

# Introduction

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Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, video game industries in the broadly understood region of Central and Eastern Europe have been rapidly growing. The new economic reality opened up new possibilities not only for game developers from that area but also for Western distributors who all accessed broader audiences than before. This has been visible especially in Poland where over the thirty years several globally-recognized gaming companies such as *CD Projekt RED*, *Techland*, *11 Bit Studios*, *Bloober Team* or *People Can Fly* have emerged providing the global audience with generally acclaimed titles, such as *The Witcher*, *Dying Light*, *Frostpunk*, *Shadow Warrior*, *Cyberpunk 2077*, *Call of Juarez*, *Car Mechanic Simulator* series; and standalone titles, e.g. *This War of Mine*, *Painkiller*, *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter*, or more recently *The Invincible*. This success would not have been possible without the localization efforts of countless professionals rendering those games accessible for global audiences, as well as producing custom-fit local versions of internationally anticipated titles for the Polish gamers. Those endeavors have been so successful that more and more frequently Polish is perceived as one of the top languages to localize any game into (Mirkovic 2021).

The research on video game localization in Poland, although still in its early stage, is constantly developing. Due to the growing interest in video game localization among translation studies scholars around the world, there are more and more scientific publications by Polish researchers revolving around this topic. The first one is most probably the article by E.J. Kuipers (2010) which describes the factors distinguishing this area of translations. He classified it as a type of “written translations” (“ *tłumaczenia pisemne*”). Maybe this was caused by the fact that in the 2000s and the early 2010s localizers often had access exclusively to the video game text. A year later, he discussed the challenges posed by training translators for localization of video games, especially in centres of higher education (E.J. Kuipers 2011). Further characterisation of this new (in that case independent) type of translation activities as well as the translation strategies most commonly used in it was undertaken by D. Czech (2013). He also mentions the approach of various Polish gamer groups to full or partial localization. M. Sajna (2013) compares the translation strategies utilized in video game localization with the ones utilized in AVT (mainly of films). The article by K. Inglot

(2013) concentrates on proper names in video games translated into Polish and German. E. Drab (2014a) classifies video game localization as AVT and enumerates its most important characteristics. In another article, she juxtaposes game localization with film translation and using three examples of *Heavy Rain*, *Infamous* and *Dishonored*, she points out the challenges localization poses for translators (E. Drab 2014b). The utilization of CAT tools in localization was the focus of the article by M. Sajna (2015), while strategies utilized by students translating computer game texts involving variables were discussed in a paper by D. Gutfeld (2015) included in the same monograph.

The first monograph devoted to video game localization by a Polish researcher – *Video Game Translation and Cognitive Semantics* – was published in 2016 by Mateusz Sajna. It analyses video games translated into Polish using the framework of Conceptual Blending Theory, designed by Gilles Fauconnier and developed by Mark Turner, where meaning construction in translation may involve blending several mental spaces which were associated with the source text to render the translation of metaphor, analogy and counterfactuals successful (Fauconnier G. & Turner M., 2002 *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blanding and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books).

In an academic essay, Chojnowski (2016) discussed the main technical and language-related challenges encountered in video game localization into Polish. E. B. Nawrocka (2016) describes those challenges using the example of a single title – *Grey's Anatomy* (Ubisoft: 2009, based on the famous ABC series). One video game title and its localization is also the focus of the article by Piotr Maziarz and Debora Onik (2019) who investigate cultural references in *The Witcher III Wild Hunt*. D. Kudła (2018) also discussed one game – the pirate Russian localization of a point-and-click game *Książę i Tchórz* (Metropolis: 1998). The topic of pirate video game localizers in the USSR and Russia was further developed in the article *Głosów użyli profesjonaliści programiści* (Kudła 2019).

The recent years have witnessed considerable growth in the number of scientific publications concerning video game localization and the narrowing of their scope. E. B. Nawrocka (2019a & 2019b) focused on the issues of coping with multitextuality as well as translating variables and gender in video games. Z. Włodowska (2020) describes the translation of toponyms in *TES Skyrim* into Russian. A survey conducted in 2018 (and described in D. Kudła 2021) collected the opinions of Polish dedicated video gamers regarding their preferences in the scope and type of localization, as well as the most commonly noticed errors in video games localized into Polish.

The video-game-localization-related literature in Polish was further extended in the early 2020s. Nawrocka (2020) focused on strategies utilized in the translation of the narrative in *Pillars of Eternity*. The first monograph devoted fully to video game localization (D. Kudła 2020) provided some overview of various theoretical aspects of this process, as well as compared the visual perception of partial and full localization of *Shadow of the Tomb Raider* (Square Enix: 2018) with its original English version using

eye-tracking methodology. A year later the first Polish video game localization handbook was published (Mrzigod 2021), where a more practical approach to the fundamentals, challenges and errors in localization was adopted. Nawrocka (2021a) discussed the Polish localization of *Diablo III* with regard to translation strategies, approaches and techniques, while in (2021b) she described the usefulness of translating game related Wiki pages to prepare students for video game localization tasks. In their monograph, M. Deckert & K. Hejduk (2022c) analysed and classified 'on-screen language' (OSL) from the point of view of translation. The material was chosen on the basis of the Polish localisations of *Tom Clancy's The Division 2* and *Shadow Warrior 2*, from which over 1000 cases of unique and meaningful OSL were extracted, almost exclusively in languages other than Polish.

Deckert, M. & Hejduk, K. (2022a) found that deficient spelling has no traceable effect on player cognitive load, enjoyment or comprehension on the basis of a manipulated Polish unofficial localization of *Distraint: Deluxe Edition*. Using the data from the same study (Deckert, M. & Hejduk, K. 2022b) they found a statistically significant negative impact of spelling errors in Polish localization on the gamer's assessment of the game *Usability/ Playability* and *Personal Gratification* and some [insignificant] impact on the gamer Satisfaction (the three factors taken from *Game User Experience Satisfaction Scale* or *GUESS-18*).

D. Kudła (2022a) briefly described the most important abilities and knowledge comprising the translator competence in video game localization. The challenges stemming from the lack or insufficient contextual details in game localization were the focus of D. Kudła (2022b). The history of video game localization practices in Poland from the 1980s to the present time was briefly outlined by D. Kudła (2022c).

Obviously, video game localization or the translation of video game content has become a popular theme for BA and MA theses at linguistic university faculties around Poland with hundreds of dissertations on that matter defended to date.

This special issue comes to further enhance the body of Polish video game localization discourse with four new contributions. The special issue was originally titled *Video Game Localization in Central and Eastern Europe – Chances and Challenges*, however, it has been decided to rename it as all of the successfully peer-reviewed contributions were written by four Polish video game localizers, two of whom are also academic researchers and one apart from practicing localization teaches at university.

The author's structure of the issue shows that the communication between the industry and the academia is not absent while both sectors try to find a platform for communication. Two of the texts provide rather practice-oriented considerations about this type of translation activity and have been gathered in a dedicated section called *Practitioners' Insight*. The text by Janusz Mrzigod offers a wide range of solutions for the issue of grammatical-gender-related variative forms of nouns, adjectives and verb forms. Overcoming this issue is important not only for Polish but also for other Slavic languages, as it renders using sentences utilizing variables and concatenation-

based sentences difficult or leading to ungrammatical constructions. Ewa Holik focuses on proper name translation in *Horizon Forbidden West* and the perception of literal translation by gamers.

The issue opens with two academic research papers. The first one by Ewa B. Nawrocka focuses on the variety of cultural and linguistic references present in *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt* and various manners of their rendering in the global English language version of the game. The second article in the first section by myself summarises the eye tracking study into the reception of a fragment of *The Shadow of the Tomb Raider* in three language versions (full English, partial Polish and full Polish).

The issue closes with *Final Variable*, a section recommending recent publications related to video game localization.

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