and can buy a bug fix in a magazine or something, but you could not buy a language. So with the advent of selling games online, and streaming games, and so on... There is a whole new market for it. People connect and can buy them in the whole new capacity than before. And just looking back at my, my own video gaming days, when I was like a teenager in the 90s, early 2000s, I didn't have a real way of getting a decently priced game, unless I went to a specific store, down there. And if I was a lucky, they might have it in stock, or something. And then I had to wait, or I had to order them or something".

Physical media was almost the only way in which a customer could get a game. The restricted access to the internet and the inexistence of digital media, along with the limited storage space of games, had a major impact on localization. There were websites in which one could get patches – called mods - that would translate the game to another language, a translation usually made by players themselves, however this was also difficult. The availability of a game in other languages would be highly dependent both on the company and the local distributors, as stressed in Hayden's interview. Broadband internet availability enabled players to request game localizations and also enabled publishers to make more languages available.

The 1990s were also important for different countries in terms of developing their own gaming culture and localization practices, and Brazil was one of them. During the 1990s, several foreign titles were released in the country, as Sega and TecToy had an agreement to do so. Some of them were both localized and translated to Brazilian Portuguese. An interesting case of this period was *Mônica at the Dragon's Castle* (*Mônica no Castelo do Dragão*, Tectoy, 1991), a reprogramming of the game *Wonder Boy in Monster Land* (Sega, 1987), which included the famous Brazilian comic[95] characters from Turma da Mônica. Figure 4.12 shows the game reprogramming:

[95] Comic book: "a magazine with one or more comic strips". Source: https://www.dictionary.com/browse/comic-book?s=t, accessed in March 26th 2020.
Comic Strip: "a sequence of drawings, either in color or black and white, relating a comic incident, an adventure or mystery story, etc., often serialized, typically having dialogue printed in balloons, and usually printed as a horizontal strip in daily newspapers and in an uninterrupted block or longer sequence of such strips in Sunday newspapers and in comic books". Source: https://www.dictionary.com/browse/comic-strip?s=t, accessed March, 26th 2020.

Figure 4.12 – *Mônica no Castelo do Dragão* (Tectoy, 1991) and *Wonder Boy in Monster Land* (Sega, 1987) side-by-side PrintScreens
Source: http://blogtectoy.com.br/monica-no-castelo-do-dragao-a-primeira-aventura-da-dentucinha-no-master-system/, accessed July 9th 2019

Although this is considered the first videogame officially programmed in Brazil, it can also be considered a localization. In the introduction, several kinds of localization were presented, focusing mainly on language changes. However, localization can make several changes to a game, depending on the publishers' or developers' requirements. There are some cases in which game graphics and stories are changed depending on the countries' policy (see BERNAL-MERINO, 2015). This is the case in which the story and characters were changed not only as a way to fulfill part of Sega's requirement to TecToy, but it was also to make the game more culturally relevant to Brazil. After all, why change an entire game for characters who are beloved in Brazil? They could also have the possibility of only localizing this game from English to Portuguese, as is the case of Phantasy Star, but that was not the case. This is an interesting case and shows the many uses and forms of localization in the development of the videogame industry.

Another important case of this decade was *Phantasy Star* (Sega, 1991). This game not only had its box and manuals in Brazilian Portuguese, but also the game texts were translated, consolidating the Role-Playing Game (RPG)[96] in Brazil (SOUZA, 2015: 67-68). Videogame localization, during this time, also became an important feature to establish not only new markets, but also help to establish new game genres. The consolidation of certain genres is fundamental for localization nowadays, as will be discussed in detail in the following chapters of this thesis.

[96] "a game in which participants adopt the roles of imaginary characters in an adventure under the direction of a Game Master". Source: https://www.dictionary.com/browse/role-playing-game?s=t, accessed on March, 26th 2020.

Besides the Mônica no Castelo do Dragão and Phantasy Star cases, this period was crucial for consolidating the important pioneer Brazilian company Brasoft, which was funded in 1984 and became an important and exclusive game localization and dubbing company. The company bought Caracol dubbing studio, known for dubbing famous Brazilian TV series, such as Mundo da Lua (1991-1992). After great success in dubbing games such as *Grim Fandango* (LucasArts, 1998 - released simultaneously both in Brazil and US in Brazilian Portuguese and English) and *The Secret of Monkey Island* (LucasArts, 1990 - *A Maldição da Ilha dos Macacos* in Portuguese), the company discontinued its activities at the beginning of the 2000s.[97]

Section 4.6 1996: The Year Everything Changed

The role of localization of the videogame industry changed with the release of Pokémon in Japan in 1996. One representative of the Nintendo of America went to Japan during the launch of *Pokémon* (Nintendo, 1996) and decided to bring the franchise to US, even though it was created to be an exclusive Japanese game and anime. The franchise was brought to US and the localization team worked in all aspects of Pokémon, changing everything that could evoke feelings of foreignness (ALLISON, 2006). Figures 4.13 and 4.14 show how the process of localization of Pokémon was done:

Figure 4.13 – Print Screen from *Pokémon Blue* (Nintendo, 1996), Japanese Version
Source: The Strong Archives

[97] Source: http://overloadr.com.br/especiais/reportagens/2015/05/como-brasoft-desbravou-localizacao-de-games-brasileira-ha-quase-20-anos/#foto5, accessed on March 15th, 2018.

Figure 4.14 – Print Screen from Pokémon Blue (Nintendo, 1998), American Version
Source: The Strong Archives

The localization process of the game changed not only the language, but also the vast majority of the characters' names and kinds of relationships they built with one another. The cases shown in Figures 4.13 and 4.14 make this point clear: in Japanese, this character is called ヒトカゲ (Hitokage), which means fire lizard. In the American version, the character is called Charmander, an allusion to its salamander-like body shape. The localization process also guaranteed the translation of the character's measurements from the metric to the imperial system. The idea of erasing as much as possible of the original culture of the game, adapting as much as possible to the targeted culture's audiences proved to be a good standard to ensure the game would be successful in other countries.

With the great success the franchise had in US, Nintendo decided to release its games internationally in several languages at the same time (ALLISON, 2006). This trend is common nowadays, above all in AAA games, and it required the localization process to be professionalized. This is because game programmers were not able to localize games in multiple languages simultaneously while games were still being developed.

Section 4.7 The End of the 1990s and the 2000s

After the worldwide success of the *Pokémon* games (Nintendo, 1996 -), videogame localization increased is importance in the industry development. The role of this process today is going to be discussed in the next chapter, but from the mid/end of the 1990s, it developed greater importance. In May 1998, Game Developer[98] magazine published the following cover:

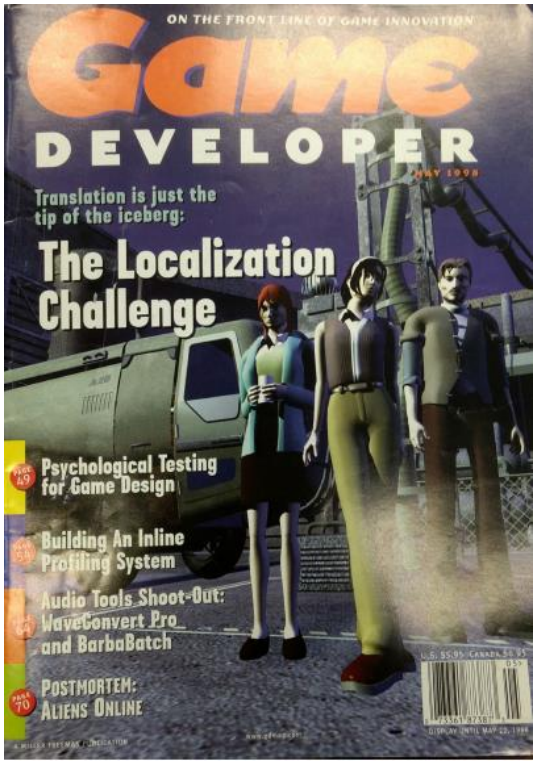

Figure 4.15 – Game Developer Magazine Cover, May 1998
Source: The Strong Archives

Figure 4.15 shows how localization has another meaning than translation. The magazine discusses several aspects of localization, including which steps it involved, the use of more than one localizer, and the use of localization kits. In a relevant discussion, the article entitled "Who does It?" states:

> "In general, the localization and foreign distribution issues are handled by a publisher. They will either handle the localization themselves, or have contacts in the target country who will take care of it. Many large publishers either have their own foreign offices or have permanent contacts with a local publisher. (…) Another common arrangement is for a distributor to bear/share the cost of localization in exchange for exclusive distribution rights in their territory. (…) Companies such as these [Polyglot, Polylang, SDL, and SRC Group] have an increasing amount of experience with all forms of media and can usually handle

[98] Source: The Strong Archives

> almost all aspects of localization, often for more than one language. There are also, of course, smaller companies and individuals available locally who deal directly with the publishers and can offer the same quality and service".[99] (Game Developer, May 1988, page 44)

This citation shows how localization practices are performed at a more general level. The main text of the article is more detailed in a development point of view, showing what the required source-code programming is before sending the game to localization. However, this overview of how the process was done is very interesting. First of all, it shows the possibilities of having a game localized in-house by a publisher, by big and small localization companies, freelancers or even by game distributors. The discussion on the role of physical media for videogames is relevant once again: game distributors would pay for game localization in order to have exclusive rights to distribute the games in specific countries.

The role of publishers, seen in Chapter 3, shows how the process started by Nintendo's NES success was crucial for videogame localization. Publishers were not only the means to publish a game on different platforms, they were also responsible to make sure the game could be sold worldwide. The redefinition of the role of publishers during the development of the videogame industry in the 2000s supported the redefinition of the role of localization.

Moreover, games could be localized in-house, by third-party companies or by freelancers.[100] The role of third-party companies and freelancers is relevant, especially with the discussion presented on the experience level they have for localizing games. This shows that game localization has its own characteristics already, even though the whole process originated in the software industry, one might affirm that, as videogames as a whole, it became something different.

However, not all countries had the same kind of development of the videogame industry nor localization practices. The Brazilian videogame market grew during the 1990s. However, at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, was characterized by a market downturn, mainly because of piracy (SOUZA, 2015: 176 – 178). One major example of this context for the Brazilian videogame industry was the high number of pirated PlayStations 2. When this console was released, a reverse engineering process showed that the console could be overridden by placing another chip on the console's motherboard. It would allow all kinds of games to be run on the console, especially games whose CDs were burned at home.

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[99] The Strong Archives

[100] This is about the same structure there is today, even though in-house localization is quite rare. A detailed analysis of this feature will be presented in the following chapters.

Although piracy interfered in the growth of the official game industry in the country, it resulted in creating a gaming culture like no other. On one hand, it allowed players to tinker with the games available for PS2, creating new versions of already existing games. On the other hand, it allowed people to create mods and patches that would allow games to be changed into different languages. This is the case of The Bomba Patch, which not only put Brazilian players into the *Winning Eleven* (Konami, 1995 -)[101] games, but it also translated everything into Brazilian Portuguese.[102]

In this context, several videogame companies did not regard Brazil as an important market, and the investments in localization and dubbing practices decreased. Game localization in Brazil got restricted to PC game titles, which were much cheaper than the console ones, as they had lower tributary loads and were officially distributed in Brazil. In conclusion, it can be stated that PC games and multiplatform (with a PC version) ones were the ones responsible for maintaining the localization and dubbing practices in Brazil (SOUZA, 2015: 176 – 178).

Localized games would become more common only in the second half of the 2000s in Brazil. We highlight 2006 as a milestone for these processes in the Brazilian videogame industry, as it was the year that Microsoft released the games Viva Piñata and Halo 3 localized and dubbed into Brazilian Portuguese to be played in their new console, the Xbox 360. From this, large companies showed renewed interest in Brazil as a potential consumer market, increasingly investing more in localizing and dubbing their titles (SOUZA, 2015: 203-204).

Section 4.8 Final Thoughts

As seen, localization processes took a long time to have the professional process we have today. It changed who should be responsible for doing so, to the most common kinds of localization, to when a game should be localized. It shows that much had to change for us to have the games that we have today.

Videogame localization, as seen, was a key element for the success of the Nintendo Entertainment System in US. After all, it allowed players to have their Japanese games localized into a language they could understand, which became consumers of this billion-dollar industry we have today. In other words, one might argue that videogame localization had an essential role in the recovery and follow-up development of the videogame industry.

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[101] A soccer videogame

[102] An entire documentary series (called *Parallels*) on the development of the videogame industry in Brazil can be accessed at: https://www.redbull.com/int-en/the-history-of-video-games-in-brazil, accessed March, 26th 2020.

It is important, here, to summarize some ideas. First of all, the actors involved in videogame localization in its beginnings were usually restricted to their own programmers of the game, who knew another language and decided to (re)program the game, depending on where it was going to be released. After this first phase, when the publishers decided to try to enter international markets and publish their games on different platforms, their role in the videogame industry not only changed but also became more prominent and the localization processes were held by them. The insertion of localization in the production chain of the videogame started as an afterthought and slowly changed into being considered before a game was released.

The second aspect to be discussed here is the way localization was shaped to what it is today over time. There was, for the first time, just language translations, with several translation problems that could result in a break of immersion. Then, there were localizations in which graphics and soundtracks were being changed to better fit targeted audiences. This would not only require some knowledge of the targeted culture beyond knowing its language, but it would also require a higher investment.

The last aspect is related to cultural uses of localization. Localization began with importing games from one place to another, changing its perspective to exporting the games to other countries. The focus on domestic markets, even though it is still important, shifted significantly during the 1990s, especially with Nintendo's NES success in US. The reasons given to localize a game, though, showed how identity construction plays a major part in this process. After all, one could learn another language by playing games, especially if the game allows the player to choose which language she/he wanted to play the game in. However, this discourse comes from an imperialistic point of view, in which enabling a player to learn other languages potentially means that the industry itself shall not adapt to the customer's needs and product requirements.

It is still important to analyze further the impact it had on the industry and the society, which will be done in the following chapters. Thus, the next chapters will explore in-depth three main issues in videogame localization today: its role in the industry, the actors involved in it, and the role of the players in localization practices today.

Chapter 5

Flowey says: “Are you a human or are you a monster?” the role of videogame localization[103]

Past experiences in videogame localization led to the role this process has in the industry today. In this chapter, we discuss four different aspects of the localization process: how interviewees and informants define localization, which languages companies localize their games for, the costs involved, and how the process translates into revenues.

Section 5.1 Defining Localization

Defining a term can be a highly complex process that depends much on how something is done rather than describing what the term actually is defined. In this sense, presenting how the informants of this research addressed the question of defining videogame localization is fundamental in analyzing its role and the various aspects. Some discussions on the definition of videogame localization were presented in the introduction of this thesis.

Bailey (INT - 3) defined localization as a concept on these terms:

> “So, localization is, of course, making... Making something available or... Translating in a broader way, not just translating words, but translating meaning, translating some product into a different culture... Like making it accessible in a different culture. (…) You know, having a product and want to make it as accessible as possible to the world. And that means translating the words, making sure the meaning is still available in that target language”.

The representative’s definition of videogame localization is tied to the idea of translating products, a process that is highly related to linguistic changes, not only related to word-by-word translation, but also by a translation of meanings for a product to be more accessible to different cultures. Interestingly, the notes from Finley (INT - 5) have a similar approach to the topic:

> “It's the tool to make a videogame closer to the target audience. I think it's more respected now that in the past, when companies didn't worry about global audiences”.

> ““"Videogame localization" is the transference of a game from one source language into one or more target languages. It includes the translation, editing and often re-dubbing and subbing of the game from one language and culture into another language and culture”.

[103] This title is a homage to *Undertale* (Toby Fox, 2015)

> "It is making the game close and available to the local players. So the local player would have the same experience"
>
> "For the first question, we think localization has two levels. The first level is to make the game playable for players who cannot read the original language. The quality requirement for this level is relatively low. The second level is to make sure the players have the same experience as those who understand or speak the original language. This would involve not only high-quality translation but also potential tweaks of fonts or UI [User Interface]".
>
> "Videogame localization and localization as a whole is a process of translating and adapting the product for the local market. Videogames localization involve additional creational aspects making this process in between of literature and movies".

Finley (INT - 5) stated the following as a localization definition: "(…) And well, the easiest way to define localization is to make the game available to local players... And make sure that it's... Well, it's accessible to people who might not have English as their first or second, or maybe not even third language, you know?". This definition brings to the fore the relation between the localization process with language accessibility, making a product suitable for different markets, which was also discussed by Jamie (INT – 7).

These definitions are focused on the linguistic side of the localization practices, which shows how different the practice is today, compared to the past. Chapter 4 showed how different localization techniques were used during the development of the videogame industry, which could change characters of a game, soundtracks, and visuals. Nowadays, localization practices are much more restricted to the linguistic side of the process, something highlighted in the definitions given: a way to make the game playable for people who cannot understand the original language in which it was created. There is, however, another side to it, which is the question of the player's experience that ties these definitions also to the discussions on localization and authenticity.

In other words, the discussion held in Chapter 4 on English as a standard language for videogames is not as valid nowadays (see next section for details). Even though most of the games are still created in English, presenting the game in only one language is no longer the most common practice as most games are (at least partially) localized for the game to be better received in other countries, even if it is not done by a professionally trained localizer, as is the case of Winter (BGS – 1; PAX – 5). Besides that, the availability of a game to the player is no longer only related to the game's box and docs, as most games nowadays are more dependent

on sound and texts, the localization practices are more frequent, at least, for in-game texts and/or for game subtitles (MANGIRON, 2018).

The definitions presented, however, are not the only ones given and some of the other interviewees offered some interesting insights into aspects of localization. Bailey (INT - 3) was one of these cases:

> "(…) The easiest definition, apart from the obvious ones... Might be... It's the best tool for market expansion. (…) When we localize a game, we don't only allow players to speak a different language to understand the game. I think it's more about building trust with them, to show them that we care about them. And yeah, so localization is different for each market".

This definition, as the other ones, still carries the linguistic aspect of the localization process, discussing both the accessibility players get when a game is localized but also the use of this process in order to gain trust from the players. This aspect is new and related to yet another aspect of localization: market expansion. When consumers acquire trust in certain brands and companies, they frequently continue to consume their products and localization, as stated, it is a process that can help customers engage better with the company, changing not only its market share for that specific country but also allowing the players to have more power for requiring better suitable products for them (see also Finley's (INT – 5) interview in Chapter 6).

Localization definitions, as seen, were not very wide in variety, but they expressed both the role this practice has to the industry nowadays, as well as its focus on the linguistic aspect of it. In order to continue the discussion on the role of localization in the videogame industry, it is imperative to consider for which languages this process is normally done.

Section 5.2 Languages

The decision-making process, as shown in chapter 4, described how the companies decide which games will be localized and to which languages. The process considers how well a certain game genre sells in a certain country, the player's age that game is appropriate for, how the last installment of the franchise went in that specific country, and how well other similar games sell in each country. This is crucial information to the decision-making process for game localization, especially considering its costs (this is addressed in the next Section).

Bailey (INT - 3) described the following on the languages they localize their games into:

> "In general, we localize in a lot of languages, so, in general 10 to 12 languages. So, that means that my company actually likes to put a lot of languages into one game because we think we have a lot of different

> players around the world, and it translate into sales, you know? (…) Because we usually have a fix set of languages, because when we go and say "we have a new game that is going to come out", there is usually 10-12 languages that we usually apply to every game. So, just for you, you know? (…) So, we, then, decide to cut some languages and focus more on areas... It's basically about areas, like, where is this genre? Or who plays this genre? Is more for marketing, sales perspectives (...). So, if we have, like, a general idea where this game is going to be popular, we localize into those languages".

The company's strategy to have their games localized into a variety of languages aiming to guarantee sales to different players involve high investments, increasing the number of languages a game is localized to throughout the years. This is a common feature among the interviewed companies. A small German publisher (PAX – 3) also localized their games for more than 12 languages, even though their largest markets is still restricted to six countries. The languages they localize include the EFIGS, Brazilian-Portuguese (Pt-Br), Simplified Chinese, Japanese, and Russian. The representative also stated that they do not localize their games both to Arab and traditional Chinese, as these languages are highly difficult to program in a game. In other words, this company does not only use the localization process to guarantee markets, but also to try and expand operations.

In addition, the representative from an American publisher (PAX – 10) stated that the company localizes its games using third party companies, and said that the publisher localized their games to EFIGS, Brazilian Portuguese, Chinese (both simplified and traditional), Russian and Japanese. The person also said that some games are also localized to other specific languages (but did not provide examples). As seen, several game publishers are concerned with the localization process and aim to accommodate as many languages as possible for their products.

London, a representative from Dutch publisher (PAX – 4) stated that his company localizes their games to EFIGS, Russian and Japanese, using third party companies. The person also said that localization is a challenge, above all regarding different accents, giving an example of English being different in Europe and US, and these choices can have an impact on the sales of the game. The discussion on accents was not only done by this representative. Ricky (PAX – 7) also discussed the same issue, giving the example that game localization done in Montreal not always makes sense to a French user, and the person also stated that the largest videogame markets related to languages are: English, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch/German.

This fine-tuning required to consider which accents to localize a game shows how intricate this process has become since its first attempts during the 1970s, as seen in Chapter 4. However, when dealing with languages and localizers, it is also important to consider that the relationship between localization and development teams as an important one for the localization process.[104] After all, even though one company already has worked with a localizer before, not always will the results of the localization process satisfy the customer. In other words, localization is a complex and dynamic capability, with uncertain results. That was the case stated by Shannon (PAX – 8): a game (title of the game uninformed) had been localized both to Korean and Japanese by a third company with which they worked in the past, which was successful. The Korean localization seems to have no problem at all, while the Japanese version had many complaints from the players which they are still working on to reconfigure and redo everything needed so the localized version has a better quality. The sensibility of different languages to the localization process is interesting for this research, as it shows how the localization process is a complex one.

Finley (INT - 5) also discussed the question of languages with these ideas:

> "(…) It's a bit different, depending on the projects... But we always translate into is French, German and Spanish. Then we have Russian, Polish, and Brazilian Portuguese as well as Simplified Chinese. (…) So, it kind of depends. We never remove language from projects, but might decide... And this language didn't work out that well, for this project. So, we're not translating this project into that language, because it doesn't make sense if we see that not enough people playing it in (…). But we might return to it in a few years, if we see that the market is growing, and so on. So, we'll see. It's always like, sometimes are all these languages... Honestly it did well in those, and those and so on. (…) English, French, Italian, and so on... But we have never localized into Italian, because it's not very profitable, to be honest (...) And the more languages we make available, the more players we get, and also it gives us more players who also want other languages".

The languages which the games are localized into usually is more than the EFIGS today, which seems to be a trend in the industry. The only case which was reported to me that the EFIGS was going to be the only languages that would support their products was with a hardware developer at E3 (Los Angeles, 2019), but the representative (Morgan) also said that they still have not decided if their product will be localized.

The EFIGS languages are, today, considered a bare minimum and no longer respond to the entirety of localization practices, a reality that corresponded well to the past, as seen in the

[104] This discussion will be more detailed in the next chapter.

previous chapter. Of course, each project can change the languages in which a game is localized based both on the budget the localization team has and also the probability that the game will profit from in this process. However, as seen, the amount of languages the games are being localized has changed to the point that a company's representative stating that they might not even localize their product as an exception among all the informants. This new variety of languages in which games are being localized to, and the push of players, requiring for more localization, indicates the new role this process is developing in the industry. The result of it, though, is related to the costs this process has nowadays.

Section 5.3 Costs & Revenues

The discussion on costs and how much a company is willing to invest in localization is fundamental to discuss the role this practice has on the industry. After all, if this practice is becoming more mainstream as it enables enhanced selling numbers, as well as more active players for their communities, then investing in this process and making sure it is done properly is fundamental.

Bailey (INT - 3) discusses issues related to cost in the following terms:

> "To have an overview of all of them. And, in special cases, if it is in a higher word count, we... Of course, it is very expensive, localization is very pricy. (...) It's usually just for translations,testing, and voice-over recordings. (…) So, that's a word price. The localization testing, like the Localization QA, is often paid by hour. It kinda depends on the person. Sometimes it's free, sometimes it's just a general price and sometimes it's by the hour. Hum, the voice recordings are very pricy because you pay for the studio, the direction, the post-production, and then every person has to show up. (…) So, that's a bit pricy. The general translation is sent per word. (...) Like 10 cent per word is, like, the absolute general price".

Besides that, also according to Bailey (INT - 3), the prices for voice-over and LQA are not included in this per word price, as the way it is charged is usually by the hour. Voice-overs, additionally, have the cost of the recording studio, sound direction, and the post-production. Even though this process can become quite pricy depending on the number of words, the possibility of paying it by word has enabled smaller developers to also invest in the localization process, such as the case of a Brazilian indie development company (BGS - 2). Addison (INT - 2) also described the cost of localization tied to the volume of the text, but did not describe if they charge by the word.

This setting for localization was also described to me in this same way by Ricky (PAX – 7), when the person discussed the two kinds of localization, the first involving voice-over –

the most expensive kind - and the second only subtitles. When discussing the budget the localization can have, the representative stated that videogame localization can cost up to 20% of a game budget, depending on the kind of localization one is doing, the number of languages, the costs of translation itself, and the budget for the development of the entire game. The high cost of the process and the amount of the game budget dedicated to the localization process is a wide discussion among the interviewees and fieldwork informants.

Finley (INT – 5) discussed these matters as follows:

> "Yeah, most are paid by the word. And it differs a lot between the localization vendors, and what do you charge for. So, you can count on paying between 7 euros cents up to 22 euros cents... 25 Maybe. But the EFIGS, Polish, and Russian, you pay at the most 12 to 15 euro cents for word. (…) Then you have a PM charge. The project management, which is usually 10% on everything. (…) I talked to one of our producers from [Name of game]. And he said that 3% of his budget goes to the localization. (…) But here has also the most languages and a few of the more expensive ones as well".

So, the costs of each language a publisher/developer chooses to localize their game into varies immensely, which explains the reason why some publishers state that they tend to localize their game into these varieties of languages, but it gets changed when the game is released, usually with fewer languages than the ones they intended to. The representative (INT – 5) also described that, besides the cost of the translation process itself, there is also the Project Management (PM) cost, so we now have a better picture of how all the localization costs work. Besides that, the game budget used for the localization process in this example shows how different takes on the subject might have. After all, Ricky (PAX – 5) was talking about lower-budget games, so that the localization process would become a higher share of the general game budget.

Evan (INT - 4) gave more details on how the process for choosing a localization vendor is, regarding the costs:

> "(…) I normally do an open call and a competition for every game, just to make sure to pick the best company for every game. And also to kind ofre-verify. Even if I stay with the same vendor for let's say translation, it's a good idea to re-verify and just make sure that I'm still working with the people who can provide the best quality for our games. It's quality assurance, I don't just continue working with someone only because I work with them on the previous game. So, I like to have several companies doing a translation test and give me a quote. So, I can just go back everything and make sure that I am really good gone the most suitable vendor for the given project. And I like to have a primary vendor, and also a backup in case anything goes pear-shaped, or if the primary company cannot deal with the sudden surge of text".

The interview shows that trust is an important issue, however, it does not guarantee future contracts, cost also plays a role. This is interesting, as this company was the only one who described how they choose localization vendors this way. All the other ones I interviewed seemed to have a set of specific vendors who they trust more to provide localization services.

On the budget of videogame localization, Evan (INT - 4) also stated that:

> "(…) again, this would depend on the genre. (…) So is heavily variestext heavy RPGs, then, of course, the localization budget will bebigger. I can only do guesswork, because, yeah, as I said the variance is really huge. But that case would be a bigger chunk of the overall game budget. And it's hard to put a percentage value... Not always we deal with the overall budget. But even though localization is expensive, it is still the best way to generate additional revenues for a game. (…) So, for example, if you would like to get only 10% of your overall text voiced, that might easily already double your budget. (…) The other thing with the voiceover that's where we have the biggest difference between languages, and also between the individual studios, not just in terms of costs, but also in terms of processes, but so that you have some idea about the cost. So, getting a voiceover for Russian or Portuguese will be one third, or even one fourth of the price of getting the same thing done for Korean or Japanese. (…) So, massive differences between the languages. (…) The industry Standard is paying by word for, the translation at least... For the voice, sometimes it's by line, sometimes it's by words, if by hours. It depends on the individual studios. It can be different, because, again, you have a very immersive story heavy game. You might have to get your lines lip synced. So, you are going to need a technology to support that. So that is very different from simply doing a subtitle".

Ricky (PAX – 7) also stated that the budget for a game varies significantly depending on the kind of localization one intends to do on their game. The budget, as noticed, might vary considerably, as voice-overs seem to be extremely expensive, when compared to text-only localizations, with a wide variety of prices depending on the language and ways of charging for the services.

This great variety brings lots of many problems to publishers during the decision-making process that might opt for a game to be localized or not, as budget constraints might lower not only the number of languages a game is localized into, but also the kind of localization a company might be able to do, bringing another layer of tension between player's expectations and what the companies can provide.

One way to avoid this kind of tension is to release games and do the localization as the games themselves are selling and forming its community. That's the strategy described to me by an American publisher (PAX – 8). According to its representative (Shannon, PAX – 8), the

latest company's release, had some localization done upon release, but most of them came when the game's community grew and had already sold enough copies so the company could afford more localization processes. The representative also told me that they are studying another method for localization, which is done through crowdsourcing, in which the players would provide resources for this process.

Another indication of the change of the role in localization practices is related to costs. Even though localization depends heavily on studying the market, the number of languages a game is being localized to and also to the kind of localization being done, a publisher willing to spend up until 20% of a game budget (Ricky, PAX – 7) in localization shows that this process is gaining importance in the industry. There are many variables to consider when discussing localization costs, from how these services are charged to the kind of localization a publisher is willing to do. The role of this process for the industry seems to be growing, though, as the budget for it and the kinds of specialization that this process has nowadays seems to also be growing. But the discussion on the role of the videogame localization would not be complete without a discussion on the revenues this process can provide to the game, and how the informants and interviewees talked about the role localization has in the industry today.

Most interviewees and fieldwork informants discussed the role of revenues that results from videogame localization. Addison (INT - 2) stated that localization is important for the market, guaranteeing revenue increase, that rapidly increases sales for 2% in Brazil, as an example. Finley's (INT - 5) notes state that localization "(…) spreads the market wildly". The same thing was said by Bailey (INT - 3), who stated that "So, I think for us is basically... Hum... When we know we can sell the game. So, over the years, languages have been added in our standard portfolio like, you know".

In other words, localization is important because it not only translates the games for the players, but it also translates into sales for the game publishers and developers. Actually, for some companies, the international market is as important or even more important than their national ones. That's the case of a small publisher from Germany (PAX – 3), as Marin stated that videogame localization is an extremely important asset in the videogame industry, as it helps games to be sold, guaranteeing an important revenue outside the English versions of each game, with the biggest revenues coming from outside the US being China, Russia, Spain, France, and Japan.

Other interviewees also stressed the role of localization for better revenues by other examples and cases. Finley (INT - 5) stated the following on the subject:

> "(…) They both released... Let's see, was it 2016? Might have to get back to you... I think it was, then we realize that Russia is a great big market. And they really like our games in Russia, and definitely decided that those two would be translated into Russian and distributed into Russia as well, and marketed. That means that if you do it for Russia, you have to do marketing that is, specialized into Russia as well. Same with simplified Chinese... (...). I think we actually sold 30% more in China because of that".

The growth of markets after localization can be outstanding, so the investment and the risks involved in the localization process can be easily paid off. Of course, one might consider that a localization process that was poorly done might actually damage the targeted market, not translating into enough sales for the company to continue with the practice for that language, but the role of players reporting the localization problems can be a way for the companies to understand better why certain game is not selling well in certain regions. Changing localization vendors and techniques might be a way of avoiding running into the same problems, trying to get the player's trust back, translating it into new sales.

Evan (INT - 4) discussed the issue between localization and revenues during the interview:

> "(…) So you are probably aware of the global market in terms of revenues per country. And you will see that the US has fallen the second place, as the second biggest market, although this year, they have regained their number one position. Because of the Chinese (...) There was a freeze by the government in approving games. But still, the market has become International, and players do expect to play games that speak to them, that speak their language, not just language as literal language. (…) Nowadays, the foreign markets do contribute to the overall game revenues, it became significant. (…) For example, the Russian market is well known for shooter games. Shooter games really do well on that market. In, in Italy is more casual games, so yeah, just knowing the demographics of the players, what is the age group, the preferences, things like that. (…) It has a beautiful return on the investment, and it is reasonably easy to calculate as well. So, this is normally a really good investment to add additional languages to the game support. And, normally, it would be the voiceover that is the most expensive part of localization budget".

Opening to new markets and localizing the game is an important asset to guarantee new sales for the products, especially because it also reflects upon the player's expectations towards the game. This discussion was not only given by Evan (INT – 4). Morgan (E3 - 5) also stated some interesting aspects regarding videogame localization and revenues. Morgan (E3 - 5) also told me that localization is an expensive effort and it would require from the companies at least some certainty that the investment would pay off with a profit margin. However, this process

is necessary if you want to take that market seriously. Two aspects of this idea need to be considered. The first one is about the concept of localization itself, as it does not mean only adapting a product so it will be better accepted in oversea markets, but it also means a new form of commitment to the product itself. The second aspect, closely related to the first one, is that when you decide to localize a product, you show the public you are interested in new markets and that it has a bigger commitment than just willing to sell any products no matter what.

Besides the revenue localization can bring to a publisher, it is also tied to the possibility of opening new markets, not only because the population does not speak certain languages, but also because governments have specific laws regarding videogames, which can affect the possibility of it being sold or not. Localization, then, becomes much more than mere translation to enable people to access games in the languages they feel more comfortable with. It means enabling users to even acquire the games. It enhances the income models presented in Chapter 3, especially if the localization process began while the game was still under development, as the game community building might start during the marketing of the game. In the end, the localization process means an extra process in the videogame production chain, and an extra cost, that might highly pay-off for the companies who do it, as it might increase the guarantee stability of that country's market share. Of course, videogame publishers and developers might change their localization strategy depending on how well certain genres sell in certain countries.

Section 5.4 Role

The different although complementing definitions of localization, the discussions of its costs and revenues, introduced many issues on the role of this process in the videogame industry. However, it is important to discuss how fieldwork informants and interviewees understand the question of the role of localization in the industry nowadays.

Bailey (INT - 3) states the following on the role of localization:

> "It's very important work, but I can see it is a very overlooked area of videogame development, because a lot of people do not know that it exists. (…) For me it's an important part because I think making games available into a lot of different languages is great customer-service-wise, and it's great because not every person speaks English, and its making games available for a lot of people and that's something I really enjoy and I think most of the time people do not realize how much work it actually is and how many people are involved in this work. So, yeah".

The role of localization, according to this representative, is related to the players' accessibility, as the customers do not necessarily speak English, making the games in as many languages as possible. Leslie (E3 – 4) stated that localization practices are fundamental to the

company, as they are a Swedish company, and localization leads to game sales worldwide. This recent trend has become an important role for the localization practice today, resulting in what Morgan (E3 – 5) told me about this practice: localization, nowadays, is a need for all the companies. After all, if you are going to consider taking on a new market in a serious way, you have to be sure the product is localized to it.

This relationship between the market and customer's accessibility was not only addressed by Bailey (INT - 3), but these themes also appeared on Finley's (INT - 5) notes. They state that:

> "The role of adapting a product to the local market is very big in modern games production, especially (by my personal opinion) because of the ease of access to the product, with digital distribution, it is easier for the audience to get the game than before when retail publishers were mostly sold on the Russian market. So basically, based on the complexity of your game it is essential that local player understands what you intended to create and have seamless fun and enjoyment, and providing local language support removes a barrier significantly. Currently there are a lot more games releasing (and with the help of digital distribution) and there is a huge localization demand than before, in Russia there was a number of local publishers, who mostly does localization and adaptation for local market, but now digital distribution allows to reach the player much faster and get the feedback much faster as well".

> "Due to the global nature of modern videogame markets, localization is more important than ever before. The growing size of projects internally requires larger sales markets, larger sales markets allow for larger projects - and even smaller indie-projects nowadays go for a localization".

The accessibility of the players to the product itself because of online retailing and a need to understand what is going on in terms of the screen has made localization an important process for the videogame industry as a whole. The meaning of this process and its importance changed significantly during the development of the videogame industry. This is not only something that was shown in Chapter 4, when past experiences in videogame localization were analyzed, but it was also addressed by Finley (INT - 5):

> "(…) I feel that, why, let's say 10, maybe around 20 years ago, the main purpose of localization was to remove the language barrier between the game and the player. I think now, we have moved towards improving the immersion of the player and adding value to the game. (…) So, I would say that the local game localization market has become more mature. And localization is in most companies no longer an ad hoc afterthought. Something that we would do only once everything else is ready. But rather there is a thought through localization strategy, and the game localizers are involved in that process much earlier on (…)".

The involvement of the localization team early on the development process shows that the role of localization has grown and become mature inside the industry.[105] Even though there are companies that still wait for the game to be released to consider investing in localization, most companies create strategies to make this process synchronize with the production chain of the game.[106]

The role of localization, though, is not only given by player's accessibility and market growth. Finley (INT - 5) stated the following when discussing the role of videogame localization to the industry:

> "(…) According to what I can read from our translators, it has a more important role nowadays, because people actually want the game. The people are constantly asking for better translations, and to get a lot of more new games. So, in order to be able to compete with other games, you almost need to translate your game into different languages. So, some of ours will never be as successful unless we hadn't translated into these languages. And when I started, we only had as I said, French, German, Spanish. It's commonly known as the EFIGS. (…) Obviously it's more important than ever, because they are reaching so many new markets".

The discussion of the role of the localization process in getting a more prominent space in the industry is not only related to player accessibility or market necessities. It also has a relation to the customers wanting the game, according to this interviewee. This is important, as it carries the notion that people in the past would not have the same will to consume games than today. Besides that, the competition among the various game publishers and hundreds of games released on an everyday basis.

Jamie (INT – 7) states that the role of videogame localization became much more prominent nowadays because of digital distribution. After all, according to this representative, digital distribution allowed the distribution to be more easily done, especially because people could buy their games in local currency, and would not need to rely on unlicensed distribution (including piracy). However, the games would need to be localized, as these distributors usually translated the games to be more easily sold.

However, during the E3 (Los Angeles, 2019) fieldwork, I noticed that the companies usually do not bring their localization team to the conference, which is important for this research. After all, even though the conference aims at showcasing what is new on the industry, and videogame localization is becoming an important feature for sales worldwide, it would be

[105] The relationship between localization and development teams are further discussed in the next chapter.
[106] See chapters 3 and 6 for further information.

natural to consider that big videogame conferences, such as E3, would address this process and stimulate the companies to bring their localization team to the convention. The companies in this convention brought their development team, from programmers to artists, but not the localizers. In other words, it seems that, even though it is still an important asset for the industry, it is something not to be openly addressed for some reason. This finding was also discussed by Bailey (INT - 3) as follows in this discussion: "And it's something everybody still expects, but nobody knows how it is done", arguing that this is not only related to players, but sometimes to industry representatives.

Of course, this does not mean that localization is not important to the industry. On the contrary, according to my informants, localization is especially important, therefore a Swedish company can sell their games outside Sweden. In other words, localization is important to guarantee markets and profits. However, it was interesting to notice that, even though it is considered an important process for the industry, most companies did not bring a specialist to the convention.

Section 5.5 Final Thoughts

As seen, the role of localization in the videogame industry is growing and the process is now tied to game development. The investment of companies seems to pay off and the localization process seems to translate into more revenue, depending on the languages the process was done. According to the interviewees, localization gained another aspect on the recent years, going beyond the idea of only overcoming language barriers and focusing on player's experience. This seems to be relevant as it brings to the fore Venuti's (1995) discussions on domestication and foreignization tied to Said's (1978) argument on identity and Bhabha's (1994) culture performance. The focus on game experience entails an idea of who the player is, how his/her culture works and what they expect from a game, which translates into game sales.

The discussion above allowed the creation of a typology about the meaning of localization for videogames, summarized in Table 5.1.

Localization Type	Definition
Localization as Translation	Localization translates meanings, not only words
Localization as Language Transfer	Localization transfers a game from one language to another. This involves the technical aspects of localization such as translating, editing, subbing and re-dubbing the game
Localization as Market Adaptation	Localization as the process of adapting and translating a product to a new market, aiming at its expansion

Table 5.1 - Localization Typology
Own Authorship

These different takes on videogame localization shows that the new focus related to user experience is tied to how industry representatives understand their jobs and role in the industry. The first type focus on translating meaning, which would allow the player to create another relationship to the game. This entails Said's (1978) and Bhabha's (1994) discussion on identity and cultural performance, as the player's context should be regarded into the process. It is important, though, to consider that this player's expectations is largely imagined during a great deal of the game's development process. The release of Alpha versions of a game allows the publishers not only to correct major technical issues, but also understand better the player's expectations (see LIMA, 2016).

The second type is more language focused and entails the technical aspects of videogame localization, including its typological features (e.g. Box and Docs, In-Game text translation, and subtitling). This localization type relates to Venuti's (1995) discussion on domestication and foreignization, as this more technical-focused definition entails a greater debate on what to localize and why.

The last localization type is tied to the LISA's definition (see introduction). This definition is focused on market expansion, costs and revenues. Even though this definition was developed by an association that does not exist anymore, it is still currently used.

These aspects will be more fully discussed in the next chapter, which describes the actors involved in the videogame localization, discussing their role in the process.

Chapter 6
Not even Sonic saved the world by himself: actors in videogame localization[107]

This chapter aims to describe how localization is performed, both according to how it is described in scholar texts concerning localization and how actors involved in localization describe it. At first, a detailed localization chain is discussed, and then the role of each actor is discussed. As in Chapter 3, the role of each actor will be discussed separately, detailing how each one becomes involved in localization practices, and the data refers to the interviewees and fieldwork (Chapter 2). Finally, the role of these actors is also discussed in light of scholar debates on videogame localization, delving deeper into the discussion of the role of localization in the videogame industry, as it debates – in details – the role of a large number of actors, including the players.

Section 6.1 Explaining the Localization Chain: How is it done?

Based on the interviews and observations as a participant in events, Figure 6.1 presents the relations among actors involved in the videogame localization chain.

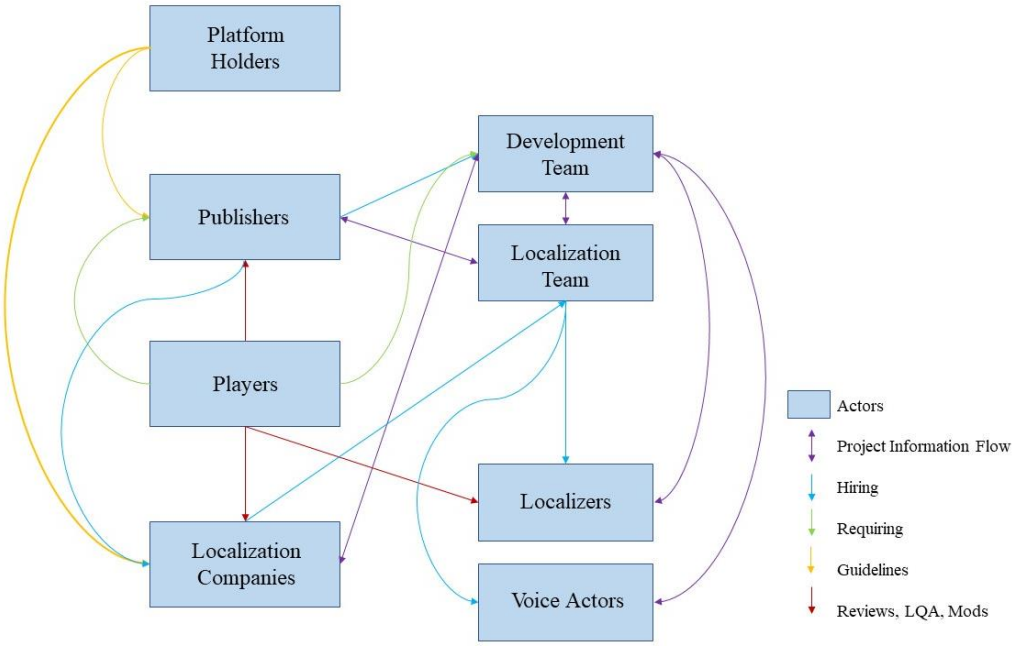

Figure 6.1 – Actors' Relations in Videogame Localization
Source: Own Authorship, based on fieldwork.

[107] This title is a homage to the *Sonic, the Hedgehog* franchise (Sega, 1991 -).

According to representatives from a Polish publisher (E3 2019: E3 – 7 and E3 – 8), videogame localization presents two features: development and business. The business side was already discussed when presenting the role of the publishers in the localization process (see Chapter 3). In general, companies seem to use information related to past experiences, the sales of other games of the same genre, and the player's age when deciding if a game is going to be localized or not and to which languages. It is important to notice that this decision-making process involves a group of people, which might include game writers, a company's C.E.O., the finance team, marketing team, localization team, programmers, and players. These are the ones who would require and pressure game publishers to look ahead in terms of localizing the game into the different languages. The other actors use their expertise to support the decision-making process, as localization is a costly effort and the company aims to guarantee their profit.

On the development side, many actors are involved. Platform Holders are the ones who create guidelines for localization, which might also dictate the tone and the form of how localization is done. Their role in the process, though, is very different and the one they had until the beginning of the 2000s, when they would give a final decision on where the game would be released and localized. Nowadays, this enlarged role is held by videogame publishers.

Inside the publisher, many steps are taken so that a new game can be localized. An interview was conducted with a representative from a German publisher (Bailey, INT - 3) who gave a summary of the process:

> "Starting with the development team, who has to prepare the game for localization. So, every team who is working on the game, like programmers, scripters, all that, they have to come up with the localization groundwork. So, working with the engine, working with the technical background. They have to make sure that a lot of languages can be put into the game and how it's gonna be. The author of the game, who needs to set up the text in a specific localization kit. So, everybody can work with it, so that's a lot of work, then of course, it comes to me as the person who manages all this work. It's all the individual translators who have to deal with it. Additionally, sometimes the Project Managers who also take care of that. Then it comes back to the development team who has to put the translation into the game, sometimes it's a lot of people who have to work with a lot of texts. The dev team, including the programmers, the scripters, the writer, the author, the project manager and, then, my team as well".

The localization process starts when the game is still being developed, when the game's writers set up the localization kit, that will be dealt by the localizers and localization managers. According to Evan and Finley's interviews, the actual localization process starts when the game

is between 50 and 70% ready, in other words, almost when game Beta testing should start. Evan described the process in a more detailed way from a localization team point-of-view.

> "Game localizers are involved in that process much earlier on. There are three general changes in the game development industry, that are of course affecting us. So, the first one is... Many people hate this word in the industry, but processes have become more agile. So, more things are happening at the same time (...). So, we don't have time to wait until everything is ready to start the next phase, for example, localization. So, we have to start working while the development is still in progress. And we have to deal with all the changing texts. Now, most companies would be sim-shipping their games. (…) Because let's say a Korean or an Italian player will see that there is a new game release, and their language is not supported. Maybe they will get offended. (…) Which of course, again, means that localization has to start earlier. And it has to be completely done when the game is ready to ship. (…) So again, localization has to be able to keep up with the increased tempoof the game localization, the game development cycle (...). We try to detect as many issues up front as possible, because, as I explained, this process has been sped up significantly. (…) So, this is something that is very important to try and catch as many pitfalls as early on as possible. (…) So, for example, they have a really nice technique, which is called internationalization. (…) That is normally happens before the actual translation starts. So that is a way for us to evaluate how ready the game is [able] to accept the localized text. And for find a bunch of implementation issues early on".

The engagement of the localization team in the localization early in the development process is key for the localization process to be completed before the game is released, so that it can be available in several languages from the first day the game was made available for the players, avoiding a customer getting offended because he/she would have to wait so the publisher could finish the localization process. The synchronization of game development and game localization was also discussed by Ricky at PAX East (Boston, 2019), however in a game developer/programmer point of view. According to the respondent, once the identification of markets and the decision for game localizations are taken, the development team should start working on a system that will allow the game to receive the translated texts and audio. Once this is completed, the publisher searches for the translator, voice actor and sound manager, hiring them and sending the game texts. Once their job is done, the developers put their translated texts and audios into the game. Parker (PAX - 1) also mentioned that for the developers to know where each localized line goes, the localizers put all the texts in columns.

Therefore, the localization process inside the publisher has many steps.[108] The first one is a team meeting, when game writers, game developers/programmers, C.E.O.s, and localization teams get together to decide if the new game is going to be localized, the kind of localization it is going to be done in and the languages. The decision-making process involves not only data like past experiences, game genre, and player's age. Platform Holders guidelines might also involve the decision-making process, especially if the publisher is still not sure if a certain game genre is selling in certain countries. However, the pressure from players for games to be localized in certain languages plays a major role in this decision, as publishers can potentially lose costumers if a game is not localized.

The second step in localizing a game inside the publisher is to prepare the game code for receiving the localized versions of the text. This process is usually called Internationalization, as discussed in Evan (INT – 4) and in the Introduction of this thesis. Testing the game's codes, even if it is not finished, for its reaction to different characters and languages is essential to learn if that code will accept other game versions and also to make sure the localization process is possible. After that, the third step is for game writers and developers/programmers who need to extract the game text from the codes and send everything to the localization team inside the company. This team is responsible for the localization process, if the localization is done in-house, or for contracting the people who will be responsible for doing the localization process, whether they are a company or a freelance localizer.

From this point, publishers and localizers start to work on the localization together. As seen during the discussion of the localizer's role, creating a good relationship between localization and development teams is crucial for a successful localization, as the teams need to create a good information flow so that localization is done. However, there are more steps, on the localization side, to be considered here. These steps were described to me by Archer (INT - 2). They are pre-production, production, and post-production. Pre-production is preparing the project, which means creating a style guide and glossary, making the localizers who will work on the project to play the game and/or to see videos of it, so they can understand the product.

During the production phase, localizers should keep constant contact with the Localization manager and the game's development team, so they can get answers for difficulties they are facing due to the lack of context. Moreover, during this phase, the project can be shared

[108] The data gathered showed that this process is fairly generalized among the videogame publishers.

among other localizers who can produce feedback for the text being localized. If the localization includes voice-overs, the new audios are recorded and edited also during localization production. According to Jamie (INT – 7), this production phase can be divided into three other stages, the first in which the text is translated, then edited and finally proofread. Finally, the post-production phase is all about the feedback, which is given by the publishers who contracted them, but also from the players (according to Archer, INT – 2).

Before discussing how the players join the localization chain in a more detailed way, it is important to say that, according to the respondents, the localizers put every string they localized in columns parallel to the original text and send everything back to the development team/programmers. They put the localized text back into the prepared game code, including new audios, and everything was sent to be tested, the Localization Quality Assurance, LQA.

The LQA can be done by different people in the localization chain. If the publisher contracted a localization company, it might also be their localizers in LQA tests, or the publisher can even contract yet another company to do so, as described by Bailey, Evan, and Finley during their interviews. The notes from Finley state that the players can also participate in the LQA, sending the localization bug reports to the company before the game is released.

The role of the players, then, in this process is double. They can act as pressure for the games to be released in the languages they want to. This entails a major role in the process nowadays, as they have a more active voice in the chain than before. However, the final choice is still related to the publishers, especially because they need to guarantee that the investment in localization will pay off. Besides that, game communities and players are also an important link in the chain, as they are the ones who evaluate the work done on localization. Game communities, forums, bug reports are common tools used from players to let publishers, developers and localizers know if localization was good enough or if they need to change IT. As said before, not all users' considerations on the localization will be revised, but this shows the importance players have in the relationship.[109]

The role of players can vary a lot depending on the game and the company. Most of the interviews (Bailey – INT-3, Evan – INT-4, and Finley – INT-5) stated that localization changes and updates are not so common nowadays, except during the localization process itself, when

[109] You can refer to each of publisher's own forums to check this. For example (all accessed September, 7th 2020):
1 – Ubisoft: https://forums.ubisoft.com/
2 – Paradox Interactive: https://forum.paradoxplaza.com/forum/forums/
3 – Microsoft's Xbox: https://answers.microsoft.com/en-us/xbox/forum?sort=LastReplyDate&dir=Desc&tab=All&status=all&mod=&modAge=&advFil=&postedAfter=&postedBefore=&threadType=All&isFilterExpanded=false&page=1

various changes might occur. Once the game and its localized versions are released, localization updates can happen, but are uncommon. Here, the experience with the process, the guidelines provided and the pressure from players for improvements on this process might be a reason why this process is becoming more reliable, in a sense that the localization functions as expected.

However, it is not always about good experiences that localization processes became so complex and tied to the overall industry. Bailey's interview (INT – 3) stated the following on this theme:

> "... And we had a case where the recordings were horrible, and we realized that after release. So, that's when a lot of people told us "it was unacceptable", and "it's really bad", and "you should change it", and then we only had it in the past, it was always the same language provider we had, and we switched. We switched the company after that. Sometimes the Japanese language was not good, sometimes we heard "it sounds like Google Translate" or something like that. It happened in the past, not anymore. Because it was only the same company who did that".

The localization updates, according to all the interviews, are usually done with the game general update system. If a game has a bug or other issue that needs to be addressed, publishers send the platform holder updates, therefore the games are constantly changing and enhancing whatever it needs. If localization needs to be updated, it is usually done with the other updates the game will have, according to Finley.

In sum, platform holders have recommendations and guidelines both for publishers and developers, but the publishers themselves are the ones who make the decision on localization. After all, even if the developers have their ideas and opinions about their games and markets, the publishers are the ones able to finance the localization activity. Videogame communities also play an important role in it, both by demanding that a game has a localized version and by reviewing the work a localization company had done.

Section 6.2 Platform Holders

As discussed in the previous chapters, platform holders develop new consoles, both from the hardware and software standpoints. In other words, they are the ones that deal with both creating new hardware and new software for games to be played. This movement, as seen in Chapter 4, has been the most normal one since the consolidation of the Atari 2600 on the market.

While platform holders can create some games to their consoles, such as the case of Nintendo, with widely known franchises such as *Super Mario Bros*. (Nintendo, 1985 -) and *The Legend of Zelda* (Nintendo, 1986 -), this is not the general rule. It is much more common for the Platform Holders to allow Publishers and Indie Developers to create games for their consoles (WILLIAMS, 2017). This movement resembles the localization one: localization is regarded as a process to be done during game development, but it is rare to find a game publisher who localizes in-house. The games are developed and sold, then, if it fits several requirements and guidelines, localization is one of them.

According to Archer (INT-2), the role of platform holders in game localization is to enable game developers to reach foreign markets, as they provide developers with development kits and guidelines for localizers, including information on what should (or not) be translated and how it should be done, setting the standards in videogame localization nowadays.

The Microsoft Guideline to Localization (2019) is an example. The following citation is a quick guide to localizing applications, regardless of this being videogames or not. It states the following for localization for Brazilian Portuguese:

> "The language in Microsoft products should have the "feel" of a product originally written in Portuguese (Brazil), using idiomatic syntax and terminology, while maintaining a high level of terminological consistency. That guarantees the maximum user experience and usability for our customers. Sticking too closely to the original text will make it sound unnatural. Focus on readability and fluency, ensuring that Microsoft products are intuitive, easy to understand, and aligned with market usage in Brazil.
> Try to understand the whole intention of the sentences, paragraphs, and pages, and then rewrite just like you are writing the contents yourselves.
> **Example**
> English: Upload your video, and go
> Not our style: Carregue o seu vídeo e vá
> Our style: Carregue o seu vídeo rapidamente".[110]

Compare this quick guideline for Brazilian Portuguese to the guideline Microsoft provides for Portugal Portuguese:

> "Translate meaning, not words. If a translated sentence is hard to understand or incomprehensible to you (or anyone else), it's likely that you didn't understand it. Always make sure that you understand every single word in the source text, and research how the same things are said in Portugal.
> When a glossary term is very generic, try to expand the translation slightly to make your translation unambiguous. For example,

[110] Source: https://docs.microsoft.com/pt-br/globalization/localization/ministyleguides/mini-style-guide-portuguese-brazil, July 15th 2019.

> translating drive simply as unit doesn't always convey an unambiguous meaning. In such cases, consider translating it as unidade de disco, unidade de banda, unidade USB—whatever is applicable in the specific context.
> To search for terms only on Portuguese (Portugal) websites, add site:.pt to your search string in the browser.
> Words to watch out for:
>
> | English | Portuguese (Portugal) |
> |---|---|
> | character | caráter |
> | characters | carateres |
> | convert to | converter em" [111] |

The guidelines offered by platform holders set the tone of localization. In the case of Brazilian Portuguese, for example, they advise not using imperative tones, while for Portugal Portuguese they state that using certain formal forms is key to localization success. This is done not only through the examples they set in each language but also by the tone and the text structure in the English explanation.

In addition to creating localization guidelines, platform holders might also create the possibility of a game sale in each country, both in the form of consulting publishers and developers on bestselling game genres in each country and also by providing digital stores for the games. The final decision on which languages and countries games will be released is due to publishers and developers, but platform holders aim to have a voice in the process, according to Ricky (PAX - 7).

However, the role that platform holders have in videogame localization is not a consensus among interviewees. According to an interview with a representative from an American publisher (PAX - 10), game localization depends largely on its genre and the recommendations of platform holders, as they are the ones responsible for selling the games through each platform online sale store. The respondent stated that the publisher should always use localization companies that are recommended by platform holders, aiming to assure that the quality of the localization fits with the required standards. Hence, for this respondent, localization activities rely on platform holders as key actors.

Although a representative from an American publisher at PAX East (Boston, 2019 – PAX - 10) states that platform holders are key actors in the localization process, they are not the only ones involved in the processes. Along the trajectory of videogame development, we find that the role of platform holders has decreased over time. This is because when games were sold exclusively in physical media, it was common for games to be released only in specific

[111] Source: https://docs.microsoft.com/pt-br/globalization/localization/ministyleguides/mini-style-guide-portuguese-portugal, July 15th 2019.

regions. Nintendo Power[112] (February, 2008, vol. 225)[113] has an article entitled "Lost in Translation 12 Japan-Only DS games that every true Nintendo fan should know about". This text discussed not only the games that were released only for the Nintendo DS console in Japan, but also shows the consoles that were exclusive to Japan. It included the Nintendo 64DD, from 1999, a console that allowed both cartridge and CD media. This feature has become uncommon, as digital distribution allows players to be aware of and demand game releases more easily, and publishers will not lose potential markets because of possible mismatches with platform holders' strategies.

Section 6.3 Publishers

Publishers nowadays have a much wider role than the ones they held 10 years ago. After all, they not only choose a game developer to finance but also play a large role in the decision-making process about localization. As mentioned in Chapter 3, publishers make several decisions on where a game will be released, along with its languages and platform. The decision-making process seems to be a complicated matter among the different actors inside the publisher itself. After all, according to an informant on the Nintendo booth at the E3 (Los Angeles, 2019) fieldwork, localization strategies are something they discuss constantly at the company, but data available to study it is limited.

The decision-making process for localizing a game is not a consensus, therefore it was described in different ways. The interview extracts below present different approaches to this process:

> "Usually, this is something our C.E.O. decides, because he has a broad knowledge of these things, but if it is an area that we are venturing into, like a couple of years ago the Chinese market was, you know, closed for videogames and that was opened, and it was pretty new. So, then, we, of course, decided to localize into simplified and traditional Chinese, and partner-up with a lot of people who had a lot of knowledge of these areas. So, of course, they bring their feedback into our decision-making process, and also, for example, we have one game that we are now localizing into Arabic and that's a whole new, different language, and whole new different world for us, and that's the case in which we have to talk to a lot of people, localization companies and you know? People who have knowledge of this area, and they help to define if one specific game is going to be popular there". (Bailey's Interview – INT - 3)

[112] a videogame magazine
[113] Source: The Strong Archives

According to this interviewee, the decision process is not done by the ones who manage the localization process, but by the company's C.E.O., supposedly the most knowledgeable actor about the videogame market in different cultures. According to Evan (INT – 4), the localization process occurs as follows:

> "(…) There is a group. So, we would have product managers. Often producers would be involved [with] the monetization group, communication group. So, it's mainly the publishing. groups, but, obviously, also production. Because, for example, we might want to think that it's a good idea to include Thai, but it causes significant issues for the UI designers to support that language for various reasons that a producer has to say that "no, we cannot support that language".
>
> "(...) Most companies consider a number of different factors when they decide which target languages they should support. There are various pieces of information that we should take into account. For example, our own data, so the history sales of games from a previous genre, from previous games from a similar genre. We should of course, understand what some market intelligence that our marketing reports that are available to understand the nature of the various markets (...) just knowing the demographics of the players, what is the age group, the preferences, things like that. What would be the player expectations for a game and also, often work today in a licensed brand." (Evan's Interview, INT - 4)

In this case, there is an involvement of a bigger group for decision-making: both publishing and production groups get together to decide if a certain game is going to be localized and, if so the kind of localization and to which languages. These differences show that the process is not homogeneous in the videogame industry, and changes depending on the company being interviewed. The differences include who participate in the decision-making process, if the company usually hires third-part companies or freelance localizers and the title of the roles each person in the chain holds. Even the small sample of companies interviewed showed a diverse set of people working at the publisher on the process of localization. However, even considering the different titles for roles, the description of the process itself seems pretty consistent: there is a decision-making process to choose if a game will be localized, to which languages, followed by the recruitment of vendors/freelancers; carry out the localization process, including the LQA; make sure localization finishes before releasing date; and accompany the company's forums for user's reviews of the localization done.

The data and method they use to consider whether to localize a game or not is not exclusive to the localization team itself, but it shows how complex the localization process is. This idea of team effort is also reported by Finley (INT – 5):

> "We have a Sales team that take a look at the competing games, (...) that... Might have some kind of, well, competing chance with us, and look at... What languages they translate their games into. And also look at different markets to see... As we did with the development team, that they went to ask the localization cost we had and a few others. How do you look at the credit market for these different parts of the world? Where do you think would be best, which language would be best to translate this game into? So, if we do a lot of research... And see, would this be profitable? And do we get more players? Will it be worth it? For us?"

These companies have different approaches on which actors should participate in the decision-making process regarding localization inside the publisher. The most common, it seems, is to involve a group of employees from different departments to analyze the potential of each game, using data from past experiences of localized games and other games from the same genre to allow a smooth and more effective decision on localization.

Once the decision on localization is made, the publishers have to consider the type of localization, which language, and the budget for it. All the informants told the author that localization should start while the games are being developed, so that the Localization Quality Assurance (LQA) test is done even before the game is released. However, even though it seems to be a common practice for the localization process inside the publisher, some specificities are depending on the publisher, as some can make in-house localization, while others only have a Localization manager and outsource everything.

That is the case of an American publisher (PAX – 8). According to its representative contacted during the PAX East (Boston, 2019), the company employs a localization manager and does not perform in-house localization. The reasons for outsourcing the localization are its high cost, and that it can be done on-demand, after the game is released, thus the company adjusts to market demand.

In addition to what has been presented, publishers have one more role in the localization process. According to an interviewee contacted at the PAX East (Boston, 2019 – PAX - 7), publishers are used to having trustworthy connections with a group of localizers, who are referred to work with developers. This feature fits with the description of the Game Developer Magazine[114] article on game localization (see Chapter 4), that is, publishers get to know and trust localization vendors (companies) and freelancers, referring those to their third-party developers. This was also stated in Bailey's (INT – 3), Evan's (INT – 4) and Finley's (INT – 5) interviews, in which company representatives mentioned the creation of trust between a

[114] Game Developer Magazine, May 1998. Source: The Strong Archives.

publisher and specific localization companies and freelancers; even in such trustworthy relations, the decision-making on localization was held at the publishers and not among localizers.

The role of publishers in localization practices is, then, very wide. They are the ones responsible for the decision-making process, deciding where a game will be released and into which languages, including if the support provided to the players will be given in their localized version. It is important to notice, though, that this enlarged role in the process is not without its tensions. After all, publishers need to meet the platform holder's requirements and they also need to address the player's wills and needs regarding the game as a whole, including localization. Besides that, as noticed, several actors who take part in the publisher and game developing team are somewhat involved in localization, as discussed below.

Section 6.4 Game Writers

A game writer is a person who is involved with the story the game is going to tell. The person can either write the script, be the person who had the idea for the game, or both. Their role in videogame localization can vary from participating in meetings on game localization at the publisher, as stated in the previous item, to engaging in the process itself. The videogame writer role appeared in two of the interviews made. Finley says that game writers should make sure that all game texts are properly taken from the game code to be sent to the localization team. According to Bailey (INT – 3), the person stated that "Of course, the writer, the original writer, the author of the game, who needs to set up the text in a specific localization kit". Evan's (INT – 4) states almost the same:

> "So normally, when you want to adapt your game to fit different cultures, than the recommended procedure is to do like, be very surgical about it, and do the absolute minimum modifications. And rather, write your story in a way that will work for multiple audiences, rather than trying to completely tailor your game for the different markets, because that just increases the cost tremendously".

In other words, game writers need to make the set up for the game text to be localized. The role of game writing was also mentioned at a panel seen at E3 (Los Angeles, 2019). It was entitled "Gaming Inside the Story: Single-Player Narrative in VR, hosted by Troy Baker".[115] The panel had several discussions on Virtual Reality (VR) technology and its use for gaming. Game writing was discussed during this panel when they debated on the roles of voice actors in gaming and how these professionals were crucial to creating believable characters, stating

[115] Source: https://www.e3expo.com/e3-coliseum, accessed June 20th 2019.

that they were making tests for using voice actors during the writing phase of a game, as the actors would be insightful for character building and narrative-wise. This led to my reflection on the role game localizers if they participated in game writing.

The relevant discussion is that game writing has an important role in game localization. After all, the stories they create and write for the games must be adaptable for different audiences, something already discussed in the Introduction of this thesis on the "cultural neutralization" of Disney and Hollywood stories (ALLISON, 2006). Game writers have crucial roles, such as supporting the decision on whether a game will be localized or not, on how adaptable the stories are for different audiences, and a more technical role of guaranteeing that the game text is properly taken from the source code allowing localization.

Section 6.5 Developers and Programmers

Game developers and, more specifically, game programmers are involved in game coding. Many of their roles in localization practices were already discussed in the previous chapters. In the past, developers were those responsible for doing all the localization, chosen because they were the ones who knew English. These practices still happen, though, as some indie developers might work on the localization of their games, as stated by a Brazilian indie developer company at PAX East (Boston, 2019 - PAX - 5).

However, much of this has changed since the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Today, game programming was made easier by developer tools and game engines such as Unreal and Unity. These engines allow games to be produced faster, as some of the core programming is already ready to use. Nowadays, in localization practices, game developers/programmers have several roles. Even though game developers are not happy about this participation. That was the case of an American indie developer contacted during PAX East (Boston, 2019 - PAX - 7), who called the localization process a "pain in the ass"[116] from a developer perspective. After all, the game files become easily corrupted when they had to deal with several different languages.

The first role game developers have is to take the game texts out of the codes, sending them to the game writers who will make sure to set all the text up for localization. According to Bailey's interview (INT - 3), developers deal mainly with the technical issues of game localization, as they are the ones who take the text off the games and put them back in when they are localized. A representative from an American game publisher, who I talked to during

[116] This was the person's exact words. They allowed me to use his speech as such, and it was decided to do so because it shows the tensions involved in this process.

PAX East (Boston, 2019 - PAX – 1), also described the role of the developers in these same terms.

According to Ricky's conversation (PAX - 7), localization requires the developer to create a different system to run it, which also allows the end-user to customize their game experience related to language. In this sense, the games should enable the user to choose which spoken language, subtitle and menu interface languages they want to play with. This respondent also reported to me another problem regarding videogame localization: how enlarged the game files become. Each language the game is localized into results in the growth of the game's file size. This leads to problems for the game to be executed properly while being played.

Taking the game texts out of the codes is not the only role game developers/programmers have in videogame localization. As discussed in the Introduction of this thesis they also need to prepare the codes to receive different format texts, in a process known as internationalization. Actually, according to Finley (INT – 5): "So, for example, they have a really nice technique, which is called internationalization. That is normally happens before the actual translation starts. So that is a way for us to evaluate how ready the game is [able] to accept the localized text". The interviewee also discussed the importance for game developers to establish good relationships with localizers to properly answer questions and discuss localization problems, obtaining a more effective result in the end.

There are, of course, other ways of taking the text out of the game and leaving the code for other versions. That is the case of what was reported to me at BGS (São Paulo, 2017). During this fieldwork, developers from a Brazilian indie development company (BGS – 3) stated that the game they were developing will have a separate file with all the game texts and sounds, which will allow the game community to change and localize the game in different languages. The aim of the developers is that the game community not only creates new content for the game, but that they would also provide the game with other languages.

In summary, developers need to take the game texts out of the game code to send them to the localizers. In the meantime, the developers also need to prepare the game to receive its localized texts, creating new systems that will accommodate new texts and enable the user to choose which language (audio and/or subtitle) to play.

Section 6.6 Localization managers

Localization managers were the most accessed group of actors for this research (see Chapter 2). The job titles of interviewees in different companies were not always the same, but their job description matched, hence such actors were grouped under the generic term of

"localization manager" and their roles are presented and discussed below, strongly relying on interview citations.

Bailey (INT – 3) described their duties in the following words:

> "(…) So, the director role is basically the management role. So, I have all the localization projects of this company under my wing, so I have an overview of everything that needs to be done, because I have a very small team - it's basically just me and one other person, an in-house translator (German-English translator). So, it means I take care of managing the localization of all our projects, and we have a lot, because we're developer and publisher. So, usually every game we publish we have to do localization as well. So that means I work with every developing team figure out how they're going to do the translation, and how many languages we are going to translate the game, then set-up the localization kit, send it out to the translators, be there for questions and manage the localization QA afterwards as well and also, I do German and English proofreading and sometimes I translate into German as well".

In this case, the Localization manager is the one who oversees the localization process, from the development team's decision-making process and localization tasks to setting up the localization kit and doing some of the localization work. This is interesting as this person has a degree in English.

This kind of academic background seems to be pretty common among the localization managers interviewed, as was the case of Evan (INT – 4):

> "So, I do have a team of coordinators, who take care of the day-to- day running of localization tasks, sending out hand-offs to the outsource company, receiving them, doing quality checks. Basically, just coordinating day-to-day work and doing some translations in their own languages. So, I am coordinating their work, and I'm also in touch with the upper management and the other departments, coordinating work with them, defining the localization strategy (...) in accordance with our marketing strategy and publishing. And also, of course, part of the localization strategy is to make sure that the game supports the translation. So, I also work with the technology teams on the ground. We have our own CAT tools, so I am the Server Admin on that, and I'm setting up workflows on the server. Also, I'm creating reports on return of investment for each language. Getting recommendations of what additional language we should support, what should be the scope of the next game. So that's what I love about game localization, because it could be a bit of everything. It is a bit of geekiness, a bit of business, a bit of people management, a bit of communication with other departments. And languages, of course, you have to understand the various challenges for each of the languages that we work on. So yeah, about a bit of everything".

In this case, the interviewee is not as hands-on as the case of Bailey (INT – 3). However, the idea of overseeing the localization project and supporting the decision-making processes seems to be a trend among the roles of localization managers. Besides that, the academic background of this person is in technical translation, which shows both in this case and in the previous one, is the relationship the person has with other languages, which reveals an interesting analysis on identity, presented in the debate section of this chapter.

This becomes even more interesting when comparing these two descriptions with the one done by Finley (INT – 5), an interviewee who is a localization manager:

> "Well, basically, the easiest way to explain what I do is that I grab all the text that is written in English from our development projects from [name of studio] and when those texts are done, emailed to translators, who will translate them into different languages, send them back to me, I add them to the game and double-check that there are no errors, that there are no loose strings and make sure everything works well with localization. Then I do localization quality assurance, which means that I use a vendor to proofread everything in all languages, and if they find problems, issues, bugs, they are reported to me, and either I can solve them myself... Or I can make sure that the team fixes them. It kind of depends on the level of difficulty, because I'm a former Content Designer myself, I can do a lot of scripting and I can write some strings. So, somethings I can do by myself".

This case is interesting as the person's background seems a bit similar to the ones described for the game developers/programmers. This person not only oversees the localization process, but also deals with the game codes while preparing the localization kits. This is interesting because it shows how the roles in videogame localization can change a lot depending on professional backgrounds, even though the major localization process keeps the same.

The last case is from Archer. In this case, the person did not tell me their academic background, but, as this is a representative from a localization company, the description of the roles of a localization manager is quite different to the ones seen in the publisher scene. The representative stated that project managers need to help the translators to understand the kind of product they are dealing with, answer questions about the project both for the customer and for the translators, deliver the localization job to the customer, always organizing the internal process of localization. The interaction between localization and the development teams (a.k.a. the customer) seems to be a key role for Localization managers to deliver a high-quality localization. That was an interesting comparison, as it shows how there are some small differences in the roles people can play, and how it can impact on the localization process inside the companies. This includes people responsible for the decision-making process of

localization, how the background in language studies or programming allows people to deal with localization in different aspects, and how the company aims to change the perspectives on how managers deal with localization.

Section 6.7 In-House Localization and Localization Companies

Games are developed in-house by publishers or outsourced to third- party companies (see Chapter 3). The same structure is used for localization activities: they are performed in-house by publishers, or by third-party companies that can be hired to work on specific localization projects.

Most companies contacted during fieldwork use third-party localization companies to take care of the localization process of their games, however, even when localization is performed externally, publishers have a localization manager to deal with the localization process (BGS – 2, PAX – 1, PAX – 3, PAX – 4, PAX – 8, PAX – 10, PAX – 11, E3 – 3, INT – 5). Some companies, however (PAX – 5, INT – 3, INT - 4) were the exceptions and had localization in-house, and the people involved in the localization process in these companies were quite different as already analyzed in this chapter. This is an interesting finding that is cost-related, which is an important discussion in the previous chapter (Chapter 5).

One interesting aspect found on the use of third-party companies is their geographical locations. According to an American publisher respondent (E3 2019 – E3 – 3), all localization projects in the company are outsourced to European companies, regardless of the language for localization. That also seems to be the process of another American publisher (PAX East, 2019 – PAX – 1), that outsources their localization projects to a company located in Europe. It is also the case with a Japanese videogame publisher, whose representative talked to me during E3 (Los Angeles, 2019) (E3 – 6). This choice was interesting and generated several questions: Would that be related to experience, and quality assurance matters? Or would that be a matter of cost? This is because allowing a single company to do all the languages enables the publisher to negotiate costs, and support the protection of games against leaking, something discussed in Evan (INT – 4).

There are, at least, two possible analyses for this problem. The first one relates to experience: Europe receives many software products developed outside its borders, which requires localizations for the various languages spoken in Europe, including several videogame publishers that established offices in the region (see Chapters 3 and 4). The second possible analysis is that these localization companies are contracted regardless of the language the game is being localized into and that goes beyond what the localization teams from the publisher can

offer. The localization can be done either by a company specialized or by companies which also does translation and voice-over jobs for television programs and movies. Depending on the amount of work contracted, cost negotiations would be done more easily.

However, regardless of the localization team location, their roles relate to participating in the decision-making process of localization, as well as performing the localization itself, by participating in Localization Quality Assurance Tests (LQA for short) and providing game support (as discussed in Archer, INT - 2). A detailed discussion about these roles is presented in the next item, where the role of localizers is analyzed.

Section 6.8 Localizers

Localizers are those who deal directly with localization and their roles were strongly discussed in the interviews and the fieldwork of this research. Localizers work in an in-house localization team, in a localization company or are even freelancers. The interviewees and fieldwork informants treated the subject from different perspectives, in this sense, we present their perspectives individually (following the same structure of discussion for the roles of publishers and Localization managers).

Bailey (INT – 3) was emphatic when explaining the use of either freelancers or third-party company-based localizers, as follows:

> "We use both. We like to work with the freelancers because I like to have the direct contact to the person's working on the game. And, of course, in agencies that's often shielded by the project manager, you know? You are never really in contact with the person working on the game. We have a fixed team of translators, of freelance translators who've been working with us since years and we usually rely on them. If it is something that needs to be done in a lot of languages and in a very, very short time, we often use agencies for that and we also use some companies for the Asian languages because we never had freelance translators for that and now the relationship is well-established, so (…) you cannot let anybody who is a translator work on videogames. You have to have a person that knows a game. And that person can see the game. A person who's a gamer can look at that text, can look at the game and know what's about, and then adjust the text, adjust the translation just in the right way. So, if you give a text of a videogame to a person who's never played a game before, it's not going to be good".

This description was relevant in two aspects. The first is the possibility of establishing more direct contacts with the localizer as a more effective way to work on localization. It was already debated that the interviewees and informants consider that a good relationship between localizers and the development team is crucial for a good result in localization practices. The

second aspect is the recognition of a localizer as a gamer or as a person who likes videogames and has the skills to understand them.

It is interesting to notice that this interviewee was not the only one talking about these same standards. Finley (INT – 5) provided documentation from localizers stating the following: "As a translator and a former player I try to collect as much feedback as possible (…)" and also "As most professional translators are contracted freelancers (…)". This identity of being a gamer or a person who understands videogames brings to the fore some features of co-production in the game industry (an issue discussed in Chapters 1, 3, and 4) and it also highlights the employment stability of localizers, as several are freelancers.

It is important to continue with the discussions on the roles and identities a localizer has in the localization process. Finley's interview (INT – 5) debated the role of localizers, their sources and identities in different moments of their interview, as follows:

> "I have several different localization vendors. That is Companies that work with localization, localization QA, and a few other things as well. But most of our freelancers who started out at localization modders for our games (…). Mostly, it has been better to have freelancing translators, they know our games inside and out, and they play them love them, they know everything that it's necessary to translate them. With the vendor if I'm lucky, they have translators who like our games and play our games, and are interested in them. But if I'm unlucky, they might not be and that's when I get questions like, what is the Pope? (…) We would QA for gameplay and AI and such. We don't do it for LQA in house (…) Some of the games are very text heavy, so it can be kind of hard to do a proofreading of them, because of the amount of words that are in, and also we have lots of variables that are quite different things, which makes it even harder to translate and proofread, because you cannot sleep. "

Besides that, the interviewee (INT - 5) also described their own experience trying to proofread some localization work on a type of game that they know and play. Below is the description of the experience:

> "I actually have been a proofreader and translator for a poker site myself. I mean, poker has never been something I'm terribly interested in. I played it with friends, and so on but not for money. So for me, some of the phrases, and soft vocabulary, the different words was a bit harder to translate, because I did not really understand them. And I think it's the same if you, as a translator, doesn't really understand our games, because they're quite complex and complicated". (Finley interview, INT – 5).

The identity of liking the games of the company in order to be a good localizer and establishing a better relationship between localization and development team seems to be a

crucial requirement, possibly being more relevant than a degree in languages or translation. This identity plays in different ways, especially considering that one might enjoy certain kinds of games, but not appreciate it enough to provide a good localization for it. Besides, the discussions presented in Finley (INT – 5) brings to the fore another role for localizers, which is their participation in LQA processes.

Evan's (INT – 4) interview also discusses the roles and identity issues of videogame localizers. According to this interviewee:

> "I wouldn't go as far to say they should be gamers. But they should definitely know and enjoy videogames. Especially the genre that they are working on. I mean, I loved working on RPGs and MMOs. I love working on the simulation games that we are working on with [name of company], because I normally play these games, so I know them, I care for them. I did work on racing games in the past, they're just not really my genre. I think the quality wasn't as great as on the games that I actually knew inside out, and it wasn't as much fun of course. (…) I think there are four basic models available for any company who would like to do localization, so they can work directly with a number of freelancers? They can rely on single language vendors, so an entire team who can take care of one language or multilingual vendors, who just take care of whatever language you need. And of course, we have in-house people, and the combination of, of any of the above which is also an option. At the moment, we have the combination of in house and a multilingual company".

When asked if the company would use different localization companies to do the localization itself and the LQA, the answer was:

> "(…) it depends on the game, I have tried both approaches. There are pros and cons, to both of them. So obviously, if you contract the same company to do everything for you, then you can negotiate bigger discounts (…) And there is also a better coordination of the people. So, let's say translators, and testers can talk to each other... But you have if you have different companies doing these different things, then you don't rely on one single vendor for everything, which might feel a bit vulnerable, it's a vulnerable situation". (Evan's Interview – INT – 4)

The answers on the role of localizers did not come with a straight answer on what they do, but they discussed the structure localization processes inside a publisher. According to this interviewee (INT – 4), the number of freelancers and localization companies would depend on the models the publisher decides to follow, which includes, also, how the LQA would be carried out and who would do each process. The "being a gamer" identity question played a role in this discussion yet again, indicating its relevance, at least, to enjoy the genre of the games the person is localizing. The idea of 'caring for what you are doing' as a way to guarantee localization quality seems to be central.

The role of localizers was discussed through the lens of the publishers, even though some of those publishers also perform localization to some languages in-house. However, it is also important to discuss the roles of localizers from the viewpoint of localization companies and freelance localizers. According to Hayden (INT – 6), on the matter of how long they worked in videogame localization, they stated: “More than three years, but working as a translator for more than 20 years, and playing videogames since I was a kid, that made me interested in videogame translation, so I took the chance as soon as I could”. The gamer identity is, again, addressed by this localizer. This allows me to argue that identity plays a complex role in videogame localization. This interviewee described the process of localization as: “The company hands out the material to the translators and we translate. We have access to the game developers to ask any question that we may think (like *"is this a noun or a verb?" “Can we use gendered words -for male and female-?*”.

Those comments highlight two aspects of localization. First of all, they show that the role of a localizer is dedicated to translating the text, by meaning and by words, while also needing to build a good relationship with the development team, to access better the intentions and perks of the game, delivering a high-quality localization job. Second, the relationship between being a gamer/enjoy games and becoming a game localizer is back yet again. The discussion on identity has been present in interviews and will be further discussed at the end of this chapter and the previous chapter.

The identity discussion changes in tone from the localization company’s point of view. Archer (INT – 2) is a representative from a localization company that localizes several informational technology products, such as operational systems, social media, and videogames. According to the interviewee (Archer, INT - 2), they only translate the texts of the game, can offer some support regarding coding and localization, but do not deal with any art features. The representative also stated that the localizers in the company are not full-time employees, but work on fixed-term contracts. The requirement to work with videogame localization for the company, differently from what the publishers seem to want, is only to be a native speaker. The identity of enjoying games is not a worry for this localization vendor, which might explain the reason why the publishers state that they would rather work with freelancers. The same was described by Jamie (INT – 7), who is also a representative from a localization company, even though the interviewee stated that the localizers they have for one of the videogame companies they work for are fans of games, it is an exception. However, as seen, publishers appreciate localizers who are gamers and enjoy the same genre of games that they are localizing.

There is one more and last issue to with regards to videogame localizers: trust-building. All actors interviewed in this research stated the importance of trust-building among those working with the game localization, which should be highlighted in localization studies because videogame companies need to trust their localizers, making sure the investment in localization was worthy and worked properly. As summarized by Evan (INT – 4):

> "Getting building trust with a company takes a long time. Also, it takes a long time for them to understand how we work, our processes and requirements. And, I mean, now we have really smooth processes for handing out work, and we understand each other without proper long explanation and instructions. But it took us some time to really align our processes".

To sum up, the role of videogame localizers is to, once receiving the texts, translate and adapt all content (in other words, localize the text), putting the new texts in columns, so that the developer will know where each line goes regarding knowing the language. They also need to create a good relationship with the development team, so that the information in the game being localized has a good flow. The aim of this is to make sure that the localized version of the game has the same "feel" as the original, according to the informants, a type of quality assurance. Besides that, localizers can also engage with LQA, also an important task, as localized versions of the game have the risk of breaking the believability of the game. Being a person who understands and enjoys the game genre, being localized seems to be an appreciated trait among those who look for people who localize, but it is not a mandatory aspect of the localizers. Being native speakers and having a good understanding of the English language seems to be an important aspect for the person wanting to work with videogame localization.

Section 6.9 Voice Actors

Voice acting was sure a theme to be further explored by this research, especially as in its early versions the dubbing process would be featured as the main theme of this research. However, even though this idea was discarded, the theme was still present in two different moments of this research. Firstly, during the BGS (São Paulo, 2017), in a panel on dubbing the game *Destiny 2* (Bungie, 2017), and also in the interview with Evan (INT – 4). As voice-overs are part of the localization process, I decided to address the theme, but it will not be the focus of either this thesis or the analysis of the process as a whole.

During the panel seen in BGS (São Paulo, 2017), several voice actors casted for the voice-over of *Destiny 2* (Bungie, 2017) discussed the role of a voice-actor in the videogame localization. Similar to the case of text localization, voice-over recording occurs during game

development, which brings another set of challenges regarding lack of context for the actors to work with.[117] These are also common during text localization and explain the importance of a good relationship between localizers and developers, including an additional challenge compared to software localization: game localization is not only restricted to texts, but it might also involve voice-acting. This aspect of voice-over was already discussed during the introduction of this thesis, and will be discussed in more depth during this chapter, along with some discussions made during interviews on the need for the localizers to be specialized in videogames.

In this BGS (São Paulo, 2017) panel, voice-actors highlighted that people who are willing to pursue voice-acting for videogames should become increasingly specialized. As they would not work with a ready product, they need to build the character from little briefing information provided by the company who contracted them. They also stated that the role of the voice director is very important, who can support character building. This discussion led me to think about the panel seen during E3 (Los Angeles, 2019) when the developers stated that it would be interesting to use voice actors in-game writing as they could also improve character building. Finally, voice actors at the BGS (São Paulo, 2017) panel also discussed their role in creating accessible games to the players. This discussion will be described in depth in the following chapters, as they were not the only ones who discussed it.

During Evan's interview (INT – 4), the person mentioned that the cost of voice acting varies considerably and that there were large differences among the recording studios both in terms of costs and kinds of services provided. This representative also stated that there are at least three types of voice-acting for videogame localization: i) the very loose time constraint – which allows the audio to be played as long as it needs to before the next thing happens in the game; ii) the exact time constraint – in which the actors have only an exact time to deliver their lines, and; iii) lip-sync – when the actors need to shape their recording exactly to the lip-movement created for the character. In addition to which of these three types will be applied, the interviewee also stressed that developers need the proper technology and programs to support what they are intended to do.

One interesting aspect found during the interviews was on text localization for subtitles or voice acting. The idea was that localization for a subtitle would have some differences from the ones done for voice acting. However, none of the interviewees discussed if there were any

[117] As seen in the introduction, both voice actors and localizers work with only some information of the project that is being developed. This results in localization mistakes due to lack of context.

kind of differences in the localization made, either for subtitling or dubbing. The work done was the same and the localized text could be used in both ways.

To sum up, voice actors not only record their voices, but they also have the role of character building according to the briefing they received about the characters they play. They also need to comply with top-down decisions of which kind of voice-acting the publisher or developing team chose for that specific game and/or scene.

Section 6.10 Players

The role of players in videogame localization varies according to game genres, how the communities are built, and also the channels used for their reviews. However, one thing is for sure: they are not passive actors in the localization process, according to all the interviewees. The growth of broadband internet access allowed players to participate more formally and actively in the videogame industry as a whole, including localization, allowing them a more active role. As customers, they managed to create two major crises in the industry, by not accepting the products the way they were being produced, as seen in Chapter 4. However, their role in the industry today is enlarged and more active. Regarding localization practices, the role of players was described in different ways among the interviews and fieldwork done. In general, there were two main roles described: the role of localization reviewers, and the role of localization requirement.

Players' expectations on a game being released in their languages were a recurring theme during interviews made. In Evan's interview (INT – 4), the following statement was made: "so, it's an expectation from the players. If there's a new game released, then they want to have their language included. Which of course, again, means that localization has to start earlier. And it has to be completely done when the game is ready to ship". In other words, even though the process itself is not that well known among the players, they will expect it to occur, resulting in a game that is adapted to them.

This expectation is one of the roles players have in videogame localization today, according to the data gathered. Requiring videogame localizations was a common topic of discussion among the interviews and fieldwork informal conversations. According to a representative from an American publisher (PAX – 8), a recent game they released had its interface and subtitles available in 10 different languages, and English-only audio. However, the community started to require the publisher to localize the game to Hungarian, something that, according to the representative, was not done as the cost would be too high for such a small

market. This active role of requiring that a game is localized into other languages is also reported by Finley (INT – 5):

> "The more languages we make available, the more players we get, and also it can give us more players who also want other languages. You'll have people talking about Turkish for several of our projects. It's a kind of hard language to translate into, because its only Turkey that has it... And it's also not very cheap".

Players require a game to be localized, which is a major part of their role in the process. It also reads as a way to get their language represented in products worldwide. This is a representation and identity discussion, as having a game localized to specific language should provide a feeling to players that they are being represented in the industry, supporting to boost consumption.

The discussion on players, language, and game consumption was a common topic among fieldwork respondents. The first one was during PAX East (Boston, 2019), when a representative from an American indie developer company (PAX – 7) was discussing how localization practices are market-based. At that time, it was told that the game they were developing at the time, was going to be released only in English. All the advertisements of the game were in English and the representative thought it was good enough, as the game did not develop a good size community for French speakers and localization would not resolve all issues related to marketing, becoming a waste of money. It is interesting to notice that the representative was not considering the role localization could have in building a community for the game, contrasting with Finley's (INT – 5) discussion on the theme.

The second time the discussion on players, language, and game consumption appeared \was during E3 (Los Angeles, 2019). According to a representative from a Japanese publisher (E3 - 2), the company's employees do not understand Brazilians, because they managed to play the games available regardless of the language, which is different from Europe. On that continent, if a game is not properly localized to their native language, the customers will not even consider buying the game. The representative stated that Brazilian players are subservient[118] to games and will play them regardless of the language, if they understand the game or not. This relationship between resisting a product and not accepting it unless it is presented in the language the players want to shows that their role is important to the industry in general and to the localization process, in particular. Of course, not all the players seem to

[118] As the previous case, it was opted to use the exact term the person said. As it was not a recorded interview, but a in a fieldnote it is not possible to retrieve the entire sentence said, but only the main terms.

care about the language the game is in, even though they would not understand the game, or their community is not strong enough to pledge for change and representativity.

Playing unlocalized games, though, is not a Brazilian exclusivity, as seen in Chapter 4. However, even though the games were not always localized many players would still play the games and use FAQs and walkthroughs that were available for downloading in different websites. Some players would also create some mod files that could translate the games played, creating an entirely new game culture in a country that deals with language barriers in different ways, not necessarily just being subservient to it. It is important to notice that this is not exclusive to third-world countries like Brazil or Hungary. The following excerpt was taken from Issue 16 of the Video Zone Magazine:

> "(…) If you are saying "I really would buy it except for the Japanese" then buy it 'cause you problems are solved – I have written a FAQ that is up on AOL that translates almost everything in the game (you just need a Japanese viewer, but that's on AOL too). Contact me (…) if you want to know where to DL it from, and if you don't have AOL, I can mail the FAQ to you on a disk with the viewer if you want, just get in touch with me". (Video Zone, Issue 16, Page 2)[119]

This is the case also presented in Chapter 4, in which this magazine editor stormed out and criticized videogame localization practices and how the publisher decided not to bring *Final Fantasy V* (Square Enix, 1992) to US, bringing only the VI. This shows that playing a game in another language does not necessarily mean being subservient and playing the game for the sake of playing. It might also mean creating different strategies to cope with language limitations, which can lead to either growing a stronger community that will have more power to require official and professional localization versions of the games and/or into the industry's professional levels. The idea would be that industry representatives would start to consider new languages and countries for localization, search for those people who are already dealing with videogame localization in an informal setting, and contracting them to do official localizations.

All other informants discussed that localization was a process that boosted consumption, (which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). Moreover, the idea of a game community and its role in localization practices was something even more discussed. The role of players in communities goes beyond requiring the languages in which they want to play the games or creating resistance localizations on their own, as they also are key components in reviewing and criticizing localization work done to the videogames.

[119] Source: Chris Kholer Archives, Folder 1; The Strong Archives.

All the interviews, as seen in Chapter 2, answered a question following the player's comments on the localization of their games. All of them, and some of actors approached during fieldwork, addressed that following user's reviews on localization was an important asset for quality assurance. That was the case of PAX - 1, PAX - 5, and Archer (INT – 2). How the information from the users provided was used differs from case to case. Regarding Bailey (INT – 3), the information collected is used

> "(…) I'm all the time in touch with the consumer. So, if there's something they are complaining about the localization, that's something I see immediately. And if it is a typo or if it is anything else or if there is a big problem, I report back to the development team and they take care of that".

This representative (INT – 3) states a constant monitoring of the player's reaction to the localization done, dealing with the information provided by players by sending them to the development team, so they can take care of any problems, if they are small enough. Evan (INT – 4), though, described the process a little differently:

> "(…) We do have dedicated forums, and bug report systems for reporting any localization bugs. But the thing with players reporting anything is that they often have a very strong, but very subjective opinion about how things should be called. So, we always have to review whether these are justified to be changed. But of course, if we can, if it makes sense, then we are quite happy to accommodate the suggestions of the players. And important approach that I normally tend to follow is that the ownership of the text always stays with the translators. So even if there is a comment from the players, and we think it might be okay to change, we always send it back to the translators to have a final say in this. And an important thing that we try to do with the players is always provide feedback about their comments, and to let them know what is being implemented. What are the things we cannot do for various reasons, but we always try to acknowledge that we have received their feedback, we looking into it, we've implemented this will be the next update. And these are the things that we couldn't do. And sorry about that. So, we try to be very open in general with how to communicate to the players, not just in this regard, but generally".

The approach to the player's suggestion by Evan (INT – 4) is quite different from what was described by Bailey (INT – 3). First of all, there is the description of forums for players to report any issues they have, including localization. The process of considering the requests from the players on changing some of the localization work is relevant. After all, not everything reported and/or suggested to be changed will actually be implemented into the game, and the decision-making process involves not only the localization team inside the publisher but also the localizer who worked on that text. The relationship built with the players is based on

feedback that states if a change will be made and what it will be. This kind of acknowledgment seems to be important to stimulate players to continue file bug and localization reports, providing constant feedback to the publisher.

This structure seems to be close to the one described in Finley (INT – 5):

> "We do have the forum, which is a very vocal, and it's forum. (...) Most of them do give us bug reports and list what's wrong with everything. And had some friends who would tell us "Ok, so this language has these problems, we think it should be like this instead". (…) And those reports are often assigned to me and them either ask the translators for help or I can, in some cases, fix it myself, because it's might be something that that's broken... A file has the wrong format or something. (…) the designers are very welcome to go back update localization, which means that we have to... Either we catch that and we managed to send it off to the translators, and they fix it or other they retranslates the things rewritten".

As seen in both the previous case and these cases, specialized forums play a major role in creating a closer relationship to the player's opinions on how the games should be localized and any other issues they may find during their play. Of course, not all players' considerations are taken into account, but it shows how important the players' reaction to the localization jobs is essential to the process nowadays.

These discussions, though, are profoundly related to the publisher's side. The notes sent by Evan (INT – 4) show that the localizers themselves are as eager to get and acknowledge feedback from players on the work they have done as the game publishers are. Those excerpts show the important role players have in their work:

> "As a translator and a former player I try to collect as much feedback as possible, via specialized forums. The players are essential to finding all those tiny things that may be improved, or whenever some content may be unclear, etc. So they're critical to improving a game translation."

> "We naturally check all the users' bug reports, but in 80% cases suggested changes are violating simple grammar and style rules and formal rules of translation. Mostly minor bugs spotted. BUT: the situation with the core fan community of (...) strategies is quite different: there are some super professionals, and we always take their suggestions into consideration and try to partner with those guys during LQA".

> "Yes, we do collect comments and opinions from players and make changes accordingly. What we usually do is to open a thread on game forums to collect comments and check the thread from time to time".

> "Yes we try to collaborate with the community if possible, but there can be as controversial feedback, and really improving feedback, we discuss

> the feedback with team worked on a project to decide if it will improve the game indeed or not. The feedback gathered usually on forums or groups in social networks or sometimes a teammate who works on another project but plays the game localized gives feedback on localization. Frequency depends on the process built on client's side".

The player reports seem to be a very important issue to improve one's ability in localizing games, usually using social media or specialized forums for such. However, as seen, not all of the player's feedback is taken into account, generating some debates inside of whether and which players' feedback should be considered for a review on the localization done. These excerpts also discuss something already discussed here: the use of players who participate in the community as localizers and LQA testers, involving the idea of co-production.

To sum up, the role of players in videogame localization has several sides. The first one, the ones who become part of a larger community that will pressure game publishers to release games professionally localized to their languages. The second side, by those players who play regardless of languages, participating in in-game communities in which non-professional localizers release mods and walkthroughs in their language, creating some resistance to the imposed language by the publishers. Finally, there is the important role of revising the localization.

Section 6.11 Final Thoughts

As seen, videogame localization is a process that has a deep connection to identity or, at least, to an imagined identity of who are the players and what they expect from the localized game. The players act upon requesting developers and publishers to localize their games into the languages in which they desire a game to be available. Publishers and developers decide on those requests, making sure that the investment made based upon the requirement turns into profit. Localizers, then, become a major actor, considering that they will bridge both the player's requirements of having their identities recognized as important and the publishers/developers need to profit from their investments. The next chapter will discuss a major issue in localization studies – authenticity – from the point-of-view of the localizers.

Chapter 7
The Cake is a Lie
Videogames, Localization and Authenticity[120]

This chapter aims at describing and analyzing how respondents and interviewees relate localization to authenticity issues, which have been addressed by localization studies (see Introduction and Chapter 1) and proved to be relevant for further investigation. This chapter is divided into five parts. The first one, Authenticity and Culture, seeks to explore how interviewees and respondents debated the relationship between cultural specificities and authenticity practices in localization. After that, two separate debates on game changes and game themes are presented, followed by a discussion on how the interviewees and respondents defined authenticity. In the last section, I present a debate in light of the scholarly discussions on Localization, Authenticity, Language and Sociotechnical Imaginaries.

Section 7.1 Are those shadows of the same person? On Culture and Authenticity[121]

As seen in Chapter 1, I we define Culture as a set of socially constructed behaviors and beliefs that can be tied to different social groups and is used by nation-states to bring an idea of unity to the people within their borders (see MÄRYÄ, 2014; and ANDERSON, 1983). In games, this can be translated into a set of different approaches. According to Shaw (2010: 3), "the study of video games as cultural texts or the culture of video games relies on many of the differing understandings of culture outlined above. Video game culture has been defined as a subculture marked by certain tastes and as an art form. Some look at games as social practice". These definitions allow us to think the relation of game and culture as set of behaviors, belief and even language that is shared among a community of players.

Authenticity is a concept that brings up the idea of something being true, in an ideal away (VANINI & WILLIAMS, 2009). Applied to a localization context, this means that localizers would be willing to keep the meanings and values of the original games in the game's localized versions.

The interviewees and fieldwork respondents debated this relationship in different ways. Bailey's interview (INT - 3) discussed the matter in the following terms:

> "It's very important work, but I can see it is a very overlooked area of videogame development, because... A lot of people do not know that it

[120] Homage to *Portal* franchise (Valve Corporation, 2007 -)
[121] Homage to *Contrast* (Compulsion Games, 2013)

> exists. (…) For me it's an important part because I think making games available into a lot of different languages it is great customer-service-wise, and it's great because not every person speaks English, and its making games available for a lot of people and that's something I really enjoy and I think most of the time people do not realize how much work it actually is and how many people are involved in this in this work. (…) So, localization is, of course, making something available or translating in a broader way, not just translating words, but translating meaning, translating some product into a different culture... Like making it accessible in a different culture. If that's, you know, the case and in that area. So, of course, that's not a big deal, I say, in an all-European. If we, of course, write a game in German and translate in French is not that big of a deal, but localization as such means, you know, having a product and want to make it as accessible as possible to the world. And that means translating the words, making sure the meaning is still available in that target language".

The discussion on localization being barely recognized in the game development scene is interesting for the authenticity debate, as it ties in with what was debated in the previous chapter, when the respondent Ricky (PAX – 7) described the localization process as a major problem for programmers and developers. However, it also linked to the discussions on authenticity and culture. After all, Bailey (INT – 3) considers localization as a way of translating meaning to different cultures. Therefore, resisting to acknowledge localization practices as important could mean that developers and programmers would not want to have the meaning of their game translated and reinterpreted for other cultures.

This debate of considering localization as a way of translating the game's many meanings into other cultural settings was not only addressed during Bailey (INT - 3). An American publisher representative (PAX East, 2019 – PAX – 10) also stressed to me that developers and localizers must create a good relationship between them so that the information flow created to ensure that the original "feel" of the game is kept regardless of the targeted culture the localization process had. Of course, this relationship between authenticity and culture is explored in different ways by other interviewees and respondents.

Finley's interview (INT - 5) addressed the issue by an example of one of their prior projects:

> "(…) So we have made four different versions of this game. And for each of them, we've had to make sure that it can be released in Germany. Because Germany until very recently, I think, classified videogames as a children's toy. (…) There are some sort of things cannot be allowed in the game. For example, mentions of certain leaders, Hitler, and... Well, certain others cannot be in and portraits of Hitler as well can't be in the game, which meant that we had to do a separate version of the game for Germany. (…) And that, of course, that's localization as well,

> because that means that there might be a whole lot of text that needs to be translated extra. Yes, for German, and not for any other language. (…) The culture must be taken into account when you localize something. And well, the easiest way to define localization is to make the game available to local players. And make sure that it's accessible to people who might not have English as their first or second, or maybe not even third language, you know?".

Even though this person was debating the definition of localization, the discussion between culture and authenticity appeared. By analyzing the German versions for the game, the representative showed what a game should not contain to be culturally appropriate in Germany, such as the mention to some sort of leaders and symbols. This resulted in a localization process that involved much more than language localization, as many aspects of the game needed to be changed. The authentic feel of the original game, created in Sweden, has to endure several changes to be acceptable to German audiences.

This is an interesting case of how localization has to operate on several levels to ensure both respect to the targeted culture and the original intentions of the game are available to several different cultures. That is the same kind of discussion presented by Evan (INT - 4):

> "When we localize a game, we don't only allow players to speak a different language to understand the game. I think it's more about building trust with them, to show them that we care about them. And yeah, so localization is different for each market. Again, we have to understand what the expectations are in different countries. (…) This probably become a big topic recently. In the last couple of years... Of course, it has always been around and big AAA companies have made it part of their workflows. For example, Microsoft, they have been doing cultural appropriation checks for many years now. But now, it's an industry wide phenomenon. And, yeah, it's difficult. So, one of the discussion topics that come up regularly on conferences and discussions is who should be responsible for this. So, I said the responsibilities kind of shared between localization, PR, the brand team. It's also important to improve the include the game design team, and artists of course, so that they are also aware of, of cultural sensitivity in general. So, it's not something that should exclusively pushed on to the localization team to, let's say, perform a culturalization check. (…) So, another interesting question that comes up a lot, when we talk about culturalization is where to draw the line between adapting your game to local taste? Or do you want to have them invite us into a culture that they might not be familiar with? (…) Or just outside their existing norms? This are all difficult decisions from what I see is that big AAA publishers tend to play safe (...). And they want to make sure that that content is not offensive on any of the markets. So, if they want to publish their game in Russia, then they will not have any homosexual characters in that. (…) There are different dimensions in cultural differences. One is simply legal, legal differences. Homosexuality is illegal in Russia... In

> China, it's illegal to talk about Taiwan as a country, or say bad things about the Red Army. It is illegal to use the swastika in Germany, although they have recently relaxed that. So, there are these things that you just have to respect if you want to publish in that market. (…) And that is the additional a layer of how people think, what is acceptable? How do they relate to women? How do they relate to drug abuse? Is it okay to picture these in the game or not? And that's where the companies have a bit more freedom to decide. In general, like 3 important guidelines that I tend to follow. Number one is exercise due diligence when using obvious references to specific aspects of cultures (…). The second important thing is storytelling with an international audience in mind. We have different ways of listening to stories, we react to different emotional beats in a story (...) That there must be a unified vision across all the departments. As I mentioned, there are a number of departments involved normally in culturalization, so localization, PR, and game design art. So just to make sure that everybody understands what they communicate to each of these markets, the artists understand what are the implications of the art as a produce game design understands how to better create a game flow that is appealing to multiple audiences, etc".

That is a long and deep debate on several factors related to culture and authenticity. For the representative, there are two main aspects to it: the first one related to laws and to what the players think is acceptable, and the second one related to game development. The latter has some other more interesting aspects than the ones analyzed up until here, when the entire development team (here considering everyone from game writers to the sales team) has to deal with different cultural aspects in the games they are creating.

Knowing the cultural meaning of certain aspects and ways different cultures deal with storytelling is an aspect of localization extremely related to the authenticity debate. After all, one must know and respect certain cultural features considered as authentic in determined cultures to address them properly in a game. This takes from culture its own agency for change and gives new meanings to their own values and behaviors, in other words, this can change what Bhabha (1994) calls culture performance.

That was not the only interesting aspect Evan (INT – 4) debated over the culture and authenticity concepts. The person also discussed law enforcements on videogame themes and people's acceptance to other cultures, referring to the one that created the game. According to the excerpt, there are some laws regarding how videogames should address certain aspects of the society and culture in question, and there is also another level, now considering what the players themselves would think is acceptable.[122] This debate also includes the discussion on the

[122] Chapter 3 also had another example of this, considering *The Final Fantasy* franchise (Square Enix, 1987 -).

point to which one should spot localizing and adapting everything to the game, to keep some authentic aspects of it. It is supported by other interviewees of this research, such as the case of Hayden (INT - 6):

> “Cultural elements are always important, but it's important that the player knows and understands what's happening in the game, too. I know from other companies that they take a more "globalized" approach, changing what they understand as "no-understandable" or "troubling" issues (characters’ names, customs, even food!). But as related to my work, the game’s story is untouchable. Local laws, especially with history issues have some impact in strategy games, but localizers/translators just follow the company's remarks about them, as they got their legal advisers behind them. So far nobody has ever told us “you can’t say that!”.

The impact of local laws and also the need for the players to understand the game in order to buy and play it is a fundamental aspect of localization and brings the challenge of keeping at least some traces of the original meanings the game creators intended to have. This tension between accepting the different, localization practices and local laws is generating a sort of globalized way to tell a story, such as Disney and Hollywood developed (see ALLISON, 2006). During Evan’s interview (INT – 4, excerpt above), the representative discussed it and that was something I realized before the interview, during the E3 (Los Angeles, 2019) fieldwork.

AAA game companies are the ones that have been embracing this idea of a globalized way to tell stories. The result of this is the constant recycling of known franchises. This is the case of THq Nordic’s *Darksiders*, a project that is being rebooted this year, and also from Bethesda, which still focus greatly on franchises like *Fallout* (Bethesda, 1997 -) and *The Elder of Scrolls* (Bethesda, 1994 -). Those are just some examples of the many games seen at E3 in AAA Companies. On one hand, it shows a need to keep their games and companies afloat, always refreshing old products with reasonable market success. On the other, it brings up the question of how localization might be involved in this or not. After all, you create and adapt products to be sold worldwide, and end up subservient to that until the franchise crashes. Bringing new games and building new franchises can be risky and also expensive, as players who are fans of certain publishers might demand that the new games are localized, even if the publisher could not study if that new game would be as successful in other countries as the old franchises were. The result of this is either creating games set in a fantasy world, as if fantasy worlds are not also culturally-based, or they do not address themes that ought to be considered polemic, such as gender, religion, and politics.

Both previous excerpts from Evan (INT - 4) and Hayden (INT - 6) dealt with the question of authenticity and cultures in light of user expectations and debates on how to decide if a game is going to be fully adapted or if some pieces from the original culture would be kept. This would introduce the players to the culture that conceived that game, bringing the notion of authenticity to the game in a way of making sure that the players understand that it was not created for their culture. The debate on player expectations was also brought into other terms on the interview notes sent by Finley (INT - 5):

> “As (...) games are most often in a precise historical context, some peculiar words are waited by the players. The historical scene is part of what attracts them to the game, so they're supposed to have minimal knowledge on this context themselves, and they expect to find that reflected in the game and the translation. And they really don't like whenever something is not matching what they know of the period”.
>
> “Now, looking at the broader context, there are also other considerations to take into account for "authenticity": puns, jokes, Easter eggs, etc. That's also a part of a feel to the game, and this has to be adapted for our native language players, to offer them the same feeling. Just "translating" is not enough in such cases, or this would just feel "off". So those few words often need far more work, finding a fun/appropriate song/movie/book to be referenced and give fun to the players in our native languages, like this is the case for English-speaking players”.
>
> “(…) [we] come from a more narrative/literary background with a Master in American & British Studies and a focus on modern media. So immersion and the role of narrative within a culture are the most important factors for us - and very fitting to the games industry with the growing importance of (emergent) story-telling”.
>
> “I studied history at the Uni and I am a former history teacher. So I always favor more historical terms whenever they help for immersion. This means I systematically avoid such words as "citizen" or "nation" whenever they're not used in a very precise context, contrary to English where their meaning is far less precise”.

The relationship between culture and authenticity here is presented in different levels. The first one is player expectations and what the localizers tend to consider to be basic knowledge. According to these excerpts, the localizers tend to think that the players already have some knowledge related to the games they are playing, especially considering games set in historical contexts. Besides that, they also consider that the players have certain expectations on the game, regarding words used and how the puns will be adapted to them. The discussion of authenticity and culture in this case shows how the player expectation plays an important role in the localization process. The authenticity in this case is given as a way to guarantee that

the player will be fully immersed in the game, a challenge considering that the games have many puns to be localized.

To sum up, the debate on the relation between culture and authenticity is given in three major themes by the respondents. The first one is related to game development, which has to acknowledge the role localization has to create stories that are capable of being localized, or even create different versions of a game to be able to sell it in different places. The second one is related to the role of laws and the player acceptance and expectations. There are some discussions on the role of laws and how it relates to people's ideals in STS (JASANOFF, 1999), however not always do laws cover everything related to a certain culture's beliefs and values. In this sense, videogame localization also has to address these beliefs, trying to address what the player's expectations are towards that game. Finally, the authenticity and culture debate also address the discussion of how far the localizers do not need to localize something because the players already have the knowledge needed to play certain games.

Section 7.2 The priest says: "Wololo! Wololo!Ayooo" and the color changes! Or: on Game Changes[123]

The last section covered how the authenticity debate relates to local culture and its impacts on videogame localization. It already started to show how, sometimes, games have some changes that are not only related to word-by-word translation, but meaning can sometimes change, along with puns. Chapter 4 also showed some examples of complete game overhaul for localization, changing soundtracks, characters, and even the name, but this does not seem to be the case nowadays. This section will present the discussions on how the interviewees and fieldwork respondents addressed the questions of changing game elements during the localization process.

During BGS (São Paulo, 2017), I talked to a representative of a Brazilian indie game developer company (BGS – 1). The person stated that their most recent release, had been localized into English and Japanese, by the developers themselves and their relatives. Besides that, the representative also said that changes made to the games for countries from the Americas to South Korea are very few, something completely different from the other Asian countries, which require many more changes. This was the only representative who discussed game changes in this way, which was interesting, as some other interviewees and respondents talked more about changes related to policy and laws.

[123] Homage to *Age of Empires* franchise (Ensemble Studios, 1997 -)

When asked about game changes during the localization process, Finley (INT - 5) stated that there are several puns in their games that do not work in all languages. The localization process, then, requires the localizer to understand those puns and find something else that is suitable to the game. I also inquired the representative if they would leave some clues for the players to feel a culture difference while they are playing, noticing that the game was created and/or developed somewhere else. The response was: “Well, I don't think that we do that. But we are pretty... We are known to be a Swedish company... The product development studio part. So, not really”. The debate on authenticity, videogames, and localization discuss the lines between adapting to a culture or to keep some traces of the culture that created the product, so the end-user can recognize it.

However, this debate was not only present during the interview with Finley (INT - 5). Evan (INT - 4) also mentioned the same discussion during the interview:

> “(…) one strategy that people tend to follow is to adapt the art, adapt various assets to be suitable for cultural norms. So, for example, you would have a level of acceptable nudity in an Arabic country, in Japan, or in Europe. Language again, vulgarity. So yeah, that's, that is what is normally adapted between different countries. (…) Right, so let me get back to the beginning of the thought, the different strategies that you can choose from. One is to adapt the content to the local taste, for example, nudity, for example, food, so in Japan, they might be snacking on rice, is rice balls. In the US, the same thing might be donuts. And the second strategy is allowing the player to immerse into a new culture. So for example, we do not want to touch a Japanese manga game, because European and Western players love it, because it's so different. And because it's reflects a different culture. And the third strategy is challenging the existing norms in a culture. And this is something that indies might be more willing to do, and discuss issues which might be taboo in various cultures. But again, this is dangerous... Like how much do you want to push homosexuality on the Russian market? How much do you want to have women driving cars in a game that you sell in an Arabic country? (…) So normally, when you want to adapt your game to fit different cultures, than the recommended procedure is to do like, be very surgical about it, and do the absolute minimum modifications. And rather, write your story in a way that will work for multiple audiences, rather than trying to completely tailor your game for the different markets, because that just increases the cost tremendously”.

As seen, changing in games is quite common in localization practices, even though it is not always recognized as such in all the interviews as will be seen. However, the way the interviewees and respondents talk about those changes is really interesting. First of all, making game changes so that specific cultures can have an authentic experience like the players from the same culture that created the game as a common practice. The specificities of each culture

the game is being targeted on appearing on the game not only through language, but also in the images, shows that the authenticity debate is essential for localization teams.

The way this discussion was presented while talking to Winter (BGS – 1) is equally interesting. After all, the vast majority of respondents and interviewees stated that targeted culture's specificities, such as values and tastes, are major ways to adapt a game to different markets. The idea that a game barely needs to be changed in certain areas of the globe, while having a complete overhaul in other areas is a really interesting concept. Allison (2006) talks about the discourse of cultural neutralization certain creative industries managed to achieve in order to easily sell stories around the world, with few to no changes to it. Even though Winter (BGS – 1) did not address this issue with these words, maybe the person tends to agree with this concept.

As mentioned, game changes during the localization process can be quite common. However, it is not all that usual for the localization team not to consider the changes made in the games during the localization process. One example of this came from Bailey (INT - 3) stated the following when asked about changes in games due to cultural differences:

> "No, actually not. Not for our games right now, I don't know if it's the same in other companies (...). We never had a specific case where we needed to change anything because I know we published a game (...) And its settled in Edo-Japan (...) and that's a German company, so that company was in touch with a lot of Japanese, you know, cultural people, with cultural background and advisors, you know? So, from the start they made sure that the text is going to be appropriate. So, I don't think we ever had... We mostly like fantasy settings and we don't localize into any region that has problems with female characters, for example. (…) I'm trying to remember if there has ever been a I'm just thinking about what could happen, like, for example, the use of specific numbers or colors, or something like that needs to change to white in Japanese or something like that, but it's never been a problem for us. At least not for my work".

Game changes during the localization process might be quite a sensitive subject for people who work on localization, as seen by the reaction I got when talking to Ricky at PAX-East 2019 (PAX – 7). After all, this idea of translating the game into other cultures while keeping an authentic feel and meaning to it might be the reason why considering that a game is not changed during the localization process. In other words, the relationship between authenticity and localization can end up meaning that the game will be the same regardless of the language they are in, providing the same experience to the player. This would result in cultural changes being related to the game's aesthetics, but never related to the language the game is presented in.

Game changes, as seen, were discussed in very different terms among the data collected. They addressed both the need to change a great deal of the game based on world regions and how much a game can be accepted when the localization team chooses not to change certain aspects of the game during the process. The discussion of how far a localizer can only translate but not adapt was discussed through the Introduction and Chapter 1 of this thesis. Besides that, it seems that big changes in games such as the ones seen in Chapter 4 are not as common anymore. The need to adapt a game by making big changes to it seems to have been less common nowadays, probably influenced by other creative industries that managed to create an idea of neutral storytelling.

Section 7.3 Why is this crocodile catching diamonds on an Island? On Game Themes[124]

Some aspects of the debate regarding videogame localization and authenticity were described, such as, how local cultures should be addressed and how much these cultures would be willing to accept the difference in a game. The question of game themes and how localization should address them had some appearances already in this chapter, but it is still important to address it in a separate topic, as the debate of whether there is a possibility to create a game or to tell a story that would fit everyone is a recurring one on the analysis made. This debate impacts how localization addresses the idea of something being authentic and deepen the discussions of either changing a game or not depending on who the audience will be.

As seen in the previous item, Evan (INT - 4) considers that AAA Game companies prefer a safer strategy in their games by not addressing some of the society's issues because they might be considered either illegal or too polemic for the game to be sold in all countries, while indie developers try to address more polemic issues aiming to increase their markets. However, the need to create products for a world market, that need to provide the same kind of experience to all the players is creating discussions to which themes a game can address to be sellable to different countries (SILVA, 2016: 44).

Besides the question of which kind of themes would be acceptable in videogames and the relation it has to authenticity and the localization process, some other issues related to game themes were addressed to me during the interviews. One of them is on brands and licensing. Videogames can virtually address any them, brands and licenses were common since the beginning of the industry, with various degrees of success and failure. Figure 7.1 shows one of the most iconic failed cases:

[124] Homage to the *Croc!* franchise (Argonaut Software, 1997-1999)

Figure 7.1 – *E.T. the ExtraTerrestriral* (Atari, 1982) cartridge for Atari 2600, exhibited at The Strong Museum of Play
Source: Own Archive

This is the case of the *E.T. the ExtraTerrestriral* (Atari, 1982) game for Atari 2600. Based on Steven Spielberg's 1982 movie of the same title, Atari developed this game and licensed it as a tie-in product to the movie. However, it was considered so bad that its sales dropped and several tons of cartridges were buried in New Mexico.[125] One could say that the game did not provide an authentic experience for the player to become E.T. himself and save the world, so the game did not translate well to the audiences and it failed.

In other words, branding and licenses for videogames can be another source for guaranteeing income for game publishers and developers, and localization efforts also need to address them. According to Evan (INT - 4), brands such as Harry Potter or Lego can be an important feature for a game, and working with them during localization requires: " (...) to know how well known and well-loved a brand is in any given country". Branding and licensing localization are also a sensitive procedure, as the localizer needs to understand how a certain brand/license is known in the country and how to properly address them.

[125] For a more detailed analysis of what happened to this game: https://www.polygon.com/2014/6/3/5775026/e-t-myth-worst-game-ever, accessed July 24th 2019.

Besides the question of branding and licenses, the game theme debate on localization and authenticity can also be related to a discussion raised during the panel seen at E3 (Los Angeles, 2019).[126] During this panel on storytelling in VR environments, the panelists mentioned the role voice-actors could have if they participated in the game development, helping out during the writing, enabling better characters to be built and also to enhance narratives. I was immediately prompted to think about the role the localization team would have if they also participated in game writing. As seen in Chapter 5, the localization team already participates during some stages of game development, aiming to make sure the codes will be able to handle the localized texts. However, their participation in earlier game development could enable different themes and other kinds of storytelling, giving new meanings to the debate of authenticity and localization.

The question of authenticity is given differently depending on the game theme and localization teams seem to be aware of that. Finley (INT - 5) discussed this exact issue with me during the interview:

> "And it's, I mean, the game needs to feel authentic in every language. We might try both in English and in other languages, try to avoid too modern, and because its historical strategy games, so it needs to feel like it's in the correct time period. So, we can't talk about Crocs in (...) a medieval game, for example. And our players who want to have these historical words, they also want to be able to understand it. And one of my favorite example is the English word domain, in that can be spelt in two different ways. Either domain as it sounds like or demesne. And when I first worked on (...) [This game], I had no idea that demesne was supposed to be pronounced domain. A lot of our players didn't as well. So that is something that we kind of try to move away from to make sure it's okay, the demesne is the correct one that we might use the more modern domain. So it works, actually feels Ok. As translators, we are not even aiming for an authentic experience, per se. We are aiming to satisfy the expectations of the players and the customers by offering a credible and appropriate experience".

The discussions on the game theme and localization authenticity are not plenty, but all those cases are interesting. The use of branding, licensing, and user expectations to create authentic experiences in videogames seems to be considered features for localization practices. After all, how to address all kinds of different themes a game can have and make those experiences enjoyable to everyone? How to address such different themes to different cultures?

[126] For more information on the panel, check Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Why is authenticity such an important aspect of localization and even game creation? It is time, then, to discuss further on what the interviewees and respondents consider authenticity to be.

Section 7.4 Is it Alchemy? Or Gridlock? Defining Authenticity[127]

Debating authenticity and localization is a topic that has several different aspects to it, but authenticity definition is, by far, a highly debated topic. Even though, as seen in Annex I, all interviews had a question on authenticity definition, it was not always directly responded to me. Most of the interviewees debated the question of authenticity in different ways.

Archer (INT - 2) stated that authenticity discussions are something that they barely do, and that it is not even something addressable during the process of localizing a game itself. The representative told me that it is something that they need to deal with to do a job, it is something related to the localizer's experience, almost like a gut feeling of doing the right thing, but it is not a kind of discussion done. For instance, this representative, as seen in Chapter 6, also discussed the need for the localizers to be native-speakers, so people who understand the target culture and can make proper decisions while localizing a game. Authenticity as a feeling, an experience tied to the localizer, who needs to be a native speaker to be able to perform a good job.

The denial of the discussion of authenticity during the localization process was not only given by a representative from a localization company. Bailey (INT - 3) stated the following on the subject when asked if authenticity was a highly discussed matter among the localization team: "No, not really. It's not... It's not a part of my work or my department. (…) It's something I barely touch... It's something the developing team discusses". From this, the representative discussed what was already presented in the previous chapter, the discussion that the localizer needs to enjoy their games to be able to do a good localization job. It is also interesting to mention, here, that the representative mentioned that localization is also about localizing meaning, to make the games available to different audiences. First of all, the authenticity debate here is not given by the localizers, they are the ones who need to find the true meaning of the game to localize it properly. Second, the true, authentic meaning of a game is given exclusively by game developers.

This discussion on managing the game authenticity during the localization process was discussed by Finley (INT - 5):

> "(…) Okay, so some of them have a bit of a discussion regarding the definition of authentic, and they assume that you mean making play feel

[127] Homage to *The Time Warp of Dr. Brain* (Sierra, 1996)

> the game story and or background are real. And it's very important in [name of company] games, because different words etc used to describe the same thing in a different era. Like I said, with the demesne and domain thing. So the CN team, which is Simplified Chinese... They frequently have discussions, for some controversial translations to ensure that we do this as authentic as possible. We usually make some preparation, make some guidelines beforehand, and make sure every member of the team knows that. They asked the team to use terms that actually was used in that era for certain terminology or proper names intended to bring any non-certain position in such cases to the discussion. And they also talked to people who majored in history or linguistics to get more help. So they have a lot of work to make sure that the pun is correct in all languages. Sometimes with puns that used to be like, that's not working our language, so we rethink this, and or just rewrite it. We had a pun, I think, horsing around, it's not something you do in French. (…) So that's a pun that didn't work. So they had to just ignored the pun they were fooling around or something. Something like that".

The definition of authenticity, in this case, started with the idea of bringing a real feeling to the games, so authenticity is related to believability. This definition relates to the context of the company itself which is specialized on developing strategy games, and a large quantity of those games has a historical setting. In this sense, the authenticity would be to bring the reality of a certain historical background to the videogame screen. The use of guidelines and team discussions for acknowledging difficult localizations is fundamental to understand how authenticity has a really important role in the localization process.

The role of authenticity in the localization process was not only discussed by a representative from a company striving for historical authenticity in strategy games. Evan (INT - 4) stated that:

> "In general, game authenticity is something that (...) [the company] is striving for. So that's one of the key values of our games, But I think what you mean here is cultural authenticity. (…) And yeah, so that is definitely something that we have started looking into lately. So you're right, this is a really hot topic".

This discussion was already introduced earlier in this chapter. However, it is important to notice, here, how the question asked turned into a great variety of answers and how even a company that produces games allows their players to manage fantasy zoos and theme parks. The thrive for an authentic experience in managing an unusual kind of business is a way the debate on authenticity and localization can have. The other sense of authenticity, related to cultural practices is fundamental to this debate and was already presented in this chapter.

Even though the debate on authenticity is not always recognized by all interviewees, none of them disregarded the theme as unimportant. Hayden (INT - 6) claims that theme is important:

> “Well, authenticity matters because we translators want the game to feel "authentic" in every language. We use to talk about it. For example, if a game is set on past ages, we tend to use old-ish language. You can't have a Roman senator speaking like a guy from June 2019. You expect something like *"O, Brute, why did thy betray Rome?"* … if the original content allows it. How do we determine it? Well, by reading a lot. Also, common sense. Kids do not speak like grown men, nor army officers like civilians”.

The role of authenticity in localization is heavily related to the player’s experience. So, knowing the game’s audience and studying on game’s genre and intentions is a way to determine how the localization should address authenticity. Of course, team meetings to discuss the difficulties and ideas of the product are considered an important asset to the localization process.

The debate over keeping the authentic experience the developers intended or regarding the player’s experience on it was a common theme on the notes sent by Finley (INT - 5). This debate is important also because they bring definitions of authenticity which are relevant for this thesis:

> “It is making the game close and available to the local players. So, the local player would have the same experience”.

> “A few words prior to answering the questions: "Authenticity" is commonly used when actually talking about "credibility" and "appropriateness". I will, therefore, I assume you refer to that. "Authenticity" would imply that something is real or at least as close as possible to reality as possible. But games are not "authentic" or real - especially not when French Emperors of the HRE, Satanic Cults and Space-Aliens are involved. As translators we are therefore not aiming for an "authentic" experience per se, we are aiming to satisfy the expectations of the players (and of course our customers) - therefore offering a "credible" and "appropriate" experience. As an example: In Fantasy and Medieval settings, for example, most people will expect "outdated" but probably elaborate language and loads of honorifics. In reality, most people in medieval times were horrible uneducated and therefore very limited in their vocabulary”.

> “Very true, although it can be fun drop in one or two truly outdated words for credibility”.

> “As a translator, this also means I may be seen as a traitor -- referring here to the wellknown Italian locution _Traduttore, traditore_. But that's perfectly assumed”.
>
> “Whenever I see a Rome specific term used in a generic context (be it Scythian tribes or a Greek kingdom) I just get rid of it, as I really feel the real treason would be speaking about procurators in other contexts than Rome. "Magistrate" goes for every context, so I prefer that. Same thing for EU4 _Condottieri_, as in French that's very precisely linked to Renaissance Italy, not 15th Century India. So, they're more basic mercenary companies. This could be seen as a loss of authenticity, but that's a huge gain in credibility for the whole game”.
>
> “Actually, we may need some clarification on the definition of “authentic” here. We assume you mean making the player feel the atmosphere of the game story/background here. This is even more important in [Name of Company] games as different words may be used to describe the same thing in a different era. We are fully aware of this issue and frequently have discussions for some controversial translations. To ensure that we do the job as “authentic” as possible, we usually make some preparation and make some guidelines beforehand and make sure every member of the team know that. E.g. we may ask everyone in the team to use the words actually used in that era for certain terminology or proper names and tell them to bring any non-certain translation in such cases to the discussion. Sometimes we may turn to someone majored in history or linguistics for help”.
>
> “Yes, it is quite common to discuss authenticity especially if there is a different time period used in-game lore. The team discusses some aspects which they not sure about it usually in work chats or via e-mail and it is essential that the whole team discuss even when starting the works including editor, so we have an agreed vector to follow. For historical games we invite history consultants to check the main aspects of this period in texts, we also try to keep the feel of the time, and how would people talk back there”.
>
> “It seems, the most authenticity issues with our projects rise when we have some VO [Voice Act].[128] Without VO, there are fewer discussions, but more checking that all members of the team are on the same page. Speaking of Rome, e.g. I am a professional Classical philologist myself, with a Ph.D. thesis about Medieval Latin. So, I try to have all possible authenticity issues covered”.

These notes on videogame localization and authenticity shows how this debate is important to the process and how diverse it can be. The idea of authenticity is deeply related here with the player’s experience, not with the developer’s intentions on the localization process. The notes discuss the tension between credibility and appropriateness, which is

[128] VO: Voice Over

something already addressed in this chapter. However, the meaning of authenticity derives from it: the player will have an authentic experience of the localized game if this reaches credibility and appropriateness levels required for such.

Game theme, on these notes, is something highly discussed. After all, the players shall have an authentic experience with the game when they can become part of the atmosphere of the game, and localization is a practice that can help the player to reach this immersion. Therefore, discussing from the use of certain words to which kinds of localization will be done is essential to the debate of what authenticity is for the people who do localization.

Section 7.5 Final Thoughts

The debate on authenticity in localization involves three aspects first: targeted cultures, games and their changes during the localization process. Second, it also includes more substantial changes in content related to wider market penetration. Third, it is concerned with the role of authenticity as defined by game developers during localization. This research contributed by identifying two major ways of understanding authenticity in the context of localization. Table 7.1 summarizes them:

Authenticity Type	Definition
Authenticity as a feeling	Player must feel that the game background and story are real
Authenticity as something real and credible	Considering that authenticity is something real and credible is not compatible to videogames

Table 7.1 - Definitions of Authenticity
Own Authorship

The first definition is tied to game content, while the second to player's imagined expectation. In this sense, the first definition allows more discussions related to videogame localization, as localizers would strive to keep the authentic feel of game content, as it is grounded on reality (e.g. games set in historical period). The second definition sets apart the idea of authenticity in videogame localization, as localizers strives to deal with player's expectations instead of keeping meanings and intentions as created by the authors.

The relevance of this typology is that the majority of the studies on localization (see Introduction for a review) regard the debate on authenticity and localization as a challenge to keep the game's original meanings regardless of the language of the player. However, as shown by the interview extracts, this is not an issue for game localizers, who present different approaches to this question.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I discuss all the findings with the literature review in light of the research questions proposed.

“Tell us, traveler... What’s out there?”
Conclusion[129]

This thesis aimed at analyzing the role videogame localization plays in the industry, both today and in the past. The previous chapters have addressed each issue related to localization and provided evidence to the research questions that guided the study. The research questions were partially addressed in each of those chapters, therefore Chapter 4 debated research question 1 “How do localizers perceive their work and their role in the videogame industry?”, Chapter 5 discussed research question 2 “Who are the actors engaged at videogame localization and what are their roles?”, and Chapter 5, research question 3 “How does the authenticity debate and cultural elements of the targeted culture play a role in videogame localization and why is this important?”. This chapter aims to present the contribution of this thesis, in which we reintroduce each research question. This chapter also discussed the limitations of the study and suggests future research.

This thesis argued that localization is becoming an important feature of the videogame industry. This was pointed out by the literature review in the discussion on the challenges of localization in providing a localized version of a game that keeps the same feeling and values of the original videogames. After all, there is this idea of hiding from the player that she/he is not playing a translated version of a game originally produced under a different culture, and that players should feel they are playing a game that was intentionally made for them.

The localization practices and its role gained visibility because of the growth of broadband Internet, the development of game online stores and forums that allowed players to express themselves and their needs to the videogame industry. The result of this process is a closer relationship between publishers, developers, and players, which enabled the industry to understand that players had access to a larger set of options than in the past and that the industry needed to develop new ways of keeping themselves in the market. In other words, videogame localization is performed because there is a market resistance to non-localized games, as if the players themselves accepted to play games produced worldwide, but only if those games were in their own language and reflected their values, resulting in a market growth.

[129] Homage to *Flame in the Flood* (The Molasses Flood, 2016).

Section C.1 Answering the Research Questions

In this section, all research questions are addressed, along with an analysis of the data gathered during the research. As stated in the introduction, each research question was addressed in a different chapter of this thesis, and each of them will be answered in light of both the data gathered during the research and the literature review.

Section C.1.1 Thinking about the Role

The first research question presented in this thesis 'How do localizers perceive their work and their role in the videogame industry?' was partially discussed in Chapter 4. In that chapter, we found that videogame localization is an important feature for the videogame industry, especially because it is a result of a new industry dynamic, based on digital interactions between publishers, developers and players. The STS approach taken to this theme enabled not only mapping the actors, but also describing and debating their roles. After all, it helps the product to be sold everywhere in the world, and there are many details to consider in this case. As seen, the localization process can have a high cost, especially if the game publisher and/or developer decides to consider doing voice-overs to their games, but the process itself is used to establish and keep new markets for the games. In other words, localization investments tend to turn to revenue. This dynamic is constantly shown at the definitions for localization given, but they were not the only ones. Therefore, it is important to think about the reasons for this importance beyond the market (see O'Hagan, 2007).

There are identity and cultural aspects at play when talking about videogame localization. After all, localization means not only translating words to another language, it also means translating meaning and values a game has to other contexts. Sociotechnical Imaginaries (JASANOFF, 2015) also play an important role in this analysis. After all, if we consider that these imaginaries are related to how groups perceive desirable futures, then having technologies that might speak for specific groups themselves is, for sure, a reason why localization has such an important role in the industry today. It is the process that allows videogames to talk to their players in their same languages and expectations, a good reason for understanding why the market expansion accelerated after the games started to sell in digital form. This new way of accessing games empowered players to disclosure their needs and wishes to the games, making sure their sociotechnical imaginaries became a reality. On this discussion, Mangiron (2018: 123) states that localization became a necessary evil to the industry,[130] as it is tied to the global

[130] Mangiron's (2018: 123) own wods: "However, localisation is often considered a *necessary evil* by developers and publishers". (Italics on the original)

success of the game and to its sales. In other words, it became an important process to the industry (MANGIRON, 2018).

Besides the player's expectations to localization and how it is related to the sociotechnical imaginaries debate, the scholar discussions of videogame localization definitions might also elucidate why this practice gained the role it has today. Both fieldwork informants and interviewees, as seen, focused their definitions on videogame localization majorly on linguistic changes of games, barely including the discussion on art and story changes, something to be much more common during the development of the localization practice, as seen in Chapter 3. The debate over the concept of localization is far wider than the one found in the industry, so it is important to address this issue.

Carlson and Corliss (2011: 65-66) debate the term in different aspects. The first one is related to the concept of localization, defined as a range of activities to "(...) adapt products to the perceived differences between local markets" (CARLSON and CORLISS, 2011: 65). Then, they notice that the videogame industry is becoming more profitable than top-grossing films, discussing that localization played an important role to it as the localization process became more integrated to the game's production process. Finally, Carlson and Corliss (2011:66) state that:

> "Many developers have taken more direct, even reflexive, interest in the process (…). Profit always remains a priority, but some developers, increasingly invested in interactive narrative as an artistic endeavor, for example, have also begun to consider how localization practices might affect the integrity of their creative projects".

The discussion on videogame localization relates to product adaptation to perceived market differences, not mentioning any kind of linguistic changes to the localized. The main discussion of this definition, though, is related to the role the process has to the industry today, as it is becoming much more integrated into the videogame's production chain, and also increasingly involving the development team. These discussions were held by Evan (INT - 4), when this representative was debating over the process of localization on the company. Besides that, the representative also stressed the same point as Corliss and Carlson (2011), on videogame localization definition: this process as a tool to establish and guarantee markets for the product. In other words, even though localization practices tend to consider the user's experiences and will, the revenue and profit continue to be the major reason why a company would invest in this process.

Even though this confluence of ideas on videogame localization definitions occurred, it was not the only one. Mangiron (2015: 189-190) has a long discussion on what videogame

localization is, noticing that it is a type of localization related to software localization, technical translation, audiovisual translation, and literary translation. It "(...) consists of making a game suitable to be sold in other territories, and it involves complex technical, linguistic, cultural, legal and marketing processes" (MANGIRON, 2015: 189), and is considered a marketing strategy.

Mangiron (2015), Carlson and Corliss (2011), and Evan (INT – 4) all give a focus for the market side of localization in their definitions. This is important, because the publishers and developers who will only invest in the process if the game sales profits from it. However, this is not what the majority of informants and interviewees discussed when defining videogame localization, which is important to highlight. Their perspectives, as seen, are more related to the linguistic aspect of localization, along with player expectations and experiences than with the marketing side of it.

This debate is more in depth when we consider Ranford's (2017: 144) definition of localization, in which he states that videogame localization should be called translation (even though he recognizes that translation is only one step of the process). He discusses the definition of videogame localization under the same terms as Bernal-Merino (2006), considering this entire process to be only translation. However, the argument by Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006) states that this process has its own characteristics and that should be taken into account, and calling it only translation would mean to simplify the discussion on the role this process has to the industry and the impacts it has on games and players. Besides that, it is also important to consider how actors involved in this process describe themselves. The informants and interviewees define their job as doing much more than word-by-word translation, so consider this process as something more than mere translation is an important feature to consider when studying this process in the videogame industry.

Of course, when researching this matter both terms can be used. In the case of the PAX East (Boston, 2019) fieldwork, it was frequently heard from game developers that localization was just translation and how difficult this process could be. However, in the interviews, it was not the case, because of the many steps of the whole process, including legal changes to games and the player's expectations over the work that is done in the game. Identity, when comparing both cases, is an important issue for localization practices. This is especially due to a possible reading of this process from the developer's perspective: considering that localizers are just "translators", as "the other" (Said: 1978). The construction of localizers as just translators, beyond bringing the problems reported by Bailey (INT - 3), can also be seen as a discourse construction of someone who is not so important in the videogame production chain. That can

even explain the reason why they do not even participate in large videogame conferences (E3), as if the game developers were the only important actors in the system.

The role localization has on guaranteeing revenue and the way the interviewees perceived their work, though, seems to tell a different story. Even though the interviewees will, of course, construct their role as an important one, when considering how localization practices are used to create extra revenue, while also creating a more dynamic environment for competition and change in the industry, this process seems not only to be an important one in the industry, but also fundamental for fostering new game concepts and designs. Chapter 4 discussed substantially how past localization attempts changed a game, either by changing some aspects of their aesthetics, story and even soundtracks. This sort of changes in games fostered the concept of telling universally-accepted stories (ALLISON, 2006).

Section C.1.2 Actors in Videogame Localization

The second research question 'Who are the actors engaged in videogame localization and what are their roles?' was discussed in Chapter 4. The interviews and fieldwork provided a detailed description of the roles of each actor and how they engage in the localization chain. However, it is important to discuss these findings concerning the debate presented in the literature review. It was highlighted that the majority of the studies in videogame localization is focused on analyzing game changes, rarely discussing the process of localization itself (see MAGIRON and O'HAGAN, 2006; RANFORD, 2017). The localization process inside the industry is fundamental to understand other themes debated on localization, especially changes and player's reactions to the localized version.

Regarding Game Studies discussions, the literature that focuses on the sociological aspects of videogames has shown to be relevant for this research. Studies on game communities overlap with this research, as players and game communities have an increasing role in videogame localization. The rise of digital game distribution, as seen in Chapter 3, played a major role in the localization process as it allowed games to be more accessible worldwide, and the player's library could have as many games as ever, as one would be willing to pay for the games. With the digital distributions, not only the games were easier to sell, but they would also be more easily reviewed by the users, thus publishers and developers would have a better understanding of the player's needs. This enabled game communities to start to demand the games to have certain features, including new languages. Players were also enabled to talk about their experience with the localized versions in more formal ways, through forums and bug reports, so that their voices can be heard. However, it is important to notice that those voices

are heard depending upon publishers and localizers being able and willing to take actions on what has been suggested by the players.

The role of the community in the localization discussion is as important as the process itself. This is because belonging to a community not only allows a player to identify her/himself with a group, but it also allows them to create an identity for themselves, putting pressure on game producers to create games they expect to play, and also on the languages they want to see themselves represented in. The identity of being a player does not only have a role in requiring the games to be in certain languages. It also plays a role in identifying who can be a videogame localizer, as being a native speaker and liking games (especially the genre of the game being localized) was an interesting aspect of the discussion. If the requirement for languages is not addressed, the games might still be consumed, and create a resistance culture of modding and creating game walkthroughs so the games can be played regardless of languages. In other words, games will be played, but players will create a new way to play them, as the industry does not address it as important enough.

These discussions strongly relate with the arguments presented by Kurt Squire (2012) and the elements of play. He analyzes the game in its social context as the most important factor when considering the relationships between culture and play. In this sense, the game community – formed by players – act upon pressuring the videogame industry to have their games localized, so the context in which a game is played needs to be addressed by publishers and developers. Besides that, the discussion on the role of players in videogame localization also relates to Bhabha's idea of culture performance. A gaming culture becoming recognizably important is fundamental for the industry to address it in the form of language localization, bringing that culture to the mainstream, while also using the players as peer reviewers of the localization.

However, the tensions between publishers/developers and players regarding localization can also be referred to Spivak's (1994) discussion on languages and the ability to speak. The findings of this thesis showed the role of players in requesting languages is an important one for the publishers and developers. However, in the same way it was meant as a positive contact, it also may lead to problems: players start to require even more languages and complain about some of the choice localizers made during the localization process. The localization process creates a tension at the relationship between players and publishers/developers, as the latter wants to provide the former with good gaming experiences but cannot afford to deal with all the expectations and requirements of players. Therefore, selecting and stimulating players to speak can related to Spivak's (1994) thoughts on the difference in power each relation might have.

The identity discussion is not only tied to the role players have in videogame localization, as this discussion also entails the localizers themselves, as their relationship with games should be addressed. Mangiron (2018: 125) states that "(...) game translator has to deal with many different game genres and text types. This requires different skills, such as documentation and terminological search; knowledge of the main features and constraints of dubbing and subtitling, and creativity". She notices, however, that there are not enough descriptive studies for a further understanding on strategies for localization practices and that are only few professional training opportunities, even though this role is in high demand with the industry.

Mangiron's (2018) discussions on dealing with different game genres and acquiring different strategies to be able to localize a game relates to this research findings. After all, the discussion on localizers require, according to the findings, them to be preferably people who enjoy the specific game genre they are localizing. This will enable them to create better strategies when developing translating strategies. The discussions on academic training for localization professionals also relates to the findings. For instance, none of our interviewees had a specific training in videogame localization. Interviewing industry actors with a specific academic background on videogame localization might bring new discussions to what the process entails and how it is done inside the industry.

Besides that, the findings also restate the localizer's needs, described by Silva (2016: 90-91):

> - *"Localizers should be familiarized with software terminology and game terminology platforms* (...)
> - *Localizers should be familiarized with audiovisual translation* (...)
> - *Localizers should master the use of idiomatic structures* (...)
> - *Localizers should be creative* (...)
> - *Localizers should have cultural awareness* (...)
> - *Localizers should be familiarized with the game culture* (...)
> - *Localizers should be familiarized with references from a global pop culture* (...)"

An interesting feature of the discussions made by Silva (2016) is the need for the localizer engagement with the gaming culture. Silva (2016) does not discuss the localizer as someone who should be a gamer to provide a good localization to the company. This reiterates the argument brought by the representatives of localization companies, as being a gamer and

enjoying that certain game genre is not a requirement to be a good videogame localizer. However, the gamer identity is an important feature for videogame publishers, who are always seeking to get the best results for their localization investment. After all, "The localisation task is facilitated by the translator having a clear understanding of such universal features, especially when the original and its localised versions are to be shipped simultaneously in a localisation mode known as sim ship (...)" (O'HAGAN, 2007: 3).

Besides those aspects of identity, the findings also discussed the role Localization Quality Assurance (LQA) has at the localization process. Mangiron (2018: 131) states that: "Quality and how to measure it is another burning issue for the game localisation industry. Little attention has been devoted by scholars to the quality assessment process in game localisation (...)."

Some of the methods used by the localization teams to guarantee the localization quality is to give the localizers the ability to play the games they localized. This enables them to access the game content in its context, as their first stage of the localization process is to deal with the game text and information on the game itself. From this stage, the localizers can guarantee that the localization aligns with for the targeted culture, while also making the necessary adjustments. According to the findings, measuring the quality of the localization process is attached to the player's reaction to the localized version. In other words, the findings confirm the argument by Silva (2016: 47) that "More than any other translated media, game localization quality is expected to pass through an acceptance filter of their main public, the gamers".

Section C.1.3 Authenticity in Videogame Localization

Research question 3 'How do the authenticity debate and the cultural elements of the targeted culture play a role in videogame localization and why is this important?' was partially discussed in Chapter 7. The discussion on localization process and authenticity has many different aspects. On one hand, there is a relationship between a game and the targeted culture, in which building up authenticity is tied to local laws, player's acceptance of polemical themes, and the discussion on when a localizer should stop adapting and letting some of the game's original aspects show. In game changes resulting from localization, it discusses how far a localizer needs to go to make the game experience enjoyable for the targeted player to continue. The data showed that major game changes as the ones seen in Chapter 4 (such as complete soundtrack changes) are becoming rare. On game themes, the discussions on authenticity and localization were focused on the use of licenses and brands, in addition to user expectations. Authenticity definitions addressed the relationship between authenticity and localization in

terms of user's expectation versus the developer's intentions, the authenticity of a game given by its theme, and also by the recognition of this theme being discussed during the localization process (SILVA, 2016).

As seen in Chapter 1, identity is built based on the culture of certain groups, that differentiate themselves in relation to others (see ANDERSON, 1983; and SAID, 1978), and this relationship is key to understanding the debate on authenticity and videogame localization. Carlson and Corliss (2011: 70) introduce relevant issues in the discussion on markets: "(...) "markets" are not themselves cultural (…) the market is a social institution that not only supplies perceived demand but also acts to produce and construct customer needs and desires (…)". Besides this, localizers should also be aware that translating should also manage the political climates in which a game was created on.

The argument that markets are tied to social constructions influences the discussion on localization and authenticity, as market preferences and acceptances relate to the cultural groups managing it, localization processes become essential to create new authenticity to products, making them sellable to the targeted country or region. However, the discussions presented by Carlson and Corliss (2011) on how the localizers perceive their work is different from the author's findings. The interviewees and respondents argued that localization is a technical process, in which authenticity is not understood as a main issue in their everyday routine. They did not seem to consider the authenticity debate and the consequences it entails - such as a need to consider political climate while they are localizing a game.

The results show that there seems to be a tension on the respondent's – the people contacted during videogame conventions -, and interviewee's – people who accepted to participate in the semi-structured interview. This tension is related to what should be kept from the original content of the game or what should be adapted, as the respondents were not keen to change the original content, while the interviewees debated over its need. This can be interpreted as keeping some of the game's original's intentions and themes, or its authentic intentions, or adapting it to fit better to the user's expectations, the foreignization and domestication, as Venuti (1995) addresses in Translation Studies. Even though none of the respondents described the process on how they decide on what will be fully adapted (or not), the way game developers and localizers build this tension within the decision-making process placing the discussion of authenticity and localization as one of the most important ones for the process. According to Ranford (2017: 145), "(…) videogames are created in a time and place as a result of a specific cultural time and place as the result of a specific cultural and intellectual legacy, and can tell us about the ideas and attitudes of their creators, making them culturally

laden (...)". He does not agree with Bernal-Merino's (2006) discussion that a videogame is a product and that the localization process does not need to maintain the source culture identity. Ranford (2017) addresses the same themes that were discussed by the respondents and interviewees. The author, as Ranford (2017), considers videogames as being a result of cultural and time specificities and those should be addressed during the localization process. Both Bailey (INT - 3) and Evan (INT - 4) recognizes that there are some cultural specificities in the games that can be pushed to targeted cultures, as they will be able to understand and accept that the game was created somewhere else and that those cultural references belong to them.

However, the notes sent by Finley (INT - 5) show a completely different aspect of it, more related to what Bernal-Merino (2006) said about what a game should be considered. That is, the idea that a game should be localized considering user expectations rather than the developer's intentions are interesting and address the concept of authenticity as the way this thesis is understanding it: a way to give meaning to something or someone.

Considering that videogames are products whose meanings are both tied to the developers' intentions and the localizers' work, the author considers that it is important to regard videogames as products tied to the time and culture that created it. However, keeping some of the game's original meanings is important both for the game and for the player. By keeping some of the original meanings, the player creates a better understanding of how products are circulating the world and that this circulation is not neutral (see ALLISON, 2006). Silva (2016: 57) also stresses this relationship between maintaining and changing meanings. He states that universalization means to use systems of representation and symbols that can be recognized and understood by different audiences. However, particularization is the adaptation of these universal symbols into culturally-aligned ones. The localization process, then, deals intensely with both these aspects.

Besides that, this also has the potential to what Bhabha (1994: 4) considers to be a revision and reconstruction of the political conditions of the present: "social differences are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project (…)". His considerations on presenting cultural and social differences might empower change, as contact with different cultures and systems would either question or strengthen certain cultural aspects. However, this involves some kind of tension, where authenticity plays a role because one might consider the players' experiences and expectations or the developers' intentions with the game. As seen, the role of policies and laws ties up how free a localizer can work on the game and keep the game entirely on its original form. But, even if they had total freedom to only translate a game on the word-

by-word, not considering the changing meanings it might have, one still needs to consider the other end of the videogame production chain: the players.

As seen in Chapter 1, players do not neutrally receive products. Their experiences and interpretations of the different subjects are fundamental for them to consume and assess whether a product is satisfactory. Hence, the Reception Theory plays an important role in this discussion. Thompson (1993) states that this theory focuses more on reader creativity and perception, by taking into account his/her expectations and economic, social and political experiences as well. The intentions from the author (called authorial intentions) are not privileged in this theory (THOMPSON, 1993).

This discussion takes into account the players' experiences in gaming and other aspects of their lives. It accounts for the authorial intentions, but these are not the focus, and the intentions are related to what the localizers discussed during the interviews. It is also related to Bhabha's (1994) discussion on presenting some social differences as a way to create change, giving the audience new horizons and ideas to consider their own reality. In this case, the role of the localizers relates to a gatekeeper, as they would localize a game choosing which would be acceptable by the players' expectations, and also aim to acknowledge (at least in some extent) the developer's intentions of the game.

The relationship between authenticity and localization relates to the discussions on sociotechnical imaginaries. Bhabha's (1994) discussion on exploring the emergence of a community that was envisaged as a project relates to Jasanoff's (2015) concept of sociotechnical imaginaries. Localizers have the power to choose what will and will not be adapted in a game, which is related by the idea of how a society creates visions of the future, relating it to the technology itself.

Therefore, authenticity, as a debate, matters, not only in an academic setting, but also among the people working with localization in the industry. The way the question of authenticity is addressed, though, is a debate, as the process of localization has the potential of adapting meaning from the source culture to the targeted one, but it can also only consider what the player's expectations are over the game. Besides that, there is also the discussion if it is the role of the localization team themselves to access and debate upon this theme when the localization process is undergoing or if that's something the development team needs only to inform the localization team so they can technically perform better. These different debates are not addressed by the literature dealing with videogame localization, as they tend to put it into more generic terms. However, as seen, that must be a better-developed debate also among

scholars, as the roles of localizers, developers, and players on the localization process are built around those debates.

Section C.2 Contributions

This research contributed to a better understanding of the role of localization in the videogame industry. It focused on studying the process by interviewing the actors who are involved in the localization itself. It brings a new perspective on the theme, as it explores the actors involved in it, how they perceive the role of localization practices in the industry, and their perception to authenticity.

It contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of each actor in the localization process and how it is related to the various stages in the videogame production chain. Players are not regarded only as consumers for localizers, as they are also the ones who request localization practices to be made and are the ones who evaluate the work done on the game. Besides, this research also contributed to a better understanding of how localizers build their roles in the industry.

On the authenticity debate, it contributed to show that authenticity is a discussion much more related to an academic discussion rather than an industry one. According to the findings, the game's authenticity is usually translated into the developer's intentions. The localizers must maintain continuous contact with the developers to be able to access the intentions properly, and to translate them properly. The concept of authenticity did not appear to be an issue for the localizers, which allowed us to reflect upon the role of the literature in creating a research agenda that does not tie in with the studied industry's discussions.

Section C.3 Limitations of this Research

The first issue of this dissertation is that it was based on a few interviews and some fieldwork. All of them seemed to go towards the same direction, with some differences that were all referred during the discussions of the subject. However, more interviews and fieldwork would have resulted in a more in-depth analysis of this process, including a better discussion on costs and revenues related to localization.

Another aspect that could have changed the results of this research was the possibility of conducting ethnography methods in videogame development and localizer companies might provide a more comprehensive understanding on the role of localizations in the videogame industry. This has proved to be an obstacle in this research due to intellectual property protection issues.

Finally, a study on the experience of localization from the user's point of view could have illuminated some of the issued discussed above, although not accessing users has not compromised reaching the main aim of this thesis.

Section C.4 Implications for Policies

Considering the role of videogame localization, and the growth of this industry in the past years, some policies could be addressed to strength local the videogame industry in different localities. For instance, from the legal perspective, there could be professional training for localization, new undergraduate programs focused on videogame localization. Besides, policy makers should consider if the videogame policies are not restrictive in game's themes.

Localization has become a crucial process for the industry growth, and therefore has shown to be a relevant dynamic capability for the survival of companies that target national and foreign markets. Hence, providing and investing in the training of professionals to perform localization may be an alternative to foster the local videogame industry. For instance, small and medium local game development companies could start accessing localization services (potentially localizing their games to other languages and reach foreign markets).

Finally, it is important for policies to address a wide range of themes to foster creativity both in game development and in game localization, possibly allowing growth in the industry. A wider freedom to localizers with regard to themes may demand fewer major changes in games, allowing localizers to provide the player with a more "authentic" experience, and foster free speech.

Section C.5 Future Research

"All your base are belong to us".[131] Certainly, one of the most iconic localization cases in videogame history can lead us to think the role this process has in the industry, why many games today use this process, how to keep an authentic feel of the game even in different versions, and the role of players in this process. Those were some of the questions that guided this Ph.D. thesis and some of them will still be guidelines for my future research, which will be presented in this research statement.

This thesis concluded that, at the same time that a localized videogame can enable the user to further explore the game and its several discourses, which can also be seen as a kind of resistance from the players to content that is brought from other cultures, it is also a system that

[131] A speech from the character Cats at the game *Zero Wing* (Toaplan, 1989).

may allow domesticating and controlling ways of play and ways of interaction between the virtual and the real world. After all, localizing a game, as said, is more than just translating it. It means inserting cultural and other identity references to the game, changing how characters are portrayed and how the story is told. However, for it to work, it must be someone who can fit into an authentic form of who the player is, so the person can enable Her/Himself to have the authentic experience the game intended to have, a form of controlled multitude. Of course, some small variations of experience are desirable and encouraged, as they can help the users to form communities and discussions on the game, extending the shelf life.

Therefore, this research leads to new research areas for investigation, for instance, to consider the role modding cultures[132] had in the videogame industry. During the Ph.D., it was found that many professional localizers nowadays were modders before, as they would create language files for games to be translated into other languages. The role of modding culture in videogame localization in the past was already pointed out by Mangiron (2018: 130). It is important to understand the role of modding today, as this practice is regarded as a strategy to prolong the shelf life of a videogame. After all, the players would play the game and buy it for a longer time if new content is created for it. Besides that, player-created content and mods enable game developers to start working on new projects for the companies (POSTIGO, 2007; AOYAMA & IZUSHI, 2008; PORETSKI & ARAZY, 2017). Research in this area should also address the role social minorities – focusing on gender and race – and the role Global-South countries have in this practice. Modding culture can bring up resistances and a new form of identities that were not presented on the original game, as they are usually created by big companies located on first-world countries that takes into consideration only a majority of players considered to be white, straight, middle-class males.

[132] Also known as Romhacking, modding is a practice in the videogame industry in which players (known as modders) tempers with the game's source code to change different aspects to it, including language.

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Attachment I

These questions were developed when the research was still considering doing a comparative study on localization and dubbing practices in the Brazilian and American videogame industries. The questions asked were in Brazilian Portuguese. Therefore, a translated version of them and the original one are presented here:

Section AI.1 Translated Version (Developers)

1. Interviewee data:
1.1 Institutional Role:
[ ] Authorized to Disclose
[ ] Not Authorized to Disclose

1.2 Gender:
[ ] Male
[ ] Female
[ ] Outher: _____

1.3 Age:

1.4 Race:

1.5 Maior Titulação:

1.6 Ensino Fundamental:
[ ] Public School
[ ] Private School

1.7 High School:
[ ] Escola Pública
[ ] Escola Privada

1.8 Ensino Superior:
[ ] Public
[ ] Private
Major:_____

1.9 Grad-school:
Type:
Major:

1.10 Name of Company:
Role:

1. Questions

2.1 Have you been working with video games for a long time? How did you come up with that theme?

2.2 What can you tell me about the development of the Brazilian video game industry? Are there any particularities in relation to the USA? If so, which ones? If not, why?

2.3 Have you reached the news about the Brazilian video game industry? If so, what themes were covered in the report (s)? Did the news (s) have a good reception? Is there a difference between reporting a Brazilian game and a foreign one?

2.4 Considering your knowledge of video game consumption in Brazil, do you think that the Brazilian player has an interest in games produced nationally? If so, what types of games are

most in demand? Do you think there is a good dissemination of the nationally produced games? If not, what are the reasons for this?

2.5 Several multinational video game developers are establishing themselves here in Brazil and are dubbing and localizing their games, as in the USA. What are the reasons for this choice? Do you think globalization has a role in this? If so, which one?

Section AI.2 Oginal Version (Developers)

1. Dados do Entrevistado:
1.1 Posição Institucional:
[ ] Autorizado a divulgar
[ ] Não Autorizado a divulgar

1.2 Gênero:
[ ] Masculino
[ ] Feminino
[ ] Outro: _____

1.3 Idade:

1.4 Raça:

1.5 Maior Titulação:

1.6 Ensino Fundamental:
[ ] Escola Pública
[ ] Escola Privada

1.7 Ensino Médio:
[ ] Escola Pública
[ ] Escola Privada

1.8 Ensino Superior:
[ ] Pública
[ ] Privada
Curso:_____

1.9 Pós-Graduação:
Tipo:
Nome do Curso:

1.10 Empresa que trabalha:
Cargo:

2. Sobre Indústria de Videogames no Brasil:
2.1 Você trabalha com videogames há muito tempo? Como você chegou nesse tema?

2.2 O quê você pode me falar sobre a o desenvolvimento da indústria brasileira de videogames? Há particularidades em relação aos EUA? Se sim, quais? Se não, por que?

2.3 Considerando sua experiência como desenvolvedor de videogames no Brasil, que tipos de jogos são mais produzidos e quais as razões para isso? Esses jogos fazem sucesso no Brasil? E no exterior? Você já chegou a trabalhar para publishers multinacionais? Se sim, fale um pouco da sua experiência.

2.4 Você acha que o jogador brasileiro possui interesse nos jogos produzidos nacionalmente? *Se sim*, que tipos de jogos são mais procurados? Você acha que há uma boa divulgação dos jogos produzidos nacionalmente? *Se não*, quais as razões para tal?

2.5 Várias desenvolvedoras de videogames multinacionais estão se estabelecendo aqui no Brasil e realizando dublagem e localização de seus jogos, como ocorre nos EUA. Quais as

razões para esta escolha? Você acha que a globalização possui algum papel nisso? Se sim, qual?

Attachment II

These questions were the ones used on the semi-structured interviews, developed after the qualification exam and the literature review selected. There were two slightly different sets of interviews, depending on who was the interviewee. Here, both versions are presented:

Section AII. 1 Localizer Interview

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Questions:

1 – How long have you worked as a video game localizer? Can you tell me how did you get interested in this line of work?

2 – Could you describe me how is the localization process in your company? And its history?

3 - Do your company use third-party localizers? If so, to which language? If it is a language that you and your team does not have any knowledge, how do you reassure the quality of the game?

4 – When you are localizing a game, which cultural elements are important? How is the process of decision making on what to localize and what not? How do you choose cultural references to localize a game and how it impacts on the final game?

5 – Do the localization team follows the users' reviews and comments on the localization work? If so, how is it done? How frequently localization adjustments are sent into a game's updates?

6 – It is common, when reading about video game localization, to discuss about authenticity and an authentic feel for the games. Is it something that the localization teams discuss a lot? What do you consider authenticity to be? How do you determine what is authentic in a video game and what do you usually do to keep this feel when localizing a game?

Section AII. 2 Publisher Interview

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Questions:

1 – How long have you worked as a video game localizer? Can you tell me how did you get interested in this line of work?

2 – Could you define me what is video game localization? What is its role on the industry today? Is it different from the past?

3 – Could you describe me the decision-making process for localizing a game? Was it different in the past? If so, how?

4 - Do your company use freelance localizers? If so, to which language? If it is a language that you and your team does not have any knowledge, how do you reassure the quality of the game?

5 – Can you talk to me a bit about the costs involved in video game localization? How much from a game's budget is dedicated to localization? How is it distributed into the different processes?

6 – Do the localization team follows the users' reviews and comments on the localization work? If so, how is it done? How frequently localization adjustments are sent into a game's updates?

7 – It is common, when reading about video game localization, to discuss about authenticity and an authentic feel for the games. Is it something that the localization teams discuss a lot? What do you consider authenticity to be? How do you determine what is authentic in a video game and what do you usually do to keep this feel when localizing a game?