

The Specifics of MMORPG Genre Translation

Linda Janíková

Comenius University in Bratislava

linda.janikova@gmail.com

Translation: Martin Tadian

Abstract

This article deals with the specifics of the translation of the MMORPG video game genre. It focuses on the *World of Warcraft* video game (2004, Blizzard Entertainment) and then on its expanded version *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm* (2010, Blizzard Entertainment). By using a descriptive method, it presents the main features of the video game and analyzes various types of elements (belonging to the field of game mechanics) that need to be localized during translation (e.g., the user interface and the terminology that forms a part of the creation process of an in-game character). The article also includes graphic examples that clarify the nature of the video game, its differences in comparison with other types of more frequent translation, and any issues that may arise during the process of its localization. Its main goal is to explore a specific video game terminology by using relevant sources and providing guidance and ideas for future video game localization projects.

Keywords: terminology, localization, game software, video games, MMORPGs

Introduction

The aim of this article is to present some of the most popular types of video games and translations of the massively multiplayer online roleplaying game (MMORPG) genre, which is considered a roleplaying game (RPG) subgenre. This is one of the most widespread types of video game globally; they are played by many players (often from different nationalities) simultaneously. This article analytically focuses on the terminology of a specific version of *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm* (2010) and various elements and terminological areas that are not typically found in common types of translation but which are typical for the translation of gaming software. The presented research worked with a few Czech and Slovak sources directly focusing on the translation of video games and built on the present author's own experience. The main aim of the

article is to raise awareness of the complexity of the translation of this video game genre and present new and interesting challenges for translators, while also describing and explaining characteristics and selecting and analyzing certain terms. This article is based on the present author's diploma thesis titled *Selected Video Game Terminology of the MMORPG Genre* which was completed in 2021 at Comenius University in Bratislava. That work contains a chapter devoted to terminology and localization procedures. This article focuses directly on the specifics and translation of the selected genre, while general translation foundations and terminology are only briefly addressed.

1 Video game genres

It is difficult to determine the exact number of video game genres. They are divided into subgenres, and, given the multi-genre features of some video games, such as the video game *Borderlands* (2009, an action RPG shooter), combined genres are also often mentioned. Chandler (1997) pointed out that video game genres do not have precisely defined rules and that some video games can belong to multiple genres simultaneously. This article introduces the basic genres and focuses on one selected subgenre. The basic classification of video game genres (Lee et al. 2014) has been modified to provide a general introduction without requiring extensive knowledge about video games:

- Action games include subgenres like shooters, survival games and their multi-player versions (battle royale), and fighting games. These video games are especially popular because they are simple to understand. From a localization perspective, they do not have a lot of text to translate. They rarely focus on storytelling and instead focus more on action. *Counter Strike* (2000), *Fortnite* (2017), and *Mortal Kombat X* (2015) are examples of action games.
- Adventure games are based on the interaction between the player and the surrounding environment; players may need to solve puzzles, such as in *Myst* (1993); there may be a storytelling/narrative-driven game, such as *Heavy Rain* (2010); and these games can even form a series, such as Telltale Games' *The Walking Dead* (2012).
- Roleplaying games require players to create their own character (or choose from pre-established ones.) The player then controls and develops their character's attributes, abilities, and destiny. Examples of these video games include *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015), *Diablo III* (2012), and *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (2011).

- Simulations aim to simulate real-life situations such as driving, building/construction, managing, and everyday life. *The Sims* (2000) is probably the most well-known video game of this genre. Other examples include *Euro Truck Simulator 2* (2012) and *Farming Simulator* (2008).
- Strategies are inspired by classic board games and require tactical planning and thinking. Titles belonging to this genre include *Age of Empires* (1997), *StarCraft* (1998), and *League of Legends* (2009).
- Sports games simulate real-life sports activities such as car racing, basketball, boxing, football, and hockey. Examples include *Gran Turismo* (1997) and *FIFA 22* (2021).

1.1 The MMORPG video game genre

MMORPGs encompass the idea of roleplaying games being played in a massively multiplayer online format. Stoffová (2016) notes that these video games require an internet connection, which makes it possible to create servers where many players can connect simultaneously, communicate with each other, and group into “guilds,” which are a type of club. Players create characters they then roleplay as heroes; the game focuses on the development of a player-controlled character and usually has a long and elaborate storyline. Usually, leveling up the character is based on gaining “experience points” (XP). Players earn XP by defeating enemies or completing tasks. “Equipment” improves with the level of the character and plays an important role as well (Stoffová 2016).

Massively multiplayer online video games began to develop in the late twentieth century. Players found that interacting with real individuals (initially at the local level and later internationally) brought more fun and that it was not as easy to predict what the opponent would do in comparison with a computer. Thanks to this genre, playing video games has become a common leisure activity for people around the globe. The advantage of having big playerbases is that developers can gather feedback about game bugs more quickly, determine player preferences, and base their updates and expansions on this information (Bernal-Merino, 2013). The most well-known and played video games of this genre include *World of Warcraft* (2004), *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* (2013), *The Elder Scrolls Online* (2014), *Guild Wars* (2013), and *World of Tanks* (2010).

1.2 The translation of MMORPGs

For most other video game genres, it can be said that the game pauses (or nothing further happens within it) when the player logs out. The MMORPG genre differs in that the video game takes place in a world that is constantly changing, regardless of whether the player is connected or not. The world in which the game takes place is continuously changed by other players who are connected. In other genres, it is possible to save the game or pause it for a certain period, but in MMORPGs there is no such thing. It is usually impossible to “win” games of this genre because they are not following a story that needs to be completed and progressed. The game evolves at the pace chosen by the player. Due to the extensive storyline and the fact that these video games are rarely sold in the way that we are used to (as a monthly subscription rather than online or in a store), they can have a longer lifespan and their localization brings long-term revenue to developers. This means that even if a player reaches the highest level, they still have the opportunity to earn new “achievements.” In the case of *World of Warcraft*, it is possible to transfer characters to newer versions (or expansions) of the game, which are released about every two years.

The fact that new game elements, updates, and paid content (such as exclusive in-game items) are regularly added to MMORPGs presents a risk for developers. Thanks to localization, they are more likely to have a greater success in different countries, but they must count on the fact that such a product needs to be constantly monitored for quality control; communication with players and their feedback is crucial in this regard. Many updates and bug fixes are based on feedback from players, who can report issues or “open” a “ticket” in the game or “on the official website if something is not working for them in terms of gameplay (e.g., they are not able to complete a quest.) Repairs are then made based on these tickets. This communication between developers and players can take place through official announcements, patch notes addressing bug fixes, social media, game forums, or the player tickets already mentioned. This means that, unlike other video games, where issues are addressed and bugs are fixed during the testing phase, MMORPGs rely upon player feedback and collaboration in addressing and resolving issues. This is in addition to the input from language and software testers, who can also influence changes in the game. Their criticism and suggestions are an integral part of the product’s localization process. When players buy a video game localized in their language, they expect technical support to be localized as well. This support is part of other non-game texts that need to be localized, which only confirms that video game localization is a comprehensive and continuous project (Fry 2003; Esselink 2000).

One of the basic features of MMORPGs is that there is fighting. There are two types of video games in terms of how and with whom the fight is going on. The first are video games where players fight each other (“player versus player,” PvP), either individually or in teams, and video games where players fight against the environment (“player versus environment,” PvE). These two ways to play MMORPGs can be mixed. In *World of Warcraft*, a separate server is created for each of the game modes, and players can activate or deactivate them directly in the game.

Often a certain form of trade takes place, such as through an auction. Players can sell their collected resources or equipment for a fee to other players, or they can sell these items to NPCs.¹ From a localization perspective, this means that a video game may have many terms that are not directly related to the characters, user interface, or main objective; however, their translation is equally important.

When translating, it is important to be careful with terms found in character creation menus and those encountered by the player in the early levels (such as spell names) as they later appear in various locations and contexts within the game where the translation may not fit. If we translated the English name of the Lightning Bolt spell in the “spellbook” to Slovak as *Blesk*, we would have to check that this translation would be suitable for all contexts. We would not be able to translate it later on as *Bleskový zásah*, for instance, if it appeared in the description of a specific quest. Another example is the translation of individual achievement names (e.g., obtaining some items). If the translation of the items were not consistent, it would be virtually impossible for the player to meet the requirements to obtain that achievement since the item could be called differently in the game than in the description of the achievement. It is therefore necessary to maintain terminological consistency so that players are not faced with ambiguities that could stop them from completing quests.

Communication between players is also an important part of the game. As Petru points out (2011, 92), this social interaction “resembles social networks, such as Facebook, rather than standard video games” because players tend to spend quite a lot of time in the game. Communication between players usually takes place through an in-game chat (see Figure 1), which includes real-time messages from players (3) and server-generated messages (2) or gestures (1) that the character performs based on player commands in the chat. All these forms of communication are part of the product localization.

¹ The English acronym for “non-player character,” translatable into Slovak as *nehráčska postava*, was not translated because of its widespread usage among players.



Figure 1: In-game chat in World of Warcraft

According to Strong (2018), some MMORPGs may differ from each other in parts such as:

- a) looking at the character from a first-person view (see Figure 2) in the case of *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (2011); from a top-down third-person view (see Figure 3) in the case of *Dragon Age: Inquisition* (2014); or from a third-person view from behind (see Figure 4) in the case of *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*



Figure 2: First-person view²

² Source: <https://img.dtcn.com/image/digitaltrends/the-elder-scrolls-skyrim-review-693-500x300-c.jpg>



Figure 3: *Top-down third-person view*³



Figure 4: *Third-person view from behind*

- b) style and gameplay mechanics (The gameplay in *The Elder Scrolls Online* [2014] revolves around using the mouse buttons to attack, while in *Blade and Soul* [2012] you need to use a combination of keys to perform stronger attacks.)
- c) several intertextual references to real events and individuals

From a localization perspective, the last aspect is the most important because, with many references and complex terminology, the translator must be able to fully use their creativity and search for sources, specifically when translating quest names and spells. One spell from the *Death Knight* class is called *Winter is Coming*, which is an intertextual reference to the *Game of Thrones* series of books and TV series.⁴ Also, the translator

³ Source: https://www.gamegrin.com/assets/Uploads/_resampled/resizedimage638339-dragon-age-2.jpg

⁴ The English word “class” can be translated to Slovak as *trieda*, but due to the common usage of the term *klasa* among players, this slang term was chosen instead. *Klasa* is suitable because it is used in the sense of having excellent knowledge from a particular field. This relates to the meaning of “class” in the game context because the *klasa* members are trained in the relevant spells.

must be able to search for sources, such as terms commonly used in parallel texts to name English terms such as “quest,” “spell,” or “mount.”

Pedersen (2011) divides references in the video game context into transcultural (present in several cultures), monocultural (existing only within a source culture), and micro-cultural (existing in a source culture but only a smaller group of target culture people can understand them) ones. Examples from *World of Warcraft* are presented in the following table in accordance with Pedersen’s classification.

Table 1: Examples of references in World of Warcraft

	Source text	Explanatory note
Transcultural reference	NPC’s name: “Harrison Jones”	This character is part of archaeological quests and references the <i>Indiana Jones</i> movie and the actor Harrison Ford.
Monocultural reference	Recipe in the cooking profession: “Suramar Surf and Turf”	This recipe includes meat and seafood, the combination of which is considered a dish from the source video game culture.
Microcultural reference	Quest name: “Ain’t too proud to beg”	This name refers to a song by The Temptations, and only a certain group of players knows it.

There are several strategies to translate the references. The translator has some freedom, and, with each solution being correct and applicable, their possibilities are as follows: find an official or established translation; preserve a part of the source reference or make only minor changes; preserve the original text of the reference using an explanatory note; generalize (instead of a specific reference use a more general translation, such as Claude Monet – *maliar* [“painter” in Slovak]); and replace the reference with one close to the target user or omit it altogether if none of the previous strategies can be applied. In this context, Mangiron and O’Hagan (2006) use the term “transcreation” to refer to the translation process that captures the translator’s freedom to change, omit, and even add elements to the video game, believing these changes could enrich the gaming experience and make them feel natural within the game.

2 World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

The plot of this game focuses on two hostile factions – the Horde and the Alliance – who are in a constant battle for dominance. They join forces against a stronger power that threatens their home, Azeroth. The story follows the first strategic video game *Warcraft* (1994), and the period in which it is set can be compared best to the Middle Ages. This

period features typical elements of RPG video games like *Dungeons and Dragons* (1998), including swords, magic, and dragons. In *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*, elements of other genres, such as steampunk (airships), horror (ghosts), and science fiction (portals) can be found. The storyline is not yet complete and is still developing through new updates, books, and expansions.

Based on the present author's own experiences, it can be said that this game has typical RPG features. Players create a Level 1 character with only basic equipment. They begin to explore the world around them, complete quests (e.g., defeating some monsters, animals, or robbers, or finding an item and bringing it to the quest giver [NPC]), and earn experience points until they reach the maximum level. They can also learn various skills and professions such as herbalism, blacksmithing, and first aid. By increasing the level, characters acquire new abilities (learning newer spells) and new equipment and can visit new places and continents and complete quests. When players reach the highest level (in *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*, this is level 85), the video game does not end but continues in a phase that used to be called "endgame" in the gaming environment and which is full of new and more challenging opportunities. Players decide whether to continue earning achievements, fight other players in arenas, walk in a group of five players to the dungeons of monsters (by defeating them they can get the best equipment), or organize raids in groups of ten to twenty-five players (in the latest expansion, these numbers change) with the aim of getting better equipment. The new updates and expansions are mostly intended for players who are in the endgame and searching for new content.

2.1 *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm* and translation

According to the official website of the developer (Blizzard Entertainment), the game has been localized into nine languages: English, Portuguese, German, French, Russian, Chinese, Spanish, Italian, and Korean. Due to its large-scale and successful nature, localization into the EFIGS language group was highly expected. Due to the different varieties of English, Spanish, and Portuguese, there has been a demand for localization into specific variations of these languages – such as Mexican Spanish.

One of the first localizations was into Chinese. Both linguistic and software changes occurred due to different legislation. In August 2009, due to new regulations from the Chinese government, players could not play the game for several weeks as developers had to wait for approval of the game's change of Chinese publisher. Along with the new guidelines, the Chinese government established censorship, according to which

developers had to change some of the visual elements of the video game (Alexander 2009). There was a form of depth localization⁵ and a reshaping of video game graphics, which in the source version was not consistent with the target culture. It specifically involved a dispute regarding the depiction of bones and death-related elements, which were prohibited from being shown in China. It primarily affected the race of the Undead, which consists of skeletons. Their visual side had to be adjusted so that no bones were shown (see Figure 5). Further, the intervention in the graphics was related to piles of bones in different places in the game world. They had to be replaced with sandbags (see Figure 6). While in other countries a skeleton appeared after killing a player, in China a grave would appear instead. In addition, the color of the blood of some monsters was changed from red to black (Alexander 2009), and, instead of raw meat on the table, players were shown a loaf of bread. Changes were also made on the linguistic level. One example of this is the renaming of the Death Knight to Fade Knight, and in all spells the English word “death” was changed to “fade.”



Figure 5: *The Undead in China’s World of Warcraft localization (2004)*

Figure 6: *Sandbags instead of a pile of bones in China’s World of Warcraft localization (2004)*

⁵ According to Bernal-Merino (2013), the goal of deep localization is to transform the product according to the preferences and expectations of target users (e.g., changing the choice of ethnicity of characters in the game).

One of the latest localizations was into Italian; this took one year and included five million words (with each new expansion, there are usually about 1.5 million new words). Since English is a flexible language, nouns, and adjectives can be combined in various ways to create compound words. Not all languages have so many options for creating compound names (Blizzard Entertainment 2012), and Italian localizers had to deal with this. A similar issue arises in the case of Slovak, where there was the spell of the Rogue class with its original English name Backstab, which could be literally translated to Slovak as *vraziť niekomu nôž do chrbta* (“stab someone in the back”). In this attack, the player must be positioned behind the enemy, so it is important for the translation to incorporate the idea of the back or indicate in some other way that it is an attack from behind; therefore, it cannot be translated as *Podraz*. The problem arises in the length of the Slovak translation, which would be considerably longer and less comfortable for the player than the English original. During the localization into Italian, the localization team had to follow several strategies. One of these was setting a limit of four syllables in invented names to avoid long constructions. If they felt that an Italian player would not understand a cultural reference, or if the reference was not appropriate, they replaced it with a reference from the target culture. Presumably such specifics were documented in their style guide (for comparison, see Kabát 2022a). Interestingly, they used a Neapolitan accent for the troll race in the game’s dubbing because the inhabitants of Naples are known for being distinctive, proud, and respectful of their ancestors. The localization team thought this characteristic was similar to the culture of the trolls, and so they decided to embody the Neapolitan accent in this way (Blizzard Entertainment 2012).

When comparing translations, it is possible to identify a certain tendency where terms that are translated in one localization are also translated in others. This is not always the case, for example, with toponyms, where accents were added in the French localization – Desolace turns into *Désolace*. In Spanish localization, Shattrath City was translated as *Cuidad de Shattrath* (the city of Shattrath) while the other localizations simply called it Shattrath. In the Spanish localization, it is also possible to see an exception in the translation of the Zangarmarsh region, where they decided to keep the original name. (Given that the English word “marsh” is in the name, it could have been at least partially translated.) In the French localization, it is translated as *Marécage de Zangar* (the Zangar Marsh).

During the localization of such names, the translator must pay attention to already finished translations (e.g., a book or film). In the Czech translation of the books, there was a problem with the translation of the Night Elf race because the translators could not

agree on whether it should be translated as *temné elfy* or *noční elfy*. In *Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos* (2002), the Night Elves were translated as *temní elfové* (dark elves) in the localization published by Cenega Czech. In later book translations by Netolička, Kratochvíl, and Komprdová, they were *noční elfové* (night elves) because their name was intended to refer to the nocturnal nature of these creatures rather than to their inherent darkness. The translators opted for a different translation in the newer books.

Alongside the parallel translations, the present author looked closely at the Slovak dubbing of the film *Warcraft: The Beginning* (Sunrise Studio 2016), which is the only official translation of *Warcraft* into Slovak. There was an interesting difference when translating names because while the existing translations localized the cities or areas for which translation can be created (note the previously mentioned example of the French translation of Zangarmarsh), this was not always the case in the film. The town of Ironforge, which was translated in all video game localizations, was not translated in the film, but areas such as Elwynn Forest (*Elwynnský les*), Frostwind Dunes (*Frostwindské duny*), Deadwind Pass (*Deadwindský priesmyk*), and Redridge Mountains (*Redridgské hory*) were, at least partially, probably because they had descriptive elements that were more transparent. It is also possible that the film translators followed the example of the Czech translation of the books, where these names appear to have been translated (or untranslated) upon the same principle. The same happened with the clan names, which Czech and Slovak translators left in the original (e.g., the Laughing Skull clan, which could have been translated into Slovak as *klan Posmešnej lebky*).⁶

The present author was also interested in the dubbed translation of the names of spells. Here the film producers took their own approach. Since characters in the game do not speak while casting spells, they decided to adapt it to the more traditional way of spell-casting seen in fantasy movies. They created a new language, eliminating the need for spell localization. There is a spell called Arcane Blast, which could be translated into Slovak as *Tajomný výbuch*. In the film, the relevant character uttered something unknown: “Shala’ros.” Another example from the dubbing is the translation of a flying lion which can be mounted by members of the Alliance and used for transportation. In the game and original film, it is called the English word “gryphon.” In the Slovak dubbing, they decided not to translate it even though there is a Slovak word for this mythological

⁶ In the translation, the approach was based on the motivation behind the term’s creation. This clan is characterized by its manic and bloodthirsty behavior and is considered the most wicked of them all. They show no respect for anyone.

animal: *gryf*.⁷ According to Netolička (2003), the reason behind this could be the success of the localization of the *Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos* video game (2002). The translators assumed that the vast majority of reader/viewers would be players who were used to the Czech localization of the game, and thus “the translation of most key names of races, units, and names is taken from the translation of the game [...]; hence they used the translations: *Duše démona, Horda, Plamenná legie, žump, peón, Řád stříbrné ruky, [and] jezdec na gryfonu*” (Netolička 2003, 1).

2.2 Terminology in *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*

World of Warcraft: Cataclysm terminology has a lot in common with other MMORPGs. They can be divided into several categories depending on the context (e.g., whether it is typical for character creating, completing quests, playing PvP, or PvE content). They can be further specified according to the choice of lexical units. The most telling example is the choice of terminology in spells because all spells within one class have a common origin. Rogue spells, for instance, connote deceit and trickery with spells such as Cheap Shot (*Podpásovka*) and Ambush (*Prepadnutie*). The terminological areas of game elements repeated in most MMORPGs can be considered as the foundation of game localization in this genre. There was more than just a focus on specific terminology, be it what the characters wear or the weapons and items they use, even though each area is terminologically so saturated that one could focus on terminology from a specific area. The relationship between the chosen terminological areas is that they are part of what is known as “game mechanics.” These are video game elements that relate to the principle of the overall functioning of the game. Terminology is directly connected with the player experience and the rules of how the game functions (Kabát 2022b). The game features that will be discussed are races, classes, spells, item names, proper names and toponyms, and the user interface.

2.3 Game features and localization in *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*

Players can create characters belonging either to the Alliance or the Horde. Each has a choice of five races, which have unique abilities (e.g., night elves can be invisible). The maximum number of characters is ten per account. The communication and interaction

⁷ The present author contacted the dubbing director with a request for information about the authors of the translation. After contacting one translator, it became clear that there was someone else whose identity was unknown. This only proves how difficult it can be to find information about translators and identify them.

between the factions is limited, so if a player creates one character in the Alliance and another in the Horde, they will not be able to send items between these two characters and will not be able to communicate with the guild from the opposite faction. Most players focus only on one faction. (Among players, there is also a code that says that they should be loyal to only one faction because otherwise they would be considered traitors; the main point and charm of the game would thus be lost.) The Alliance is primarily based on the Eastern Kingdoms (*Východné kráľovstvo*) and the Horde on the continent of Kalimdor (*Kalimdor*) (see Figure 7).



Figure 7: *The map of Azeroth in World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*

After a character is created, the player is presented with a short video (“cinematic”) with spoken commentary, introducing the environment where the character begins. These cinematics appear at different stages of the game; sometimes they are part of quests and sometimes they are simply additional audiovisual material. Part of the localization is audiovisual translation, and such scenes must be titled or dubbed or the spoken commentary needs to be translated. Within the Alliance, players can choose from the following races: Human (*Človek*), Dwarf (*Trpaslík*), Gnome (*Gnóm*), Draenei (in their own language, this word means “exiled”), Night Elf (*Nočný elf*), and Worgen (*Vlko-lak*). In the Horde, players can choose from these races: Orc (*Ork*), Troll (*Trol*), Tauren

(derived from the Minotaur), Undead (*Nemřtvy*), Blood Elf (*Krvavý elf*), and Goblin (*Škriatok*).



Figure 8: *Creating a character in World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*

Different races can play different classes; however, a Human cannot be a Shaman because Humans are tied to folklore and shamanism is associated with the elements and spiritualism, as well as voodoo, which would not fit in with the story of Humans, who follow the religion of Light. Overall, players can choose from the following classes: Mage (*Mág*), Paladin, Priest (*Kňaz*), Rogue (*Zlodej*), Warlock (*Černokňazník*),⁸ Death Knight (*Rytier smrti*), Hunter (*Lovec*), Shaman (*Šaman*), Warrior (*Bojovník*), and Druid. The names of each spell denote the action that the character performs after pressing the keys assigned to them. When the player moves the mouse over the spell icon, they will see a brief description of its function (see Figure 9) and how many seconds or minutes it takes to recharge (cooldown).

⁸ In *Warcraft: the Beginning* (Sunrise Studio, 2016), this class was translated as *čarodej* (sorcerer, mage). Since then, it has been characterized by the use of dark magic; therefore, it can be translated as *černokňazník*.

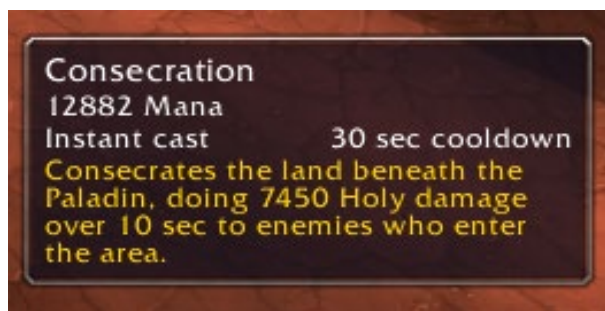


Figure 9: A description of the Consecration spell in World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

In connection with the terminology of spells, it is worth mentioning the Paladins. Since they are warriors in the service of God, and are inspired by the ideas and ideals of the Crusader Knights in the fight against the forces of evil, they can use abilities for their courage and devotion that are more typical of priests, such as healing. This is reflected in the lexical choice of spell names, which all have a Christian connotation: Crusader Strike (*Križiacky zásah*), Blessing of Protection (*Ochranné požehnanie*), and Consecration (*Posvätenie*).

The equipment that players acquire either by making, buying, or receiving as a reward after killing NPC characters is visually distinguished by the color of the name. Colors determine the rarity and quality of the item. If it is a poor quality item, it has gray text; if it is of common quality, it has white text; if it is of uncommon quality, it has green text, if it is of rare quality, it has blue text; if it is of epic quality, it has purple text; if it is of legendary quality, it has orange text; and if it is an artifact or heirloom, it has yellow text. In addition to common item names, the item title may also have information that will help the player learn more about the armor or weapon (see Figure 10). To give an example, a Crafted Dreadful Gladiator's Mail Helm (freely translatable as *Vyrobená krúžková helma desivého gladiátora*) contains four parts:

- Crafted (*Vyrobený/á*) – this means the item can be obtained by “crafting” through one of the professions (in this case, the profession of leatherworking) or by purchasing it from another player who made the item.
- Dreadful Gladiator's (*desivého gladiátora*) – this suggests that it is an item that falls under the PvP category, thus adding values that are important to the PvP environment.
- Mail (*krúžkový*) – based on this, the player knows what material the item is made of (*krúžkové brnenie*) and for who it is intended (since not all characters can wear the same armor); this item is intended for a Shaman.
- Helm (*helma*) – the last part of the name determines which part of the body the item is intended for.

Thanks to the nomenclature using class-specific terms, it is possible to quickly identify items. Players can then immediately determine if they are suitable for their character.



Figure 10: A description of armor named *Crafted Dreadful Gladiator's Mail Helm*

Proper names and toponyms should not be translated unless it is a game designed specifically for children, where names can be naturalized and the game will continue to produce the same impression. This is because they are usually already established names in the game world, or because their translation could seem forced, or even impossible, because their origin is unknown. On the other hand, names that do not denote non-existent words, but comprise real ones that can be translated and have an embodied feature of the place they name, should be translated. Unlike other types of translation, video game translators have more freedom to decide whether to translate a name or not. This was apparent in the Czech translation of the *World of Warcraft* books. In *World of Warcraft: Chronicle (Volume II) - Kronika - Svazek II* (Kratochvíl & Komprdová, 2017), names such as Nagrand, Talador, and Ashran (see Figure 11) remain in their original form because they are invented, whereas names such as Shadowmoon Valley (*Údolí Shadowmoon*), Barrier Sea (*Hraniční moře*), and Tanaan Jungle (*Tanaanská džungle*) are either partially or completely translated. With proper names, the character of the chieftain of one of the Orc clans is called Blackhand. This name, like others, was not translated in either the books or the film even though a translation would have been possible.

In order to maintain consistency in the non-translation of proper names, there was no translation; this was the case even if descriptive elements which were related to the appearance of the character (i.e., the figure has a black hand) were incorporated.



Figure 11: A map in *World of Warcraft: Chronicle (Volume II)* (2017)

Besides the video game, there are books based on *World of Warcraft*. Translators must have an overview of how certain names have been translated in previous works. The Czech translators clarified this in the introduction of the book as follows:

Books based on games have the disadvantage that you are translating things that players have already encountered. You can then choose to simply not translate or add notes to the translations. [...] *World of Warcraft* is actually a “higher level” because there is a translation of a game that is a part of the *World of Warcraft* universe [*Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos*, which is translated into Czech]. And some books have already been translated by someone else. (Kratochvíl & Komprdová, 2017).

Czech translators also highlight the issue of translation of names for the inflective features of Czech (and Slovak). Many names cannot naturally be inflected; if they are, they may come across as strange to the reader and affect the overall impression.

The user interface (see Figure 12) displays basic information about the character. There is also additional information, as can be seen below in the case of the hunter: a

domesticated animal in the upper left corner (1), a mini-map in the upper right corner (2), a list of active quests (3), an in-game chat in the lower left corner (4), and an action bar with icons/spells/mounts/professions at the bottom of the screen (5). There are many icons for spells, which can be activated either by using the mouse or pressing the button on the keyboard assigned to the spell. More windows can be opened on the action bar, such as windows with details about the character (e.g., their equipment, attributes, and reputation with other factions), a spell book, talents, achievements, information about the guild and its members, a group finder, and settings.



Figure 12: *The user interface in World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*

When localizing the user interface, there are two factors. The first is a limited space for text. Slovak is a language with longer sentences compared to English, especially when a term cannot be translated directly and it is necessary to describe it. In the specific case of the user interface in *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*, single-word terms are most commonly used; Slovak names should therefore fit comfortably within the allocated space without any issues. The window with the English name “General,” which is located above the in-game chat (6) in Figure 12, could easily be translated as *Hlavné* (and, if space permits, *Všeobecné*) without having to add another word such as *správy* (messages) or *informácie* (information); it is understandable from the context. In the translation itself, translators do not know where the text will be located and what exactly it represents. By default, they will receive a document created in Word or Excel which has a list of individual text strings that may not be in the order in which they appear in the

video game (Ženíšek, in Schubert 2013). Such a simple translation task may result in several errors and inconsistencies since the translator cannot know how many characters they can use. One way to move forward is to try and not exceed the length of the source text strings.

Another factor that translators from English encounter is capitalization. Every significant word or verb is capitalized in video games in English. This applies, for example, to quest names on the right side of the user interface (see Figure 13).

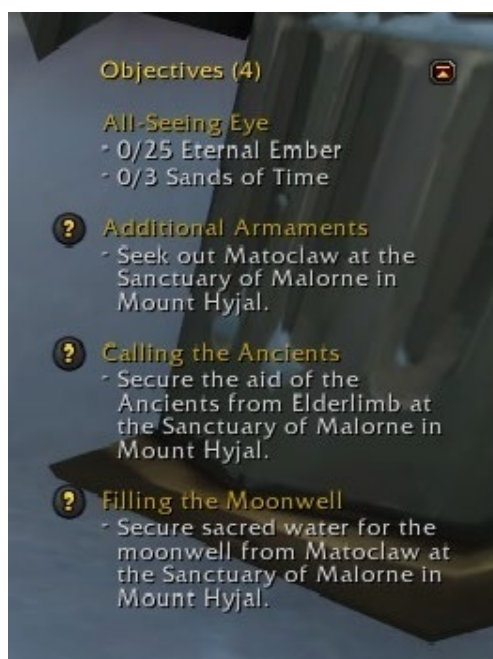


Figure 13: *A list of quests/the Quest Log in World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*

As Bernal-Merino (2013) states, the text in the user interface must be short, clear, and accurate. Its main task is to help the player in the game without having a negative impact on their gaming experience and not wasting time with the interface. Icons are often preferred instead of words because they are generally easier to understand. In Figure 12, there are icons on the sides of the mini-map where the player can choose advanced settings; however, this internationalization strategy cannot always be applied. Indeed, some areas of the video game pose a greater challenge for the translator. In relation to other areas of MMORPGs, it can be said that video games offer a wide selection of areas that can be addressed more closely and offer space for further suggestions and creativity in translation.

Conclusion

This article analyzed the *World of Warcraft* video games (2004 and 2010) with an extensive story that had unfolded in over twenty books and in expansions and sequels. It is one of the most well-known MMORPGs. Its main features were described and summarized based on the division of game and problematic parts, such as spells or toponyms, which may cause problems for translation. In addition to the standard characters that appear in the translation of game and non-game software (e.g., spatial constraints), translators in game localization may also encounter pre-existing book translations. Also, book translators must consider existing localizations of the game version of the story at hand. Such a procedure is also common in artistic translation. Analyzing the specifics of MMORPGs showed that such translations have many common features with artistic and audiovisual translation. At the same time, there are many special features. It is necessary in future research to point out the common specifics of MMORPG translations and that some of them can be applied in the translation of other genres.

Based on parallel Czech translations of the *World of Warcraft* books, the translation procedures and their solutions were clarified. Some may seem peculiar to an uninvolved translator, such as the (non-)translation of toponyms and proper names. This article also offered its own translation proposals. Localization is a rarely studied type of translation, but, with the development of technology, software localization is becoming more frequent. Gaming software will increasingly be localized and explored more.

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