

KWARTALNIK NEOFILOLOGICZNY, LXVIII, 4/2021
DOI: 10.24425/kn.2021.139558

DOMINIK KUDŁA
(UNIWERSYTET WARSZAWSKI)
ORCID 0000-0001-5738-9852

THE VIEWS OF DEDICATED POLISH GAMERS ON THE LOCALIZATION OF VIDEO GAMES INTO POLISH – ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

ABSTRACT

The body of research on the perception of video game localization solutions is constantly growing. However, no attention was given to Polish video gamers' language version preferences. The present paper presents the results of a survey of Polish dedicated gamers when it comes to the preferred localization scope, what factors influence that preference, what solutions characterise a good localization and which ones the localizers should avoid.

KEYWORDS: video game localization, localization of games into Polish, game localization quality, video gamer survey, translation errors

STRESZCZENIE

Stale rośnie liczba badań dotyczących tego, jak odbierane są rozwiązania w ramach lokalizacji gier. Jak dotąd nie poświęcono jednak uwagi temu, jakie są preferencje polskich graczy względem wersji językowych gier wideo. W artykule przedstawione zostały wyniki ankiety wśród polskich zaangażowanych graczy dotyczącej preferowanego przez nich zakresu lokalizacji, czynników wpływających na ich preferencje, rozwiązań charakteryzujących dobrą lokalizację i tych, których lokalizatorzy powinni unikać.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: lokalizacja gier wideo, lokalizacja gier na język polski, jakość lokalizacji gier, badanie ankietowe graczy, błędy tłumaczeniowe

INTRODUCTION

The video game industry is one of the fastest growing sectors of global economy, especially when it comes to entertainment. According the video game market analysing website Newzoo (Wijman 2021), the income generated by video games globally in 2020 was \$177.8 billion, which means that the market grew by 23.1% year on year. The analysts confirm that the global pandemic had a considerable impact on that (the forecast in May 2020 assumed the revenue to be \$159.3 billion, *ibidem*). However, the global video game revenues surpassed

those of the movie industry as early as in 2011 (Weber 2017). This impressive growth would not have been possible without selling the games outside the markets where they have originally been developed. For that purpose, new language versions of video games tailored for users representing a specific region have to be created. All the processes aimed at this objective are referred to by both the video game industry, video game users as well as more and more translation studies scholars (O'Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 19; Bernal-Merino 2015: 35) as video game localization.

Due to joint political and economic reasons, Polish video gamers gained the possibility to buy localized versions of new games on a regular basis in the 1990s. Although for approximately a decade full localization of video games was a standard on the Polish market, the middle of the first decade of 21st century witnessed more and more titles receiving only a partial localization in Poland. Such games as the latest instalments of the *Assassin's Creed*, *Dragon Age*, *Far Cry*, *Fallout* or *Mass Effect* series, were released exclusively with Polish subtitles, even though the games which have opened those series featured a full Polish voice acting. Moreover, for some games, e.g. *Hitman 3* or *Resident Evil Village* (both released in 2021) no Polish version is available. Some publishers claim that, apart from an unquestioned financial aspect, choosing a partial localization of video games for the Polish market also stems from the comparably high average-user proficiency of English, as well as Polish gamers' preferences (cf. Czech 2013: 20; Drab 2014: 109; Dębowski *et al.* 2016; Bobrek 2018). The survey described in the present article was conducted partially in order to verify such statements.

The present article opens with a brief description of video game localization: the origin of the name, common market practices and the crucial challenges faced by practitioners. Secondly, the present scope of research devoted to video game users' opinions concerning game localization is presented. The third section is devoted to the materials and methods used in the experiment: the survey as well as its participants. Next, the results of the survey are discussed. Finally, the most important conclusions from the experiment are gathered.

VIDEO GAME LOCALIZATION

Due to the fact that the processes aimed at creating new language versions of video games were omitted by translation studies scholars for a relatively long time, the terms used in the industry have remained relatively unspecified and there are several names referring to the whole spectrum of processes (cf. O'Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 179). The two most common names are *video game localization* and *translation of video games*. However, researchers have also suggested several other names, e.g. *adaptation* (Esselink 2000: 3), *transcreation* (O'Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 106), *audiovisual translation* (Drab 2014: 112; Bernal-Merino 2015: 97),

translation of multimedia interactive entertainment software or TMIES (Bernal-Merino 2015: 6), *rewriting* (O'Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 101). The notion of localization was coined in the 1980s by utility software developers in the USA (Esselink 2000: 3). It comes from the word *locale* which is used in the software industry to refer to a combination of language, culture and character coding specific for a particular region (*ibidem*). The reason for distinguishing this notion from the notion of translation was the fact that software developers perceive translation as a semi-automatic process of transferring linguistic elements (words/ phrases, sometimes sentences) equivalently from one language into another (cf. Folaron 2006: 198; Kuipers 2010: 78; O'Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 87). Consequently, translation was and to some extent still is perceived in the industry as an element of localization. Moreover, according to some software experts, the broader process seemingly extends translation by providing concern about cultural elements present in a particular product (cf. Brooks 2000: 43). Such perception is wrong, as these elements have been one of the central points in discussions about translation since antiquity (e.g. in works by St. Jerome).

However, also various translation scholars (e.g. Chandler 2005; Munday 2012: 279–280; O'Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 236; Bernal-Merino 2015: 85) state that translation should be perceived as a part of the video game localization process defined as “all the many and varied processes involved in transforming game software developed in one country into a form suitable for sale in target territories, according to a new set of user environments with specific linguistic, cultural, and technical implications” (O'Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 19). Apart from translating the linguistic elements in a game, localization also involves some modifications of extralinguistic aspects. Such adjustments may involve the complete change of marketing strategy (cf. Thayer, Kolko 2004: 481), changes of the appearance of the game characters (cf. Mandiberg 2015: 263), replacing the original soundtrack (cf. McCarthy *et al.* 2005: 149), changing the game controls (cf. O'Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 94) and even excluding some of the game elements as well as removing some parts of the game plot. The last two types modification stem from the practices concerning the legal aspects of the video game market (underlined, e.g. by Bernal-Merino 2015: 35). Various countries impose strict control of the content which is allowed to be published within video games due to politically sensitive components or elements inappropriate due to age-rating, cultural taboos or religious reasons existing at a particular target market.

One of the specificities of video game localization which enables to distinguish it as a new genre within translation activities is the fact that video game localization within one project combines text types and challenges known from a wide spectrum of previous types of translation (O'Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 155–158; Drab 2014:101; Bernal-Merino 2015: 51–82; Bushouse 2015: 2; Kudła 2020: 84–86). Similarly to literary translation, video game localization involves dealing with the use of multifarious registers and styles of language, individualizing the characters appearing by their idiolect, the use of non-standard spelling to reflect dialectal

or incorrect pronunciation in written text. Terminological consistency, set rules of formatting some texts involved and the need to carefully verify the correct use of words, phrases and even grammatical structures in a specific specialized context render video game localization similar to technical translation. Challenges resembling audiovisual translation in video game localization include maintaining cohesion between text, image and sound elements, the use of dialogue subtitles (dividing them and adapting them to the reading speed of the recipient), the use of voice acting, lip movement synchronisation, translating song lyrics and adapting songs for a particular language. The translation type which the process of creating new versions of video games is the most similar to is software localization. The requirements set by both the former and the latter are complying with spatial limitations imposed on the text (e.g. the length of text in characters, the shape and size of textboxes, buttons, etc.), the use of short translation segments and sentence building rules based on variables (i.e. elements which can take varying values, e.g. numbers, nouns, in different contexts; the process of inserting certain values into such sentences is called *concatenation*). Moreover, similarly to previous translation types, video game localization is also subject to intertextuality, financial requirements of the ordering party, as well as content limitations regarding age rating, the preferences and legislation of the target market, in some cases also censorship.

Despite the similarities, there are several aspects which are approached by video game localizers differently than in other genres of translation, while some of the challenges it poses were unknown to translation studies before (cf. Drab 2014: 103; O'Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 75; Bernal-Merino 2015: 40). More and more often the products of video game localization are being developed simultaneously with the original. Due to this fact such results are commonly referred to as language versions of a particular game rather than its translations. This means that via the decisions made on the basis of the secondary target markets (within the process called *internationalization*) various language versions have also impact on the product which is the basis for localization activities (cf. Esselink 2000: 25). The multimodal and interactive nature of video games as a medium specify the main purpose of the localized content (referred to as "skopos" by Reiß and Vermeer 1984). Due to the fact that the user is at the same time a recipient and an active participant of the events presented within a game, in the localized version, they have to be provided with as similar immersion (the feeling of being an integral part of the game world) in the game to the original one as possible. Moreover, the game world is depicted using several communication channels: moving image, sound, speech, written text and interaction with the user, which means that far-reaching modifications within all these communication channels are not only allowed but also required. Such changes are aimed at creating a maximally authentic, coherent and engaging experience. Consequently, the notions of language equivalence and translation fidelity are subordinated to that goal in video game localization.

Another difference is that the text segmentation and concatenation, which are helpful in utility software, provide a difficulty in video game localization. Whereas the former translation type is aimed at user productivity and the conciseness of the message, the objective of the latter one is interactivity and telling engaging stories. Due to the fragmented character of the text which the translator receives within video game localization (it is dominated by one-word or several-word segments) the text is highly decontextualized (cf. Bernal-Merino 2015: 145). Consequently, the translation quality is highly dependent on the specificity of the reference materials provided by the developer. In some examples, the gaming and localization experience of the translator can also help the localizer overcome the decontextualization. However, if the translator has access exclusively to the fragmented text and is uncertain of the function of a particular segment and the situation in the game where it is used (e.g. who says a particular sentence to whom, or is a particular word a label in the inventory rather than a name of a menu function), they can make not only a grammatical or stylistic error but also a factual one. For that reason translating video game elements without sufficient contextual information is referred to as “blind localization” (Dietz 2007).

Moreover, in video game industry, the boundary between the creators and the recipients is becoming more and more blurred. The reason for such a tendency is the fact that, while being functionality and linguistic testers, numerous gamers become active participants of the game development and localization processes (O’Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 193). The activity referred to as *modding* – creating various modifications of the material present in a particular game – is also a proof that gamers can become video game creators. Such modifications also include creating new language versions of a particular game. Often informal groups of gamers working on their own language version are formed due to dissatisfaction of the recipients with the quality of the official localization of a particular title.

Nowadays, video game localization is interwoven into the game development process. In order to curb piracy practices and create global fandoms for particular titles, video games usually are released on the same date worldwide (the strategy is called *sim-ship* or *simultaneous shipment*, Bernal-Merino 2015: 172). This means that translators usually work on an unfinished game, which contributes considerably to the importance of the communication between the developers and localizers. An alternative model, referred to as *post-gold*, which entails localizing a fully complete game, which has already been released, is rarely applied in the industry (e.g. on markets of secondary importance). When it comes to the affiliation of the localization team, it could be a part of the game developing company (*in-house model*, O’Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 117) or be hired by the game developer or distributor (*outsourcing*). Nowadays, a model which is more and more often implemented in video game localization is *crowdsourcing*, i.e. voluntary translation of the game elements by a community of dedicated gamers using cloud platforms.

Throughout the history of video games several scopes of localization have been developed (Chandler 2005: 12–14; O’Hagan, Mangiron 2013: 111; Bernal-Merino

2015: 187–189). The most basic one, *box and docs* localization, involves translating exclusively the game box cover and the printed elements included inside (e.g. game manual, guarantee documentation and materials provided in collector's editions). This is a rare case nowadays, as due to the increased internet transfer capabilities the sales of physical copies have been mostly replaced by the use of electronic distribution platforms. However, sometimes such localization includes the game's website and page on such a platform, e.g. *Steam*, *Epic Games*, *Ubisoft Connect*, etc. As video game became more and more complex, also the in-game text (the user interface, dialogue subtitles and graphic text) had to be translated into particular target languages – this scope is called *partial localization*. The situation when all the assets involved in the game (apart from the previous elements including also the voice-acting recordings, sound effects and sometimes music) are translated and adapted is called *full localization*. Bernal-Merino (2015: 188) notices that more and more often the industry also distinguishes a more advanced level of localization which is referred to as *deep localization* or *enhanced localization*. In such a case the localizers try to set a game in the target culture as much as possible, so that the player has a feeling that the game was created specifically for their market, e.g. by adding some elements which are present exclusively in a particular language version of the game (and were even absent from the original version).

SURVEYS ON VIDEO GAME LOCALIZATION

Apart from being asked by the video game developers and distributors, the questions on how the users perceive video game localization are more and more often phrased also by translation studies researchers. According to Mangiron (2018), the first academic survey regarding the perception of video game localization was the study by Geurts (2015) regarding dialogues in video games. Approximately 77% of the Dutch gamers surveyed preferred subtitles to voice-acted dialogues, as the former solution provides the user with the possibility to listen to the original soundtrack of a game. Numerous of them have pointed to being accustomed with subtitles commonly used in the Dutch television (Geurts 2015: 69–70). The majority of the participants stated that the Dutch voice-acting is worse than the English one (Geurts 2015: 62). Numerous respondents also focused on errors occurring in dialogue subtitles in video games. The most commonly mentioned were inappropriate subtitle segmentation, language errors as well as unnatural phrasings occurring (e.g. at variance with the Dutch collocations or idioms), unnaturally extended or reduced subtitle display times as well as excessively small font size. Geurts (2015) also underlined the connection between the level of immersion and the scope of video game localization of a particular game.

Another study was conducted by Fernandez-Costales (2016). He analysed the preferences of Spanish-speaking gamers when it comes to video game localization.

The survey focused on not only the most frequently chosen language versions of games themselves but also the materials devoted to them, e.g. their official websites or trailers. In total, 94 students of the Faculty of Education at the University of Oviedo took part in the survey. The author tried to adjust the research sample to the age group tendencies observed in international gamer studies. However, two thirds of the participants were male, while more and more market studies show an almost equal distribution of gender. The three even subgroups have been set for the gaming frequency: playing occasionally, frequently and very frequently. The reliability of the scale used in the closed questions used in the survey was verified using the coefficient alpha. The vast majority of the participants (88%) characterised a good video game localization as a one where the user is not aware of the fact that it is not the original language version of the game. Approximately 71% of them pointed out that the localization quality has an influence on the player experience. According to 87% of the surveyed foreignization, e.g. leaving original cultural references unchanged, is the most appropriate strategy in video game localization. Around 75% support leaving character and place names untranslated in video games. When it comes to the materials concerning video games, the participants of the study used English versions of the websites, social media pages as well as official videos devoted to particular games. Fernandez-Costales (2016: 192) states that the results seem to contradict the arguments offered by game distributors who provide the user preferences as a rationale behind their market activities in Spain. The majority of Spanish video game localizers aim at adapting the largest possible amount of humorous elements and cultural references.

Similar surveys were conducted among French-speaking gamers by Ellefsen (2016) and Hernandez (2017) in their MA theses. The faults in video game localization most negatively affecting the player experience, according to the participants of these studies, were linguistic errors and low quality of the French voice acting. Numerous surveyed pointed also to the excessively literal translation of the original text as well as unnatural and monotone intonation of the voice actors.

The research into video game language version preferences was conducted also outside Europe. Khoshsaligheh and Ameri (2020) surveyed more than 750 Iranian gamers to assess the video game localization into Persian. As according to them there had been no video game market research in Iran before (Khoshsaligheh, Ameri 2020: 190), their work also aimed at establishing the demographics of the local gamers. The overwhelming majority of their participants were male (97.6%) and in their teens and early to mid-20s (the results were gathered through the most popular Iranian surveying platform, while the participants were recruited through the most popular social medium – Telegram). The vast majority of the participants (86.1%) preferred the original (English) language versions to Persian localizations (pointed out by 1.6% while the remaining 12.3% did not specify their preference in this regard). They have found that this stems from the fact that, according to the participants, officially localized video games are subject to censorship, they contain numerous technical errors, often blockbuster titles are not officially localized or

their Persian localization is considerably delayed (Khoshsaligheh, Ameri 2020: 200). They found that most participants prefer subtitled Persian version (45%), followed by dubbing (21%), while some (22%) stated that the localization scope depends on the game genre (Khoshsaligheh, Ameri 2020: 201). However, they found no correlation between the preferred localization scope and the declarative English proficiency of the participants.

Another study of video game localization into Persian was conducted by Afzali and Zahiri (2021). They scrutinized 5000 comments made by Iranian gamers on the video game localization of eight recently released video games (all of which had both an official localization into Persian and a fan-made one). As the study was not a survey, they have implemented a methodology called “netnographic exploration”. The analysis has shown that the preferred elements to be translated into Persian are game menus, installer applications, system messages as well as game guides and manuals, while dialogues and narrations should remain in their original (untranslated) form.

More recently, Al-Batineh and Alawneh (2021) investigated the patterns and tendencies within officially localized Arabic video games between 2005 and 2020 and surveyed the preferences of Arab gamers when it comes to the decisions made by the distributors. They found that the number of games localized into Arabic had grown exponentially throughout the analysed period (out of 142 localized games more than 100 were released after 2016). Out of 613 surveyed Arabic-speaking, almost two-thirds (64.27%) prefer partial (text-only) video game localization, while 23.65% chose full localization and 12.07% play the original language versions. Al-Batineh and Alawneh (2021) have also studied the preferences of the gamers when it comes to translating various elements of a game into Modern Standard Arabic and Arabic Local Dialects.

Comprehensive surveys of the Polish video game users had been conducted since 2014 within the *Polish Gamers Research* project (cf. Strzyżewski 2014; Krakowski Park Technologiczny 2015, 2018; Bobrowski *et al.* 2017, 2019; Krampus-Sepielak *et al.* 2021, there has been no report published in 2017). The studies were conducted jointly by the *Krakowski Park Technologiczny* company, the representatives of the video game industry in Poland (*Stowarzyszenie Polskie Gry* and *Indie Games Poland Foundation*), news website *Onet*, gaming website *Gry-Online*, as well as researchers representing several Polish universities and companies and was co-financed by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The six editions of the survey have provided detailed insight into the demographics of the Polish video game users, their genre, payment and platform preferences, as well as their motivations to play, gaming routine and sources of information on games. The latest one focused also on the Polish video game developers. For all this, no questions concerning video game language versions or localization were addressed in this project.

To the best of the author’s knowledge, the question of how do Polish-speaking users perceive the quality of video game localization into their native language had not been studied scientifically neither prior to conducting the survey described nor

prior to the publication of the present paper. Consequently, this paper is aimed at presenting the subject by answering several research questions.

1. What is the favourite language versions that Polish dedicated video gamers choose? Is the choice dependent on any factors (e.g. game genre, English language proficiency, etc.)?
2. Why the gamers choose foreign language versions of video games?
3. What are the features of good video game localization into Polish?
4. What solutions should translator choose when it comes to various elements present in a localized game?
5. What are the most common errors present in Polish video game localizations?

THE SURVEY AND ITS PARTICIPANTS

The survey into the preferences of Polish gamers with regard to video game localization was created using Google Docs. It was titled in Polish “Jakość tłumaczenia gier wideo” (“The quality of video game translation” – as the study was directed to members of the general public, the general-language word *translation* was chosen rather than more specialized *localization*). The form consisted of six sections titled: I. Gaming preferences (4 questions), II. Foreign language command (2 questions), III. Video game language version preferences (4 questions), IV Video game localization quality (8 questions), V. Video game localization errors (3 questions), while the last section gathered demographic information (4 questions). In total, the participants answered 25 questions.

The invitation to participate in the survey was published by the author on eight largest Facebook groups gathering video game enthusiasts (the numbers of participants in each group at the moment of survey publication is provided in brackets): „Gracze to My!” (75,516), „Sekcja graczy” (9,469), „PlayStation Konsolowi Gracze” (5,877), „Mobilni Gracze – Gracze Androida & iOS” (1,376), „Pog(R)adajmy” (1,132), „PS4 Polska. Gracze i Gry.” (1,030), „Gracze PS4/XBOX/PC” (377), and „Gracze PC Polska” (372). The results were gathered between 8th October and 8th November 2018. The survey was anonymous, nonetheless, the participants were asked to provide their e-mail address in order to prevent automatic or irrelevant responses.

In total, 407 responses have been received. However, due to the fact that some of the submissions were incomplete and one person has sent their answer twice, the final analysis involved the answers submitted by 395 participants.

Over 82% of the participants fell into the age group between 12 and 25 (12–18: 41.5%, 18–25: 41.0%), while the age groups are distributed much more evenly when it comes to Polish internet users, with the slight dominance of the 25–34 age group (cf. Krakowski Park Technologiczny 2018, Krampus-Sepielak *et al.* 2021). Moreover, as much as 83.3% of the participants were male with 16.7% female,

while both the 2018 and 2020 *Polish Gamers Research* reports point out a more even gender distribution (51% male, 49% female, *ibidem.*). Due to these facts, the present study is not representative of the group of Polish video gamers as a whole. However, the sample represents a group which identifies itself with video gaming and falls into the category of “dedicated gamers” (cf. Adams 2014: 96–98), which apart from spending much time on gaming (the length of one session and playing over a week are described below), discuss actively video game topics with other users (all the participants were members of very active social media groups) and try to find as much information about games as possible (the groups are often a source of the latest news for gamers).

The vast majority of the surveyed play video games highly regularly. More than a half play video games every day or more frequently, while more than three quarters play video games at least four times a week (cf. Fig. 1.). Moreover, the respondents spend much time for one gaming session. More than a quarter (28.86%) devote above four hours for that purpose, while more than four in ten of the participants (42.78%) devote between two and four hours for one session.

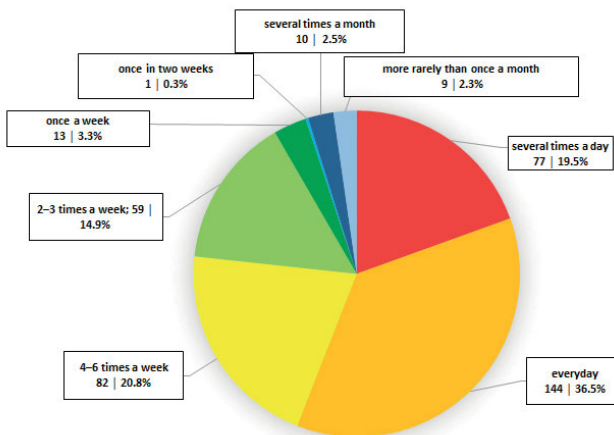


Figure 1. Gaming frequency of the participants

The vast majority of the surveyed used computer as a video gaming platform (83.80%, cf. Fig. 2.), followed by stationary console (37.97%), mobile devices (29.11%), portable console (6.33%), browser games (4.81%) and social media (1.52%). Video gamers usually play on more than one platform. Consequently, in this question and the following one (concerning genres) the participants were allowed to choose multiple options. The hardware preference also points out to dedicated gamers, as they are usually associated with using their PC as a platform (cf. Adams 2014: 97).

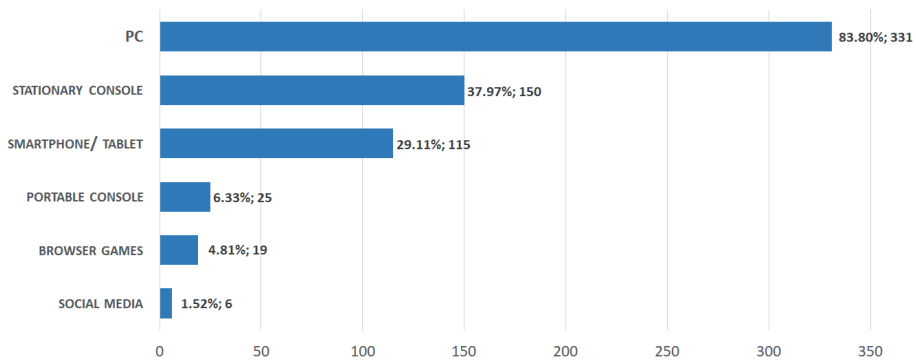


Figure 2. Video game platforms used by the participants

The most favourite genres of the survey participants are open-world (71.1%), action (65.6%), shooter (63.5%) and role-playing games (55.2%, cf. Fig. 3.). These genres are also perceived as the ones preferred by more dedicated gamers (cf. Adams 2014: 97).

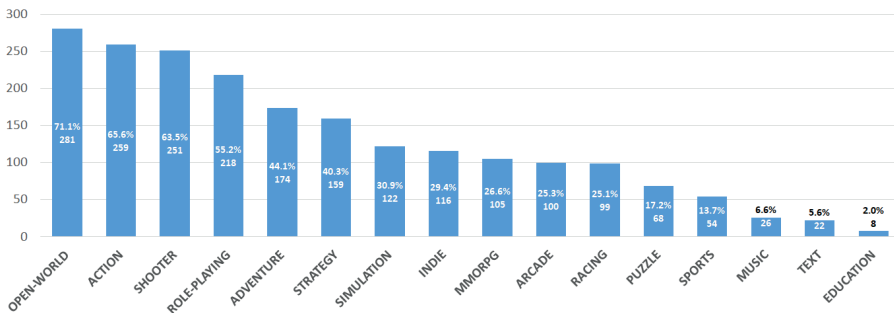


Figure 3. Favourite video game genres of the participants

The last independent variable used to distinguish the participants, was their command of foreign languages. All the participants have declared their native language to be Polish. The language with regard to which some variance among the research sample occurred was English. Interestingly, the declarative English fluency of more than a half of the participants (58.98%, cf. Table 1.) was at least upper-intermediate (B2). However, this is in line with the level of education of the respondents (22.9% declared finishing an upper-secondary level, 18.7% were during their BA/ BSc program, while 17.5% had completed higher education).

When it comes to other foreign languages mentioned by the surveyed (German, Spanish, Russian, French, Italian) less than 10% of all participants were able to speak them at a level higher than elementary (A1).

Table 1. Declarative English fluency of the participants

don't know	beginner (A0)	elementary (A1)	pre-inter-med. (A2)	inter-mediate (B2)	upper-inter-term. (B2)	advanced (C1)	proficiency (C2)
0.76% 3	2.78% 11	9.62% 38	11.14% 44	16.71% 6632	27.34% 108	23.54% 93	8.10% 32

RESULTS

The first research question addressed the preferences of the dedicated Polish gamers when it comes to the video game language. The answers were provided by the participants in the first question of the survey. The results are shown on Figure 4. The language version favoured most by the respondents was the partial localization, i.e. the one with the original sound and Polish in-game text and subtitles (39.7%). A comparably favoured version is the one without localization – 35.4% favour the original (usually English) language version of the game. Approximately one fifth of the participants prefer the full Polish localization (21.8%), while 3.0% choose a version with Polish voice-acting and foreign subtitles.

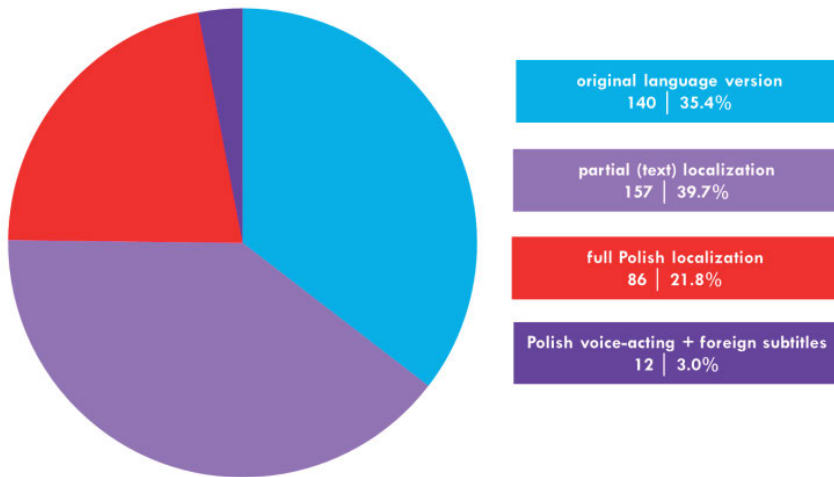


Figure 4. Favourite video game language versions of the participants

In order to understand better the language version preferences of the participants, they have been compared to the command of the English language among the participants. The distribution of various levels of English proficiency were not even within the research sample. For that reason the two variables were depicted in Figure 5 (the colour scale when it comes to language versions is the same as in Figure 4).

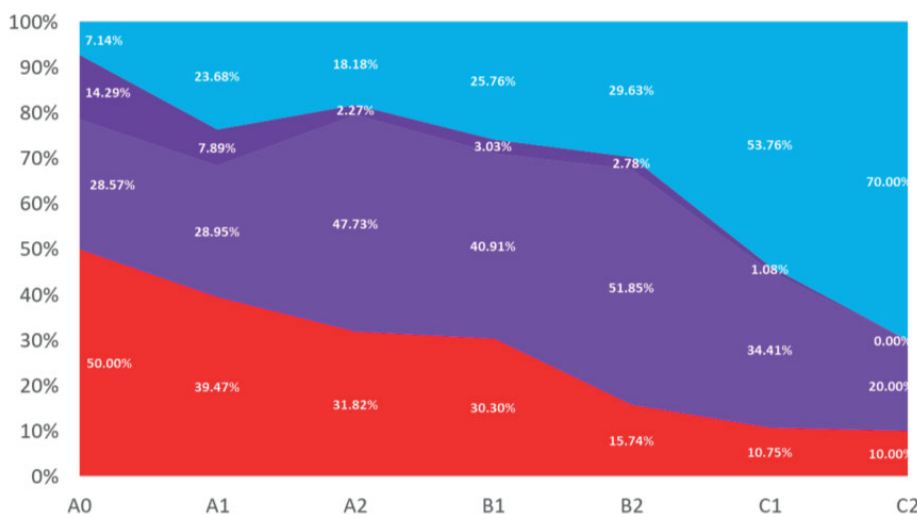


Figure 5. Favourite video game language version of the participants and their English proficiency

Although no significant correlation between the two factors could be presented, a noticeable trend has been observed for the preference for the full localization to be decreasing with the growth of the English language proficiency. Similarly, the preference for the untranslated original version is growing for gradually increasing command of English (reaching 70% at the C2/ proficiency level). The partial localization is the favourite language version for participants with the pre-intermediate, intermediate and upper intermediate level of English (being favoured by more than a half of the participants declaring the B2 English proficiency).

Another follow-up question was whether the favourite genre has an impact on the preferred language version of the video game among dedicated Polish gamers. As the distribution of variables failed the assumption of normality, the results were compared for each genre separately (cf. Table 2).

Table 2. Localization error types frequency assessed by the participants

	original language version	partial (text) localization	full Polish localization	Polish voice acting + foreign subtitles
open-world (281)	34.52% 97	40.57% 114	21.71% 61	3.20% 9
action (253)	31.62% 80	41.90% 106	22.13% 56	4.35% 11
shooter (251)	34.26% 86	39.84% 100	21.91% 55	3.98% 10
role-playing (218)	33.03% 72	41.74% 91	23.39% 51	1.83% 4

Table 2 cont.

	original language version	partial (text) localization	full Polish localization	Polish voice acting + foreign subtitles
adventure (171)	36.84% 63	33.92% 58	25.15% 43	4.09% 7
strategy (158)	36.08% 57	40.51% 64	21.52% 34	1.90% 3
simulation (121)	29.75% 36	42.15% 51	23.14% 28	4.96% 6
arcade (100)	37.00% 37	42.00% 42	18.00% 18	3.00% 3
racing (99)	27.27% 27	45.45% 45	20.20% 20	7.07% 7
puzzle (68)	45.59% 31	36.76% 25	13.24% 9	4.41% 3
sports (54)	18.52% 10	37.04% 20	35.19% 19	9.26% 5
music (26)	30.77% 8	50.00% 13	15.38% 4	3.85% 1
text (22)	22.73% 5	45.45% 10	31.82% 7	0.00% 0
education (8)	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	37.53% 3	12.50% 1

The general language version preference trend is also noticeable for the participants selecting most of the popular video game genres: open-world, action, shooter, role-playing, strategy, simulation, arcade, racing and music ones. However, some variance is noticeable among adventure and puzzle video game enthusiasts. In both cases, the favourite language version was the original one, followed by partial and full localization. Moreover, the participants preferring sports video games demonstrated a similar liking for full and partial localization over the original language version.

With reference to the second research question, the participants were also asked in an open question to provide the reasons why they choose language versions other than Polish. Their answers were coded into several categories, while taking into account the most commonly recurring subjects. The reason most commonly provided by the participants was the willingness to learn a foreign language (51.65% – 204 answers). Another rationale was curiosity (41.01%, 162), sometimes accompanied by the willingness to compare how the game sounds in both languages (13.16%, 52), followed by the unnatural character of the Polish language versions (39.49%, 156 – mostly when it comes to the exaggerated or insufficient intonation

in the voice acting or the excessively literal translation). For 36.46% of the participants, the lack of the official full (or sometimes partial) Polish language version of the game they chose is the reason for choosing an original language version. As much as 26.08% of the answers (103) mentioned the willingness to compare the Polish localization with the original or other localizations in general. Only 4.05% of the surveyed (16 people) stated that they always choose Polish language versions (either full and partial localizations or games developed in Polish).

The third research question addressed the features of a well-made video game localization. In this case, the participants were also asked to express their opinion in an open question. Consequently, most of the surveyed provided several such aspects. The most commonly mentioned characteristic (83.04%, 328 answers) was preserving the character of the original game, e.g. by carefully adapting the humour, cultural references and proper names occurring in a game. Similarly high importance was attached to the general quality of voice acting present in a localized video game (81.01%, 320), e.g. natural intonation (68.10%, 269), the choice of voice actors fitting particular characters (64.81%, 256), appropriate lip synchronisation (47.09%, 186). The majority of the surveyed also mentioned using natural language, which fits a particular game context when it comes to style, vocabulary and fixed expressions (72.91%, 288). Approximately a half of the participants (53.92%, 213) underlined the importance of the translation to be devoid of errors: linguistic (grammatical, spelling, stylistic) and factual (the use of appropriate terminology of a particular area, reference to the gamer's jargon). Only 25 participants (6.33%) mentioned the participation of famous voice actors or celebrities in the Polish language version of a video game.

Another rationale for conducting the survey was gathering the opinions of dedicated Polish video gamers on subjects related to video game localization. The first solution discussed was translating proper names, such as character, place, item names in Polish versions of video games. The answers were distributed rather evenly between three statements: the decision should depend on a particular game (30.13%, 119), the original proper names should always be retained (29.62%, 117) and the original names of characters and places should be preserved (26.58%, 105). Consequently, the majority of the participants suggests leaving at least some of the names unchanged. The remaining answers were "only some original names should be preserved" (6.84%, 27), "it doesn't matter" (3.80%, 15), "the number of translated and untranslated names should be similar" (1.77%, 7) and "all the proper names should be translated" (1.27%, 5).

The next translation solution commonly discussed among video gamers is the use of the gamers' jargon in Polish localizations (e.g. Anglicisms such as *skill*, *item* or *boss*). Almost a half of the surveyed expressed their indifference to that matter (46.08%, 182). Approximately one third (33.92%, 134) stated that such expressions should be used in games in Polish, while the remaining 20.00% (79 answers) were against using such elements.

The participants were also asked to express their view on the use of swearwords in Polish versions of video games. Almost a half pointed out that such expressions should only be used when it is required by the contextual situation (48.61%, 192). Another answer chosen by a considerable share of the research sample (42.03%, 166) was being for the use of swearwords in video games in Polish. A much smaller percentage (9.11%, 36) stressed the importance of using such expressions exclusively in games with the 18+ age rating, while only one person (0.25%) was against the use of obscene language.

The last linguistic solution discussed in the survey was the manner of formulating the instructions addressed to the player in Polish, which is a language possessing a grammatical category of gender. The most commonly chosen of five available answers was “it doesn’t matter for me” (40.76%, 161). Around a third of the surveyed stated that the instructions should be formed using impersonal constructions (33.16%, 131). 63 participants (15.95%) suggested using exclusively the masculine gender forms, 40 of them (10.13%) supported using the masculine and feminine together (e.g. *powinieneś / -nnaś*), while none chose using exclusively the feminine forms. It is worth mentioning that the sample was far from being representative when it comes to gender (only 16.7% of the participants were female). Moreover, it has to be noted that the survey was conducted in 2018 when the question of expressing the non-binary gender was not a mainstream topic when it comes to Polish language.

The fifth research question was devoted to various localization errors occurring in Polish versions of video games. The participants were asked to assess (using a Likert scale), how often according to them twelve types of errors occur in Polish versions of video games. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Localization error types frequency assessed by the participants

<i>error type</i>	very often	often	not often	rarely	very rarely
spelling	0.51% 2	8.35% 33	27.34% 108	35.70% 141	28.10% 111
punctuation	2.03% 8	14.43% 57	27.85% 110	38.23% 151	17.47% 69
grammatical	2.78% 11	16.46% 65	34.68% 137	29.87% 118	16.20% 64
factual	7.09% 28	22.78% 90	35.95% 142	22.78% 90	11.39% 45
wrong equivalent	13.92% 55	33.42% 132	29.37% 116	14.18% 56	9.11% 36

Table 3 cont.

<i>error type</i>	very often	often	not often	rarely	very rarely
stylistic	4.56% 18	17.97% 71	40.25% 159	24.56% 97	12.66% 50
terminological inconsistency	6.84% 27	18.48% 73	34.18% 135	28.35% 112	12.15% 48
voice-acting inconsistent with subtitles	14.18% 56	26.58% 10	28.86% 114	18.48% 73	11.90% 47
unnatural intonation	20.51% 81	33.16% 131	23.29% 92	14.94% 59	8.10% 32
inappropriate subtitle font	7.59% 30	14.68% 58	27.59% 109	26.84% 106	23.29% 92
subtitle size	5.82% 23	12.66% 50	24.56% 97	30.38% 120	26.58% 105
subtitle placement	5.82% 23	9.87% 39	23.29% 92	29.87% 118	31.14% 123

The localization fault which was perceived as the most common by the surveyed was the unnatural intonation of voice actors (specified as occurring often and very often by more than a half, 53.67%, 212). Almost a half of the participants (47.34%, 187) pointed out also the frequent occurrence of wrong Polish equivalents of English words and expressions. Another error recurring frequently in games, according to the participants, (40.76%, 161) was the variance between voice acting and subtitles in Polish. Four localization errors were assessed moderately frequent: grammatical errors, factual errors, stylistic errors and terminological inconsistency (all of them were defined as happening not often by the highest percentage of the participants with the neighbouring answers given by a comparable numbers of participants). Five video game localization faults were classified as rather rare or rare: punctuation errors, spelling errors, size of the in-game subtitles, subtitle placement on the screen and inappropriate subtitle font.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the survey claims no rights to being representative to the whole group of Polish video game users, it provides some insight into the preferences of Polish dedicated gamers with regards to video game localization.

The answer provided by the participants seem to be in line with the claims by the distributors that Polish dedicated gamers prefer partial and no localization to full localization of video games. There also seems to be a connection between the increasing preference for the original language version as well as against full localization and the growing English proficiency of dedicated gamers. However, these tendencies need to be verified in a larger and more representative sample. The answers provided by the surveyed may also stem from the present strategies of game developers and distributors. The preferences for partial localization within the sample seem to overlap with the most commonly adopted localization scope within particular game genres in the recent years. Nonetheless, the availability of the desired language version of the game at the Polish market was underlined by only approximately a third of the participants.

The most common rationale behind choosing a non-Polish language version of the game was foreign language learning, followed by curiosity, the unnatural voice-acting in the Polish version and the eagerness to compare various language versions of one game.

According to the dedicated gamers participating in the survey, a satisfying localization into Polish should reflect the atmosphere of the original game as much as possible, include a diligently created voice acting (with natural intonation, carefully chosen voice actors and appropriate lip synchronisation). Moreover, the language used in an ideal Polish language version of a video game should be natural, fitted to the situation it is used in (and consequently building the feeling of immersion) as well as devoid of any linguistic or factual mistakes.

Another focus in the survey was the translation decisions made in video game localization. The majority of the participants agree that at least character and place names should remain untranslated in Polish language versions of video games, although almost a third stated that the decision should be based on the specificity of a particular game. The dedicated gamers surveyed seem to have no particularly specified opinion on the use of gamers' jargon in video games in Polish. However, they mostly accept the use swearwords there. Although the research subjects seemed to be indifferent to the grammatical gender used in Polish video game localizations and an overwhelming majority of them were male, a relatively noticeable number of them suggested using gender non-specific forms.

According to the surveyed dedicated gamers, the most commonly occurring errors in Polish video game localizations were voice-acting unnatural intonation, the use of wrong Polish equivalents of single English words and phrases and the variance between Polish subtitles and voice acting.

To sup up, a large-scale and more representative survey of Polish video gamers on localization should be conducted in order to uphold or contradict the findings of the present study and provide a wider perspective on the matter for both the industry and academia.

REFERENCES

- ADAMS E. (2014): *Fundamentals of Game Design. Third Edition*, New Riders, Berkeley.
- AFZALI K., ZAHIRI M. (2021): *A netnographic exploration of Iranian videogame players translation needs: the case of in-game texts*, "The Translator", <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2021.1880536>> [last access: 17.10.21].
- AL-BATINEH M., ALAWNEH R. (2021): *Current trends in localizing Video games into Arabic: localization levels and gamers' preferences*, "Perspectives. Studies in Translation Theory and Practice", 5: 1–20.
- BERNAL-MERINO M.Á. (2015): *Translation and Localisation in Video Games. Making Entertainment Software Global*, Routledge, New York.
- BOBREK G. (2018): *Gry, w które lepiej nie grać po polsku*, "TVGRY.pl", <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSPkx0yBu7A>> [last access: 17.10.21].
- BOBROWSKI M., RODZIŃSKA-SZARY P., KRAMPUS-SEPIELAK A., ŚLIWIŃSKI M., RUDNICKI S. (2017): *State of the Polish Video Game Industry '17*, "PolishGamers.com", <http://polishgamers.com/upload/raport_A4_EN_2017_web.pdf> [last access: 17.10.21].
- BOBROWSKI M., GAŁUSZKA D., KRAMPUS-SEPIELAK A., RODZIŃSKA-SZARY P., ŚLIWIŃSKI M. (2019): *Polish Gamers Research Report*, "Polish Gamers Resarch" <<https://polishgamers.com/pgt/polish-gamers-research-2019>> [last access: 17.10.21].
- BROOKS D. (2000): *What Price Globalization? Managing Costs at Microsoft*, in: SPRUNG R.C. (ed.), *Translating into Success: Cutting-edge Strategies for Going Multilingual in a Global Age*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: 43–57.
- CHANDLER H.M. (2005): *The Game Localization Handbook*, Charles River Media, Massachusetts.
- CZECH D. (2013): *Challenges in video game localization: An integrated perspective*, "Explorations: A Journal of Language and Literature", 1: 3–25.
- DEBOWSKI J., ARASZKIEWICZ M., BOBREK G., MAŃKA M. (2016): *Tragiczne przypadki polskiego dubbingu gier. Dlaczego jest tak źle*, "TVGRY.pl", <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HateX3Bq09Y>> [last access: 17.10.21].
- DIETZ F. (2007): *How difficult can that be? – The work of computer and video game localization*, "Revista Tradumática", 5: 41–47.
- ELLEFSEN U. (2016): *Harnessing the roar of the crowd: A quantitative study of language preferences in video games of French players of the Northern Hemisphere*, MA thesis, University of Roehampton: London.
- FERNÁNDEZ-COSTALES A. (2016): *Analyzing Player's Perception on the Translation of Video Games*, in: SMITH I.A., ESSER A., BERNAL-MERINO M.Á. (eds.), *Media Across Borders: Localizing TV, Film, and Video Games*, Routledge, New York: 183–201.
- GEURTS F. (2015): *What do you want to play? The desirability of video game translations from English into Dutch according to Dutch gamers and non-gamers*, MA thesis, University of Leiden.
- HERNANDEZ M. (2017): *Video Game Localisation: A Francophone Gamers' Perspective on the Quality of PC Video Game Localisation*, MA thesis, Université Genève, <<http://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:104629>> [last access: 17.10.21].
- KHOSH-SALIGHEH M., AMERI S. (2020): *Video game localisation in Iran: A survey of users' profile, gaming habits and preferences*, "The Translator", 26/2: 190–208.
- KRAKOWSKI PARK TECHNOLOGICZNY (2015): *Polish Gamers Research '2015*, „kpt.krakow.pl”, <http://www.kpt.krakow.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/polishgamers_2015_final_pl-2.pdf> [last access: 17.10.21].
- ID. (2018): *Polish Gamers Research '2018*, „kpt.krakow.pl” <<http://www.kpt.krakow.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/polish-gamers-2018.pdf>> [last access: 17.10.21].

- KRAMPUŚ-SEPIELAK A., BOBROWSKI M., GALUSZKA D., RODZIŃSKA-SZARY P., ŚLIWIŃSKI M. (2021): *The State of the Polish Video Games Industry 2020*, "Polish Gamers Research", <https://polishgamers.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Raport_2021_long_FINAL_EN_WEB.pdf> [last access: 17.10.21].
- KUDŁA D. (2020): *Ocena odbioru lokalizacji językowej gier komputerowych na podstawie danych okulograficznych*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Instytutu Komunikacji Specjalistycznej i Interkulturowej, Uniwersytet Warszawski, Warszawa.
- MANDIBERG S. (2015): *Responsible Localization: Game Translation between Japan and the United States*, PhD thesis, University of California, San Diego, <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3g21n3q7>> [last access: 17.10.21].
- MANGIRON C. (2018): *Reception studies in game localization. Taking stock*, in: DI GIOVANNI E., GAMBIER Y. (eds.), *Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam: 277–296.
- MCCARTHY D., CURRAN S., BYRON S. (2005): *The Complete Guide to Game Development, Art, and Design*, ILEX Press Ltd, Lewes.
- MUNDAY J. (2012): *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications (3rd ed.)*, Routledge, London/ New York.
- O'HAGAN M., MANGIRON C. (2013): *Game Localization: Translating for the Global Digital Entertainment Industry*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia.
- STRZYŻEWSKI M. (2014): *Kim są gracze w Polsce? Wyniki badań rynku Polish Gamers Research*, „Onet.pl”, <<https://technologie.onet.pl/gry/kim-sa-gracze-w-polsce-wyniki-badan-rynkupolish-gamers-research-2014/34rqzyn>> [last access: 17.10.21].
- THAYER A., KOLKO, B.E. (2004): *Localization of Digital Games: The Process of Blending for the Global Games Market*, "Technical Communication", 51/4: 477–488.
- WEBER L. (2017): *In the \$75 Billion Videogame Industry, Hiring People Is a Last Resort*, "The Wall Street Journal" (10 April), <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-a-75-billion-business-is-getting-out-of-the-hiring-game-1491838235>> [last access: 17.10.21].
- WIJMAN T. (2021): *Global Games Market to Generate \$175.8 Billion in 2021; Despite a Slight Decline, the Market Is on Track to Surpass \$200 Billion in 2023*, "Nezwoo.com" <<https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/global-games-market-to-generate-175-8-billion-in-2021-despite-a-slight-decline-the-market-is-on-track-to-surpass-200-billion-in-2023/>> [last access: 17.10.21].