

THE RISE OF MULTIMODALITY:
APPLYING TRANSLATION CRITICISM TO VIDEO GAMES

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THE RISE OF MULTIMODALITY:
APPLYING TRANSLATION CRITICISM TO VIDEO GAMES

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Mehmet Eren Sönmez, certify that

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ABSTRACT

The Rise of Multimodality:

Applying Translation Criticism to Video Games

This thesis explores how the video game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (W3WH) and its official translation alongside a fan translation into Turkish can be systematically analyzed by a translation criticism model. The study also focuses on how the recent rise of multimodality within Translation Studies can offer new perspectives in the way translation is viewed. Based on the literature on video game translation practices, this study carries out a discussion on the terminology used to describe such practices, analyzing the variety in the use of terms from the perspective of the expanding research area of Translation Studies. By investigating the two translations of the video game W3WH, the study aims to find out the differences in translation strategies between the official translation and the fan translation. The study also discusses the choice of fan translators to continue with their translation process despite the launch of the official translation. Moreover, the industry's reduced view of translation is challenged, in contrast with localization and transcreation. Within this frame, the study relies on a critical analysis that integrates the different modes and assets in the video game to draw a comprehensive picture of the gameplay experience. The thesis hopes to increase the cooperation between academia and industry by promoting a bidirectional learning process.

ÖZET

Çok Modluluğun Yükselişi:

Çeviri Eleştirisinin Video Oyunlarına Uygulanması

Bu tez, *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (W3WH) video oyununun ve Türkçe'ye yapılmış resmî ve hayran çevirilerinin bir çeviri eleştirisi modeliyle sistematik bir biçimde nasıl analiz edilebileceğini incelemektedir. Çalışma, aynı zamanda çok modluluğun Çeviribilim'deki son zamanlardaki yükselişinin çeviriye bakışa dair nasıl yeni perspektifler sunabileceğine odaklanmaktadır. Video oyun çevirisi uygulamalarına ilişkin literatüre dayanan bu çalışma, bu tür uygulamaları tanımlamak için kullanılan terminoloji üzerine bir tartışma yürütmekte ve sınırlarını genişleten Çeviribilim perspektifinden terim kullanımındaki çeşitliliği incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, W3WH video oyununun iki çevirisini inceleyerek resmî çeviri ile hayran çevirisi arasındaki çeviri stratejisi farklarını bulmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca çalışmada resmî çeviri piyasaya sürülmesine rağmen hayran çevirmenlerin çeviri sürecine devam etme tercihleri sorgulanmaktadır. Buna ek olarak endüstrinin yerelleştirme veya çeviriyaratım aksine basite indirgenmiş çeviri görüşüne meydan okunmaktadır. Bu çerçevede bu çalışma, oyun deneyiminin kapsamlı bir resmini çizmek için video oyunundaki farklı modları ve bileşenleri entegre eden eleştirel bir analize dayanmaktadır. Tez, akademi ve endüstri arasındaki çift yönlü öğrenme sürecini teşvik ederek iki alan arasındaki işbirliğini artırmayı ummaktadır.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The aim and scope of the thesis	4
1.2 Literature review	6
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY	25
2.1 Multimodality.....	25
2.2 Video game translation	28
2.3 Translation criticism.....	33
2.4 Methodology	39
CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF <i>THE WITCHER</i>	42
3.1 A short biography of Andrzej Sapkowski.....	42
3.2 Historical Overview of <i>The Witcher</i>	43
3.3 W3WH	46
CHAPTER 4: TRANSLATION CRITICISM OF THE OFFICIAL AND FAN TRANSLATIONS OF W3WH.....	48
4.1 Background information about the translations.....	48
4.2 The translation of “witcher”	54
4.3 The user interface.....	57
4.4 The in-game menu and components	65
4.5 Cutscenes	98
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	115
REFERENCES.....	126

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The main menu in the fan translation	60
Figure 2. The main menu in the official translation.....	60
Figure 3. The language selection menu in the fan translation.....	62
Figure 4. The language selection menu in the official translation	63
Figure 5. The gameplay settings in the fan translation	64
Figure 6. The gameplay settings in the official translation.....	65
Figure 7. The bestiary entry of noonwraiths	68
Figure 8. Dandelion’s character entry page	79
Figure 9. Junior’s character entry page	80
Figure 10. Junior’s character entry page in the fan translation.....	81
Figure 11. The letter by the knights	86
Figure 12. The letter by the knights in the fan translation	87
Figure 13. The letter by the knights in the official translation.....	88
Figure 14. Fritz’s letter.....	90
Figure 15. Fritz’s letter in the fan translation.....	91
Figure 16. Fritz’s letter in the official translation	93
Figure 17. The post written by “Willuhs”	95
Figure 18. The post written by “Willuhs” in the fan translation before the update ..	96
Figure 19. The post written by “Willuhs” in the fan translation after the update	97
Figure 20. The post written by “Willuhs” in the official translation	98
Figure 21. Dijkstra, Bart, and Bart’s way of speaking.....	101
Figure 22. Dijkstra, Bart, and Bart’s way of speaking in the fan translation.....	102
Figure 23. Dijkstra, Bart, and Bart’s way of speaking in the official translation ...	103

Figure 24. Bart's response to Geralt after he mocks the troll	105
Figure 25. Geralt recognizing his own love story in the song	109
Figure 26. Geralt describing Yennefer's scent while searching for her.....	110
Figure 27. Geralt investigating the griffin's corpse	112
Figure 28. Geralt investigating the griffin's corpse in the fan translation	113
Figure 29. Geralt investigating the griffin's corpse in the official translation.....	114

ABBREVIATIONS

AVT: Audiovisual translation

GOTY: Game of the Year

RPG: Role-playing game

W2AoK: The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings

W3WH: The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with video games and their translation into other languages, cultures, and audiences. The problem with this endeavor starts with its naming, as there is not a universally accepted term to describe this transfer. Furthermore, even the understanding of the concept is not clear, opening the way for a variety of perspectives and interpretations. Interestingly, the studies that elaborate on this issue in a detailed way usually avoid providing a definition, and when they do, they highlight a single aspect of the process, such as the rich text variety or the necessity for the translator to find creative solutions. Nevertheless, one repeatedly emphasized point in the majority of the studies on video games and their translation is the insufficient interpretation of the term translation. This approach tends to be justified by the complex nature of video games, which practically leaves no other choice than arguing that the process involves translation but is not limited to it.

The arguments for translation being unsuitable for video games is paradoxical, as video games and their translations are generally analyzed under the umbrella term of audiovisual translation (AVT). Indeed, the presence of verbal, audio, and visual elements marks a similarity between video games and other audiovisual products, such as movies, TV shows, opera, and even advertisements. This similarity raises the question of what causes the insufficiency of the term translation in the dominant discourse on video games and localization. As a matter of fact, even in Translation Studies, only a small minority prefers to use the concept of translation while discussing video games, dooming the concept to a highly narrow transfer limited to verbal elements, which is hardly ever the case.

The rich and complex nature of video games is not a hindrance but an opportunity for Translation Studies. The history of translation is marked by countless efforts to demonstrate the complexity of the process, which made this deep-rooted activity worthy of establishing its own discipline in the first place. After this achievement, it is interesting to note that the dominant narrative on video games and their translation is now moving away to other terms, indirectly depriving translation of all its depth and complexity. This move away from translation means losing a valuable chance for a perspective that puts the multimodal text in its center. Although the amount of research on multimodality in Translation Studies is increasing, the importance of translation for video games continues to be overlooked.

It should be acknowledged that video games are gaining popularity within the discipline, and this trend demonstrates the growing influence of technology on Translation Studies. Not only new products but also new translation forms are welcomed, including the translation activities carried out by the fans themselves. This new form of cooperative translation is largely ignored altogether or questioned due to its variable quality (O'Hagan, 2009), but this attitude is by no means limited to the fan translation of video games, as the same argument is also made for fansubs of series (Díaz-Cintas & Muños Sánchez, 2006).

In this thesis, I discuss the translation of W3WH into Turkish, and this is a unique case due to the simultaneous presence of an official translation and a fan translation. I suggest a translation criticism model for video games, drawing upon the frameworks provided by Katharina Reiss (1971) and Antoine Berman (1995) in their discussion of translation criticism. In this regard, video games are considered as multimodal texts that comprise not only of verbal but also of audio, visual, and

gestural modes. This model, which I call video game translation criticism, attempts to identify the strategies applied by the translators in the respective groups.

It should be noted that the translation strategies identified here may not stem solely from the respective translator group's choices. In addition to the time and space constraints associated with video game translation practices (Mangiron & O'Hagan, 2006), there might also be other considerations that influence the translators' decisions. To illustrate, in the case of fan translation, the comments by the fans as well as the implicit assumptions about their preferences might impact the translators' choices. On the other hand, the official translators are constrained by the already existing Turkish translations of the previous games of the saga. Further, as the patron that commissions the translation task, the developer company has a certain power regarding translation decisions, since the official translation team might not want to risk future tasks by challenging the developer company's demands. This study acknowledges the existence of these constraints, but they remain outside the scope of the research.

I consider translation criticism to be the perfect tool for the analysis of video game translations for several reasons. Firstly, the use of a translation criticism model allows the analysis to adopt a systematic approach. The examples that are to be discussed in the criticism do not stem from the preference of the critic but the model's categories and the video game's components. As such, the study hopes to carry out an objective evaluation. Secondly, the translation criticism model chosen for the thesis pays particular attention to the multimodal elements and the cultural differences in video games, and these factors are fundamental characteristics of these texts. In other words, translation criticism is able to investigate the aspects that make a video game in the first place. Lastly, although translation criticism mainly focuses

on the textual elements, it also attempts to integrate the process and reception of the translations. Therefore, the textual analysis in a translation criticism aims to shed light on the development of the translation as well as its consumption, addressing the material at hand from more than one viewpoint.

1.1 The aim and scope of the thesis

My thesis aims to offer a translation criticism of the official translation and the fan translation of W3WH. In this study, I attempt to systematically analyze the two translations, taking into account the video game itself as well as the work of Andrzej Sapkowski, the creator of *The Witcher*. As proposed by Berman (1995), the criticism also traces the translator groups and the translations' background stories in the hope of shedding light on the translation strategies.

W3WH is chosen as the video game that is to be analyzed for two reasons. Firstly, it is a highly popular video game with a rich set of details, benefiting from numerous cultural and historical references as well as real and fictional languages. Secondly, W3WH is a unique case because of the presence of two translations into Turkish. These translations, the official translation and the fan translation, have found widespread acceptance as well as fierce criticism, creating fan bases of their own.

The majority of research on video games and their translation focuses on the textual product (Sarigül, 2020), and this brings up the question whether the translation criticism model proposed in this thesis offers a new perspective. Sarigül's (2020) assessment is accurate, but it can be argued that the analyses thus far have turned a blind eye to the various modes that constitute a video game. An analysis that investigates the entirety of a video game with all its components is yet to come, and

my thesis aims to fill this gap. This thesis tries to integrate the other modes that have a significant role in the meaning making process, as they contribute to the immersion of the player in the game. Therefore, the criticism model used in the study considers the textual elements in the video game, but as the video game itself is considered a multimodal text, the presence of the other modes is taken into account and discussed accordingly as well. The analysis is indeed textual, but the video game itself, with all its components, is viewed and approached as a multimodal text.

The issue of the place of localization and whether translation encompasses it or vice versa can be approached from a wider perspective, as the borders and limitations of translation have been a topic of discussion within Translation Studies. Similar to the localization case, translation has been repeatedly challenged but also enriched by the emergence of other terms, including rewriting (Lefevere, 1992), transcreation (Gopinathan, 2006), transculturation (Jin, 2013), and adaptation (Venuti, 2007). The existence of this variety in terms indirectly questions translation's capability of encompassing all the transfers and considerations that it addresses, but it also ascertains that translation still manages to offer an efficient framework and an indispensable starting point for studying linguistic and cultural exchange. The scholars that suggest other terms bring the complexity of translation to the foreground and engage in a fruitful discussion, enriching Translation Studies as a discipline.

In the case of localization, the situation is different, as the variety in terminology widens the gap between Translation Studies and the video game translation sector, which mostly prefers the term localization to define itself. However, even though it is a major challenge to define what translation is, it is still possible to describe what translation is not. Translation is not a process limited to the

transfer of the verbal elements, and the increasing importance of multimodality within the discipline serves as a stark reminder. As one of the most complex forms of a multimodal text, video games and the analysis of their translations can demonstrate that Translation Studies is capable of offering valuable knowledge to the video game translation industry.

In this study, I argue that although the quality of fan translations can vary, the same argument can be made for all kinds of translations, meaning that the widespread exclusion of fan translation in research within Translation Studies is not a justified stance but a lost opportunity. Various fan translations have even been received more positively than official translations (Mangiron Hevia, 2007), which makes the lack of focus on fan translations as well as the prejudice towards them due to their supposed low quality a bias. This thesis attempts to investigate the translation strategies systematically and comparatively in the official translation and the fan translation of W3WH. Due to the large amount of data in the video game, both translations can give us valuable insight into the translation groups' strategies, priorities, and concerns. The research questions of the thesis are:

- i. What is the impact of multimodal elements on the translation of video games?
- ii. How do the fan translation and the official translation of W3WH differ from each other in terms of translation strategies?
- iii. To what extent do the other works of the saga influence the fan translation and the official translation of W3WH?
- iv. How do the fan translation and the official translation of W3WH manage to coexist simultaneously?

1.2 Literature review

Video games are a newcomer to Translation Studies, and their analysis from a translation perspective started later than the other audiovisual products, most notably movies and series. Having said that, the amount of research on video games and their translation has been increasing steadily. In his dissertation, Sarıgül (2020) identifies

four main categories in which Translation Studies has approached video games: theoretical discussions on video games and their translation; studies of video games and their translations as textual products and of the challenges posed for the translators; investigations of video game translation processes and the participants involved; explorations of video game translations' reception in other languages. This categorization successfully provides a comprehensive overview of the main research topics within the discipline. Although the video game translation criticism model presented in this thesis mainly falls under the second category, the thesis also offers a theoretical discussion on video games and their translation as multimodal texts, attempts to shed light on the translation processes of both translations, and discusses the possible influence of the fan reactions on the translations. Nevertheless, the thesis limits its literature review to theoretical discussions on and the textual analyses of video game translations.

One of the first studies on video game translation from a theoretical perspective is the article by Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006), two of the leading scholars in research on video game translation practices. In their article, Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006) analyze professional video game translation practices. They describe the process as game localization and argue that it is similar to "business software [localization]" (Mangiron & O'Hagan, 2006, p. 12). They point out that game localization carries certain characteristics of AVT as well. As audiovisual texts, video games require translation and software engineering while being transferred to another market, and the goal of game localization is determined as preserving the "look and feel" of the source game (Mangiron & O'Hagan, 2006, p. 14). To this end, translators are generally given the freedom to change virtually anything they deem necessary. As a case study, the authors analyze the English translation of *Final*

Fantasy, a Japanese game series that has been enjoying worldwide popularity thanks to its translation into other languages. Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006) identify categories and provide the readers with examples, demonstrating the strategies that the translators adopted in the translation process. As one of the early examples of studies on video games and their translation, the article is a valuable contribution that emphasizes the importance of video games and their translation for Translation Studies.

In the same year, Bernal-Merino (2007) describes video games as products that consist of various text types. As such, he also argues that video games have several similarities with other audiovisual texts. Nevertheless, he states that as video games can be developed in a variety of ways, translators might need a set of distinct talents and skills to translate a video game. By pointing out the importance of popular culture, familiarity with different genres, creative solutions, and the interactive nature of games, Bernal-Merino (2007) depicts video game translation as a highly complicated process that requires the translator to be an expert in various fields at once.

In another article, Bernal-Merino (2008) investigates the use of creativity for the translation of video games. He points out how “ludic creativity” separates video game translation from other translation types (Bernal-Merino, 2008, p. 65). Even though there are certain similarities between video game translation and other forms of “polysemiotic translation” (Bernal-Merino, 2008, p. 58), video games’ attempt to create a world and make the players believe they are in that world is a unique characteristic of these products. The interactive nature of video games requires the translators to come up with convincing solutions that encourage them to use their creativity. Bernal-Merino (2008) considers video game translators as experts in

cultural transfer who possess a wide range of talents that they use to offer the players a product that introduces a new world to enjoy. It is also worth mentioning that Bernal-Merino (2008) identifies the importance of not only the verbal elements in the video game but also other assets, such as graphics, soundtracks, and even the characters themselves.

Fernández Costales (2012) investigates the translation strategies that the translators use while translating video games. After emphasizing the importance of video games as the most important and widespread form of entertainment, Fernández Costales (2012) points out that the increasing influence of globalization and the technological advancements have increased the amount of research on the topic. Nevertheless, he states that various forms, including subtitling, dubbing, and voice over are still relatively unknown. It should be noted that video games are multimodal texts that create meaning by various modes at the same time, and as such, they are highly complicated texts. This argument is strengthened by an emphasis on the “non-textual” as well as “semiotic elements” that the translators should take into consideration (Fernández Costales, 2012, p. 391). Fernández Costales (2012) puts the argument forward that Translation Studies can investigate video game translations from various perspectives, since as a discipline, it fully encompasses these translation activities. Interestingly, even “no translation” is acknowledged as a valid translation strategy (Fernández Costales, 2012, p. 397). It can be stated that Fernández Costales’ article offers a detailed account of the strategies that the translators can adopt while translating video games, emphasizing their complex nature.

The sophisticated character of video games due to the variety in text assets is also discussed by Dietz (2007) who attempts to investigate video game translation practices and the difficulties associated with these. The article states that video game

translation is a special category due to the diversity of text types and topics. Dietz (2007) believes that the key to a successful video game translation is the translator's familiarity with both the video game and the gaming culture. Even though Dietz (2007) decides to use the term localization, he does this without discussing what the term means or encompasses, and he uses "translator" and "localizer" interchangeably. With its provocative title and conversational tone, Dietz's article is a study worth mentioning, as it successfully highlights video games and their translation as a separate field of research within Translation Studies.

Dietz (2007) is not the only study which approaches video games and their translation from an industry point of view. To illustrate, Mangiron (2018) is one of the scholars who offers an academic as well as an industry standpoint to video games and their translation. The author draws a map of the research on "game localization" (Mangiron, 2018, p. 122), and she emphasizes the relationship between these practices and other forms of translation, including AVT, literary translation, and collaborative translation. Moreover, Mangiron (2018) highlights the interdisciplinary tendency of research on this topic and encourages scholars to adopt from other disciplines in their analysis, such as media studies and psychology. The article by Mangiron (2018) provides the reader with a comprehensive summary of the issues associated with video games and their transfer to other languages and markets.

Di Marco (2007) is one of the early translation scholars who conducts research on video games. In her article, she focuses on the importance of culture while translating video games, and the term "cultural localization" is used to describe this practice (Di Marco, 2007). She analyzes the importance of the cultural details and how they are transferred from Japanese to English for the American culture. This article is a short one without any concrete theoretical background. Instead of

analyzing a video game in a detailed and systematic way, the author chooses to investigate one category at a time, such as the customization of the main character, the importance of gender and transgender, and the transfer or humor. Nevertheless, the study is still a valuable contribution to Translation Studies, as it is one of the earliest studies on video game translation practices.

The significance of culture and the related challenges while working on a video game translation has been a relatively popular topic of research in Translation Studies. To illustrate, Edwards (2011) is one of few scholars who decide to use neither “translation” nor “localization” to describe the activities that allow a video game to travel to a new locale. Even though she acknowledges localization as a strategy, she argues that localization with regard to video games is inevitable, as it allows the target audience to understand a video game that was produced for a different audience in a different locale. As such, Edwards (2011) states that the difference between translation and localization is the material, and even a linguistic transfer of a video game constitutes localization, whereas more attention to cultural characteristics would turn the transfer to culturalization. One interesting point that the author makes is that considerable attention to cultural features might save the developer company from backlash, whereas disregarding them can bring about discontent not in the gamer community but among the people who do not belong to the intended audience. In other words, even though a video game can be transferred to another culture with a specific group in mind, it is possible to receive a reaction from even the people who do not play the video game.

Carlson and Corliss (2011) are two scholars who put culture to the center of their research by viewing video games as part of the goods and services that circulate transnationally. In this movement, translators have a significant role due to their

expertise in cross-cultural communication. Carlson and Corliss (2011) make a distinction between translation and localization, but while doing so, they reduce translation to the linguistic transfer of text from one language to another, whereas localization can be about translation, editing, or even testing. It is interesting to mention that Carlson and Corliss (2011) regard localization to be a broader concept than translation, but at the same time, they highlight the translators' importance as gatekeepers, as they determine what circulates around the globe and how. One interesting point that the writers make is that localization is usually considered as domestication, as the process intends to bring something foreign to a particular culture and make it usable.

O'Hagan (2015) also analyzes video game translation practices as an integral part of the globalized world. She further acknowledges that although the rapid expansion of technology has affected translation, Translation Studies has not paid sufficient attention to video games despite these being closely related to technology. While defining video game localization, O'Hagan (2015) emphasizes the importance of culture and introduces it as one of the main challenges of the practice. While the practice combines intercultural communication with interactivity, the theory in Translation Studies needs to be expanded to account for the activity. As such, O'Hagan (2015) considers localization as translation that keeps its close connection with culture and adds technology into the mix. The element of technology is present not only in the process of translation but also how the translated product is enjoyed.

One important point that is to be mentioned is the terminological discussion in research on video game translation. In his comprehensive dissertation, Bernal-Merino (2013) recognizes the variety in terms, which still retains its relevance for Translation Studies. In order to overcome this "terminological maze" (Bernal-

Merino, 2013, p. 121), the scholar promotes an understanding of video games as multichannel texts as well as multimedia entertainment software. While demonstrating the elements that constitute a video game, he also draws a detailed picture of the video game industry and of the research within Translation Studies. Bernal-Merino (2013) argues that although the wide range of video game genres is a challenge, video game translation is to be recognized as a unique translation category. Further, he states that the essence of the translation of video games is best captured by the term “translation of multimedia interactive entertainment software” instead of solely by translation or localization (Bernal-Merino, 2013, p. 141).

One of the master’s theses that discuss the theoretical framework of video game translation is by Bushouse (2015). In her study, Bushouse (2015) provides the reader with a comprehensive history of video game translation and a detailed discussion on what makes video games special as texts. Moreover, the thesis attempts to demonstrate that the definition of translation easily encompasses all the practices that take place in the transfer of a video game from one locale to another. Bushouse (2015) views localization as one of the many strategies that the translator, as the expert in cultural transfer, can choose to adopt. The argument that a widened definition of translation can help us investigate video game translations as well as improve the status of the translator is especially worth mentioning.

Sánchez (2009) is one of the first studies that addresses the translation of video games carried out by the fans themselves. The focus in the article is on romhacking, which is a combination of video game translation and programming. After discussing the history of video games, Sánchez (2009) moves on to romhacking. It should be noted that romhacking is a unique activity that does not necessarily involve the transfer of the game contents from one language to another.

Therefore, Sánchez (2009) distinguishes between romhacking and fan translation. As a romhacker himself, the author gives valuable insight into the practice and states that romhacking, despite being illegal, is usually allowed by video game companies, since romhackers generally work on older games that are no longer sources of income for developers. On the quality of amateur translations, the author argues that thanks to their familiarity with the particular video game and gaming culture, amateur translations can produce better results as well as receiving positive reactions from the players.

There are several studies that offer a theoretical discussion on video game translation as a category under the umbrella term of AVT. Even though these studies investigate numerous audiovisual products, they also contribute to the theory of video game translation. Gambier (2008) provides the reader with a detailed account of the research on AVT in Translation Studies. After discussing the development of AVT research within the discipline, the scholar analyzes the challenges in the task. Despite the intersemiotic character of AVT, Gambier (2008) points out that the research has often been limited to linguistic analysis. The reasons for this tendency are identified as the literary background of most researchers as well as the difficulty of carrying the analysis to a different dimension to study other modes of meaning. Further, Gambier (2008) argues that video games can be studied from an AVT perspective, as both the material at hand and the translation techniques used are similar. It is important to emphasize that the article considers fan translations to have high chances of being successful, as fans are aware of the general expectations of the fan community.

Chaume (2018) discusses the question of terminology in his article and demonstrates that the terminological challenge applies to AVT in general. The article

elaborates on various terms, including, localization, adaptation, and transcreation. After giving an overview of the evolution of AVT, Chaume (2018) argues that AVT has had a big role to play in the expansion process of the definition of translation. The article uses translation as an umbrella term and argues that “no other term can explain all these new types of transfers better than the old concept of translation” (Chaume, 2018, p. 95). Using the concept of norms proposed by Toury (1995), the author emphasizes the choice of the material to be translated as the first step in the process, and as fansubbers and fandubbers also choose which movies are chosen, Chaume (2018) integrates the practice of fan translation to his study.

Mangiron Hevia (2007) produces one of the early examples that investigates video games and their translations by carrying out a textual analysis. The article starts out by discussing video game translation practices and what they entail. After investigating the evolution of the video game industry and the definition of a video game, Mangiron Hevia (2007) identifies the assets in a video game. This analysis unearths the challenges that the translator faces while translating a video game, and a video game is described as “an interactive multimedia text” which aims to entertain its user (Mangiron Hevia, 2007, p. 307). Even though the article does not include a case study, examples from different video games are used to identify seven skills that the translators should possess to tackle the challenges during the translation process.

Mandiberg (2009) is one of the few scholars who challenges the concept of localization in favor of translation. The article argues that localization and translation exist but as separate processes that carry different connotations. The scholar points out that localization claims to produce the same, whereas translation emphasizes the differences. Therefore, the article promotes translation in the context of video games, as the translators need to change the video game to ensure its suitability for a

particular audience. With examples from the famous video game *Kingdom Hearts*, Mandiberg (2009) demonstrates that each translation of a video game is unique and different, which is the exact opposite of what localization claims to do by achieving standardization.

Oers (2014) investigates video game translation practices by analyzing the video game *Beyond Good and Evil* and its Dutch translation. The video game has been translated into Dutch completely, meaning that the players can also choose to play it with Dutch dubbing. Using the translation categories by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) as well as Mangiron and O'Hagan's (2006) concept of transcreation, Oers (2014) analyzes the translation strategies that have been used in the Dutch translation of the game. One interesting result that the article finds is the wide use of literal translation, even though translators are given nearly full authority to make any changes that they consider necessary.

Costales (2014) discusses the video game translation practices in superhero video games. He explains the choice of material by stating that superhero video games are often related to other media, such as books, comics, or movies. As he points out, a superhero video game generally has its own fan base before the game has even been developed, as such fans enjoy using different entertainment media all depicting the same universe. Costales (2014) argues that one of the challenges that the translator faces is a video game's multimodality, as text, sound, video, the gamer's actions, and even online gaming make up the gameplay experience for a player. On the other hand, after analyzing the video game *Batman Arkham Asylum* and its translation into Spanish, he emphasizes that the main character, Batman, has been adapted to the Spanish culture, and the translator has chosen to transcreate, which is one of the translation strategies to be chosen by the translator.

Galhardi's (2014) article investigates how fans stop being passive consumers and actively engage in video games by producing amateur translations. The case study chosen by Galhardi is a unique one, as the same video game, *Chrono Trigger*, has six translations in total, two official translations and four fan translations. Therefore, the case study gives the scholar the opportunity to comparatively study the translations that were produced in a 15-year span. Galhardi (2014) argues that fan translations generally limit themselves to the linguistic transfer of a video game, leaving the content unchanged, but he also acknowledges romhacking practices that specifically aim to alter the game's content, sometimes not even transferring the game to another language. One interesting finding of the study is that there is not a visible pattern in terms of whether fan translations display a foreignizing or domesticating approach (Venuti, 1995).

There are various studies that analyze the translation of a certain element of a video game, such as register (e.g., Sajna, 2016) or humor (Touiserkani, 2015). Sajna (2016) investigates the Polish translation of *Dragon Age: Origins* and asks the question how remoteness in language is created. The scholar finds out that register is conveyed by applying older lexemes in Polish. However, one interesting finding is that the translation attempts to recreate a balance between the old register that reflects the medieval setting and the modern language of the players to allow them to follow the story without interruptions. On the other hand, Touiserkani's (2015) article on the translation of politeness reflects on the dynamics and ideology in his country. The article analyzes *Half Life 2* and its translation into Persian, aiming to identify the implications of the translation strategies for the target audience and its culture. The study concludes by pointing out that politeness in the Persian translation

of the video game is an “adaptation strategy factor” that sheds light on the target culture and the predominant ideology (Touiserkani, 2015, p. 801)

Numerous theses offer textual analyses of video game translations. Hyttinen (2010) analyzes the Japanese video game *Zero: Akai Chō* and its two translations into English, one for North America and the other for Europe. In the same year, Szurawitzki (2010) focuses on the translation of the Japanese video game series *Sairen* and justifies the choice of the video game with its rural Japan setting, unearthing challenges inherent in the transfer of the rural elements. Ettinger (2014) identifies the dominance of Japanese games and their English or Spanish translations in video game translation research and therefore chooses to study *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* and its translation into Dutch. Koelewijn (2015) is another scholar who chooses to discuss the Dutch translation of a video game. In his master's thesis on *Grand Theft Auto V*, Koelewijn (2015) carries out an analysis and attempts to demonstrate video game translation as a unique translation category with a strong multimodal character. Another study that discusses the relationship between video game translation and multimodality is Silva's (2016) dissertation on the video game *inFamous 2* and its translation into Brazilian. In his work, the author uses a multimodal corpus and aims to determine the translation strategies, evaluating them and promoting Venuti's (1995) domestication as the suitable solution, as it enables a better gameplay.

Sainio (2019) investigates the translation of attack moves in the English translation of the Japanese video game series *Pokémon*. In his thesis, he identifies the names of the moves in all the *Pokémon* games, starting from 1996 and ending with the release of the sixth generation in 2013, to detect whether there have been any changes in the translation choices throughout the years. Sainio's (2019) thesis is one

of the few studies that analyzes the change in translation strategies within the same video game series over time. Another study that approaches video game translation from a different perspective is Strong's (2018) dissertation. In his work, the scholar focuses on the impact of the language spoken between the gamers on the translation of video games. By involving the communication between the players as a factor to be considered in the translation, Strong (2018) offers a new viewpoint to video game translation strategies.

Jørstad (2018) studies the role-playing game (RPG) *Undertale* and its translation into Japanese. The article questions how *yakuwarigo*, a style of language that is specifically used in works of fiction and translation, is used in the Japanese translation. This thesis is an example of studies that discuss the translation of games into Asian languages. The results of Jørstad (2018) point out the freedom enjoyed by the video game translators to use *yakuwarigo* to emphasize a character's femininity or masculinity where the source text does not offer any information. In other words, Jørstad (2018) arrives at a conclusion that is in parallel with the idea of video game translators receiving "carte blanche" to carry out their task (Mangiron Hevia, 2007, p. 309).

As for the stand of video game translation research in Turkey, the number of studies has been increasing despite video games receiving scholarly attention at a comparatively later stage. One of the earliest studies that touches upon video games is Şahin's (2013) book. In his work, the scholar analyzes the developments in translation technologies and how they can be integrated into translator training. Under the category of localization, Şahin (2013) also considers video games and their translation due to the technical steps involved in the process. The study also discusses the importance of the cultural details and their transfer in localization and

of considering the conventions of a locale. Odacıoğlu, Loi, Köktürk, and Uysal (2016) carry out another study that investigates translator training. In this study, the scholars analyze the curricula of two universities, Atılım University and Roehampton University, to measure the presence of video game localization. Even though the article does not discuss the reason behind choosing these two universities, Odacıoğlu et al. (2016) discusses the relationship between translator training and video games, a research field that is largely neglected within Translation Studies.

A study that is worth mentioning is Okyayuz and Kaya's (2018) article on the teaching of audiovisual translation. In their article, the scholars emphasize the importance of placing multidisciplinary in a central position for translator training. The necessary change in the teaching methods is identified as related to the demand from the market as well as to the dominance of technology and globalization in today's world. Even though the article investigates AVT teaching as a whole, video games are also mentioned while discussing the benefits of training that encourages multidisciplinary and creativity.

The majority of the studies in Turkey carry out textual analyses and discuss the translation challenges in a case study. To illustrate, Odacıoğlu and Köktürk (2015) analyze the fan translation of *Wolfenstein: The Old Blood* into Turkish. After discussing the reasons that might drive fans to engage in translation activities, they offer a comparative analysis between the source text and the fan translation. The scholars also interview the fan translator and investigate the reception of the fan translation and its playability by analyzing the online comments. The article is a valuable contribution and paves the way for more research on video game translation. However, the lack of discussion on the chosen examples for analysis prevents the study from acquiring a systematic character.

Önen's (2018) master's thesis analyzes two games from different categories, *Football Manager 2015* and *League of Legends*. As the latter game is also dubbed, this study manages to integrate multimodal elements, especially audio, into the analysis. After obtaining qualitative and quantitative data, the author also investigates the comments on forums on the respective video games. As such, Önen (2018) combines a multimodal textual analysis with the reception of video games. Another study that pays attention to the multimodal character of video games is Şener's (2020) master's thesis. Even though the thesis is not from Translation Studies, it still carries elements from the discipline. Şener (2020) investigates how *The Witcher* books have been transformed into video games, focusing particularly on intermediality and literature. The discussion on the traces of the books on the video games carries out implications for how video games can be analyzed systematically, paving the way for an analysis that moves away from the verbal elements towards a combination of different modes and media.

Another master's thesis that discusses video game translation is Zan's (2018) study. This thesis investigates various video games and their translations using Venuti's (1995) dichotomy of foreignization and domestication and Aixela's (1996) concepts of substitution and conservation. Zan (2018) identifies culture-specific items in ten video games and analyzes the translation strategies. One thing to note is that, as pointed out by Sarıgül (2020), the thesis disregards fan translations entirely because of their low quality. This seems in contrast with not only studies investigating fan translation products and practices but also the argument that fans' knowledge of pop culture as well as their expertise on a particular field can help them produce more successful translations than professionals (e.g., Desjardin, 2017).

Öncü Yılmaz and Canbaz (2019) analyze the translation of story-driven video games and choose the popular video game *The Last of Us* for their case study. In their article, the scholars study the video game's subtitles into Turkish, and the video game is viewed as a complex audiovisual text. Notably, Öncü Yılmaz and Canbaz (2019) provide their reader with contextual information as well as images from the video game, so that the subtitles can be considered alongside the visual elements. Therefore, the article is a multimodal analysis of the translation. A similar strategy is visible in the master's thesis by Diri (2019). In this study, the scholar looks at video games as well as web and mobile applications and their translations. In the chapter devoted to video games, Diri (2019) offers visual material to offer the context for the translation choices. Diri (2019) benefits not only from transcreation (Mangiron and O'Hagan, 2006) but also Vermeer's (1996) Skopos theory in his analysis.

Dinler (2022) is another master's thesis that attempts to close the gap between video game translation and other translation categories, such as literary translation or technical translation. While doing so, the scholar acknowledges the multimodality of video games as the most important feature that shapes the translation strategies. Dinler (2022) analyzes *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* and its official translation into Turkish and categorizes the translation decisions using Venuti's (1995) foreignization and domestication methods and Molina and Albir's (2002) translation strategies. He concludes that video game translations require a variety of translation methods due to the strong multimodal character of video games, but it is still possible to draw parallels between video game translation practices and other translation types.

Sirkintı (2022) studies the efficiency of machine translation systems in video game localization. The scholar chooses the video game *Kenshi* to discuss whether

post-editing can be used as a replacement for fan translation activities. The study reaches the conclusion that even though the utilization of machine translation relieves the translators of workload and enables them to work faster, certain competences, such as creativity and knowledge of the game culture, influence the post-editing process immensely. As a result, Sirkintı (2022) dismisses the chances of the raw product from machine translation replacing fan translation, but he also acknowledges the possibility of widespread adoption of machine translation systems in video game translation processes.

Onar (2021) is a master's thesis that approaches the concept of video game translation not from a Translation Studies perspective but from a game developer viewpoint. In her study, Onar (2021) analyzes the video game *Uncharted 4* and its translation into Turkish. The thesis evaluates the translations and suggests improvements, but the suggestions on the translation choices are also reviewed by an *expert* due to the author's lack of knowledge in translation theory. Onar (2021) investigates the entirety of the video game by choosing examples from all the chapters. However, the discussion on the translation strategies is not systematic but based on personal value judgments. Nevertheless, the study demonstrates the increasing attention to video game translation not only in Translation Studies but also other disciplines.

Aktürk (2022) is another master's thesis that investigates video game translation strategies. The study discusses the translation choices in the Turkish official translation of W3WH. Similar to various other studies, Aktürk (2022) uses the binarism of domestication and foreignization as well as Skopos theory for her analysis. Even though the scholar states that her study is largely limited to the comparative analysis of in-game text from the subtitles, she also offers visuals from

the video game to introduce the elements of the different modes. One can argue that the number of examples that the study offers in its analysis is sufficient to arrive at conclusions, but Aktürk (2022) does not offer a discussion on the translation choices in certain categories. Therefore, the evaluation of the translation choices is not systematic, and as the judgment criteria are not defined, the study loses its descriptive focus and acquires a normative character.

Lastly, two recent dissertations deserve special attention. Firstly, Karagöz (2019) is the first dissertation in Turkey on video game translation processes. The study focuses on video game localization from a holistic view, attempting to describe how it functions both in professional and amateur groups. After his investigation, Karagöz (2019) identifies three groups: professionals, semi-professionals, and amateurs. As the author discusses the actors taking part in the process, he draws a clear picture of the video game localization practices in Turkey. Furthermore, Karagöz (2019) analyzes the popularity of video games as well as the development of the video game industry, which is also marked by the participatory culture. Similarly, Sarıgül (2020) investigates the professional and amateur fan translation practices in Turkey. He chooses two video games for his case study and conducts surveys and interviews to understand how the localization process works in the two different settings. These two dissertations offer a comprehensive analysis of the transfer of video games into Turkish, enlightening the dynamics both in official settings and fan groups.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter aims to introduce the theoretical framework and methodology used in the thesis. As the study deals with video games and their transfer into different languages and cultures, a terminological discussion is offered to draw a picture of the research on video game translation in Translation Studies. While analyzing video games, the thesis prefers the concept of translation instead of the commonly used localization, referring to Bernal-Merino's term "translation of multimedia interactive entertainment software" (2013, p. 141). Additionally, the thesis revisits Reiss' (1971) and Berman's (1995) translation criticism models to discuss how video games and their translations can be studied in a systematic and comprehensive way, attempting to suggest a model for a video game translation criticism. Moreover, in this criticism, video games will be considered multimodal texts in parallel to Kaindl's "multimodal conception of translation" (2013, p. 49), emphasizing the components that constitute a video game. Lastly, the place of such a multimodal video game translation criticism within Translation Studies is evaluated as part of the "technological turn" in the discipline (Cronin, 2010; O'Hagan, 2013).

2.1 Multimodality

Multimodality could not find itself a place in Translation Studies for a long time, as the discipline chose to solely focus on the verbal elements of a text, effectively turning the discipline into a monomodal one (Gambier & Munday, 2014). The discussions on multimodality have widespread implications for the core of Translation Studies. To illustrate, Gambier (2006) states that "no *text* [emphasis in

original] is, strictly speaking, monomodal” (p. 6), arguing that every text has multimodality in it, due to elements such as the font, letter size, and page layout. When this premise is accepted, the question then becomes how to investigate the non-verbal elements alongside the verbal ones (Kaindl, 2013). Therefore, multimodality and the discussion surrounding it has changed Translation Studies fundamentally, adding more factors to be considered in research.

Even though multimodality had been a topic of discussion in various disciplines, such as linguistics and semiotics, Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2001) arguments for a multimodal communication theory formed the essence of the integration of multimodality into Translation Studies (Kaindl, 2013). In another work, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) investigate how the visual elements create meaning alongside the verbal elements, thus introducing different modes and how they come together as well as how a “visual grammar” (p. 1) differs from a “linguistic grammar” (p. 3). As they build upon their attempts to identify the function of visual elements in creating meaning, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) move to a more general theory of multimodal communication and argue that multimodal texts make “meaning in multiple articulations” (p. 4). As a result, it is the existence of various modes and the combination of them that become relevant in understanding a multimodal text.

The emergence of multimodality as a research topic in Translation Studies overlaps with the challenges presented to the equivalence paradigm by target-oriented approaches (Kaindl, 2013). Nevertheless, there have been various suggestions from scholars on how to integrate multimodal elements to translation theory. To illustrate, in the translation criticism model of Reiss (1971), the fourth text type is the audio-medial text, which she describes as “dependen[t] on non-linguistic

(technical) media and on graphic, acoustic, and visual kinds of expression” (p. 43).

As for the examples of this category, Reiss (1971) names radio and television programmes, theatrical works, and any type of text that is accompanied by music, such as songs and choir performances. Nevertheless, the scope of research on multimodality has been growing, focusing on various other genres. From a multimodal perspective, Oittinen (2003) analyzes the translation of picture books as a combination of the visual and verbal elements, whereas Torresi (2008) studies the translation of different modes, especially the visual mode, prevalent in advertisements.

Multimodality is an especially useful concept for analyzing retranslations in our globalized world, as it successfully emphasizes the complex meaning-making processes in retranslations that are often accompanied by sound and image (Albachten & Gürçağlar, 2020). A recent example that highlights the multimodal nature of retranslation is Okyayuz and Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt’s (2022) article on the translation of Nasreddin Hodja from an oral literary work into a cartoon for visually and hearing impaired and children. Further studies on multimodality in Translation Studies include Lee’s (2013) analysis of the relationship between translation and multimodality as well as how meaning is created in the technology-driven era, and Ketola’s (2016) multimodal cognitive framework that combines illustrations and words in the translation of technical texts.

One research area in Translation Studies that heavily makes use of multimodality is AVT (Gambier, 2006). This is hardly surprising, as even the definitions of this practice often emphasize the different modes in audiovisual texts. To illustrate, Pérez-González (2009) defines AVT “as a branch of translation studies concerned with the transfer of multimodal and multimedial texts into another

language and/or culture” (p. 13). Zabalbeascoa (2008) describes an audiovisual text as “a communication act involving sounds and images” (p. 21), emphasizing that such texts might consist of different modes. Even though subtitling and dubbing are considered the most common translation forms in AVT (Pérez-González, 2009, p. 13), other types of AVT, including surtitling, voice-over, audio description for the blind and visually impaired, and translation in live performances, have been gaining increased attention from Translation Studies (Díaz-Cintas, 2008). As a matter of fact, Cabrera and Bartolomé (2005) identify 17 different practices under the umbrella term of AVT.

As AVT has been expanding, video games have become a research topic as well. Video games have numerous similarities to other audiovisual texts, in terms of both the modes they include and the translation practices they require (Bernal-Merino, 2007; Mangiron & O’Hagan, 2006). Mejías-Climent (2017) describes video games “as the most sophisticated example of audiovisual text in terms of [...] multimodal nature” (p. 109), further emphasizing the complex multimodal character of video games. In a video game, a combination of audio, visual, and textual elements create meaning, and it should not be forgotten that the interplay between these different modes contributes to the players’ immersion. In other words, the successful interaction of the modes mentioned enables players to actively engage with the game, giving the video games their interactive character.

2.2 Video game translation

The concept of video game translation seems self-explanatory despite the existence of a variety of terms for describing both translation and video game. Before attempting to define video game translation, it is first necessary to discuss what a

video game is. Several scholars (e.g., Mangiron & O'Hagan, 2006; Munday, 2009) follow the definition that video games are “any forms of computer-based entertainment software, either textual or image-based, using any electronic platform [...] and involving one or multiple players in a physical or networked environment” (Frasca, 2001, p. 4). As this definition does not reflect the advancements in technology and gaming industry, Bernal-Merino (2013) criticizes Frasca's (2001) attempt as being too narrow. He chooses to describe video games as “a multimedia interactive form of entertainment for one or more individuals, powered by computer hardware and software, controlled by a peripheral [...] and displayed on some kind of screen [...]” (Bernal-Merino, 2013, p. 24). Accordingly, video game translation then can be defined as the “interpretation and recreation for a different specific purpose” (Bernal-Merino, 2013 p. 141) of such entertainment products. Even though the scholar uses the term “video game translation” in his study, he points out that he prefers “the translation of multimedia interactive entertainment software” (Bernal-Merino, 2013, p. 141), as it addresses the variety in games as well as their various assets and characteristics.

The use of translation to describe the transfer of video games to make them available for other audiences is also a debated topic. As Bernal-Merino's (2013) preferred term also demonstrates, video games essentially consist of software, which is why localization is often used instead of translation. One of the scholars who wrote extensively on localization is Esselink (2000). In his influential guide for localization, localization is described as “the translation and adaptation of a software or web product, which includes the software application itself and all related product documentation” (Esselink, 2000, p. 1). In the same work, he also borrows the definition provided by LISA and states that “[l]ocalization involves taking a product

and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold” (Esselink, 2000, p. 3). Even though the descriptions might look similar at first sight, Pym (2002) rightly points out that the former definition determines software as the material to work with, whereas the latter expands on it and moves the transfer process to any product. This criticism demonstrates that even in a work that offers “a rather complete set of introductory materials” for students (Pym, 2002, p. 189), the definitions might be blurry. O’Hagan (2015) also criticizes Esselink’s definition and highlights that his definition fails to demonstrate the new developments that separate localization from translation.

The problematic nature of a definition becomes clear with scholars feeling the need to adapt their definitions due to their shortcomings. To illustrate, Esselink (2003) alters his definition of localization and states that “localization revolves around combining language and technology to produce a product that can cross cultural and language barriers” (p. 21), indicating that localization, as he views it, is not limited to software or web products. Yunker (2002) defends a similar perspective and underscores that localization can be defined as the “process of modifying a product for a specific locale” (p. 17). In his glossary, Pym (2011) does not offer a definition but highlights that in some cases, localization is used “only [to] refer to work on digitized content” (p. 85), whereas in others it is regarded as “a mode of translation paradoxically defined by the incorporation of ‘internationalization’ [...] into the workflow” (p. 85). The latter definition sets localization as an encompassing term to translation, but it also brings another term, “internationalization,” to the picture. Indeed, from an industry point of view, localization is often viewed within the framework of a new “globalization, internationalization, localization and

translation (GILT)” sector (LISA, 2003, p. 6). As one of the categories in this sector, translation is limited to “the written text or spoken words” (Esselink, 2000, p. 4), and since no such limitation exists for localization, “generally localization is seen by industry as a superordinate term that encompasses translation” (Munday, 2016, p. 288).

In addition to the difficulty of defining localization, scholars also question whether it is the proper term for video games to begin with. Mangiron and O’Hagan (2006) argue that “in game localisation, transcreation, rather than just translation, takes place” (p. 20), referring to the freedom enjoyed by translators while working on video games. It is interesting to note that the term transcreation was first used for the translation of sacred texts in India and was defined by Purushottama Lal as a “readable and not strictly faithful translation” (Kothari, 2003, p. 36). Later, Haroldo de Campos uses transcreation to refer to a “creative literary translation” approach that translators utilize while translating contemporary poetry in Brazil (Jackson, 2010, p. 139). Viera (1999) explains that transcreation, alongside the other terms that de Campos used to refer to translation, is an attempt at “a transformative recreation of inherited tradition” (p. 97). In other words, through the use of transcreation, de Campos aims to emphasize that the translator does not only use a level of creativity that matches the one of the author (Cisneros, 2012) but also creates a product that is utilized for a different purpose than the original work (Viera, 1999). Mangiron and O’Hagan’s (2006) understanding of the term diverges considerably from both the Indian context and the Brazilian tradition, as the two scholars argue that the transcreation of video games takes place to protect the “look and feel” of the original to present itself as an original work as well (p. 12). Despite the history of the

term, transcreation has a solid place within Translation Studies and is used for both video games and advertising (Munday, 2016, p. 260).

In his work, Bernal-Merino (2013) mentions rewriting, adaptation, and transadaptation as various other terms that are used while discussing video games. The fruitful debate on terminology successfully demonstrates the complex nature of video games and their journey to other cultures, languages, and audiences. Nevertheless, Schäler's (2010) argument that localization is often defined as "like translation, but more than that" (p. 210) can be applied to the other terms as well, indicating that the attempts to highlight the complexity of such practices reduce translation to a mere word-transfer process. Translation emphasizes differences, and it attempts to enable communication despite the impossibility of achieving perfection, whereas localization assumes that the same meaning can be created, thus hinting at a universal consumption of the same product (Mandiberg, 2009).

This thesis challenges the way translation is indirectly depicted as a simple and unproblematic process through the use of other terms, but it also acknowledges that the same terms enable translation to disguise its "unpleasant imperial aftertaste left by agonistic conceptions of translation as conquest" (Cronin, 2003, p. 63). After all, localization particularly does an effective job in "engag[ing] effortlessly with the 'local'" (Cronin, 2003, p. 63), and transcreation underscores the necessity of altering the text with nearly unlimited freedom (Mangiron & O'Hagan, 2006). Even though it is true that translation would receive more resistance than these newer terms to make the same arguments, despite its shortcomings, translation is the most suitable concept to explain the transfers taking place in video games and audiovisual products in general (Chaume, 2018).

2.3 Translation criticism

Translation criticism can be defined as the “objective” (Reiss, 1971, p. 4), “systematic” (van den Broeck, 1985, p. 56), and “productive” (Berman, 1995, p. 23) analysis of a translation. The relationship between criticism and translation has been a topic of discussion since long before the establishment of translation studies as a discipline, and one can argue that every translation itself is a critical act to begin with. Dryden (1680/1992) highlights the critical nature of translation by boldly claiming that “[one] should be a nice critic in his [sic] mother tongue before he [sic] attempts to translate a foreign language” (Preface). Even though Dryden has the translation of poetry in mind, his statement successfully demonstrates that criticism has an important place alongside translation and that it is not limited to the evaluation of translations.

Each translation consists of a critical reading of a text (Folkart Di Stefano, 1982), and the criticism inherent in translation is a topic of discussion in its own right. However, criticism as a form of evaluation is to be distinguished from this critical character of translation (Lefevere, 1987). There are various views about what a translation criticism is or what it should do, and the place of this endeavor within Translation Studies is also discussed. In his famous map of the discipline, Holmes (1988) puts translation criticism as a separate sub-category under the applied translation studies branch and argues that translation criticism is one of the activities that contributes to and benefits from the pure branch of the discipline. Toury (1995) interprets the branches differently and views the applied branch of the discipline as an extension, thus challenging the unidirectional influence between pure translation studies and applied translation studies argued by Holmes (1988).

Translation criticism and how to achieve quality in translation are two topics that are closely related to each other, and one of the scholars that contributed to the discussion before the establishment of Translation Studies as an independent discipline is Nida. In his influential work, Nida (1964) coins the terms “formal equivalence” and “dynamic equivalence” that he describes as “two basic orientations in translating” (p. 159). Nida (1964) uses the former to describe the type of equivalence between the source text and the target text that focuses on form and content, whereas the latter gives priority to the message or meaning. As Nida and Taber (1969) later describe translation as “reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” (p. 12), it becomes evident that they prioritize meaning over form. This is in parallel to Nida’s (1964) argument that translations can be judged according to three criteria: “general efficiency of the communication process,” “comprehension of intent,” and “equivalence of response” (pp. 182-184).

Despite having important implications for translation criticism, Nida’s (1964) ideas do not present a systematical and reliable model that can be utilized for analysis. The assumption that an equal response would result in a “good” translation brings various issues, and House (2001) questions how the equivalence of the response can be measured. As such, she argues that the reaction of the target reader cannot be used as a criterion in quality assessment. Further, Meschonnic (2003) challenges the binarism of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence and points out that a separation of this kind would mean disregarding an indispensable level of the text that functions as a whole. Nevertheless, despite the criticism that it received, Nida’s (1964) focus on the target reader for evaluation of translations has had a

profound influence on Bible translation in particular and Translation Studies as a whole.

Even though there are different opinions about what a translation criticism might look like, one point that the scholars generally agree upon is that it should not be an error identification process. Van den Broeck (1985) believes that “error analysis” may be useful in translation didactics but not in translation criticism (p. 58), and he therefore disapproves of the attempts at criticism that solely rely on subjective value judgments. Similarly, Douma (1972) considers subjective evaluations that do not even describe the criteria they are based on as “of little interest to the public” (p. 95). In order to ascertain the objectivity of the criticism, Reiss (1971) believes that the critic should try to unearth the reason behind “the (alleged) error” (p. 4). Unlike determining arbitrary criteria and evaluating the translation accordingly, offering an explanation for the translator’s choices would open up a discussion, leaving the door open for other opinions and perspectives.

Popovič is one of the scholars who writes extensively about translation criticism and its functions as well as purposes. While discussing the status of Translation Studies in Slovakia, he highlights the importance given by Slovak scholars to textual analysis and states that translations can be studied “from [their] stylistic, communicational, semiotical, comparative and [...] praxeological aspect[s]” (1975a, p. 110). Even though Popovič does not directly associate these terms with translation criticism, the aspects that he mentions demonstrate that he promotes analyzing translations from a wider perspective instead of solely carrying out a textual analysis. His views on criticism become even clearer in another work, where he argues that translation criticism has three primary functions: “postulating,” “analytical,” and “operative” (Popovič, 1975b, p. 249). Popovič describes these

functions as “to the translator,” “to the text,” and “to the reader” respectively (1975b, p. 249), indicating the three necessary elements inherent in any translation criticism.

In order to understand the status of translation criticism alongside the source text and the target text, a more detailed look into Popovič's understanding of translation becomes essential. Two concepts that build the base of Popovič's translation theory are *metacommunication* and *metatext*. In his comprehensive account of Popovič's thoughts on translation, Špirk (2009) identifies how Popovič extends his earlier theories and puts metacommunication and metatext to the center of his model. According to Popovič (1976), the source text is the “prototext” and belongs to the primary communication alongside the author and the receiver (p. 226), whereas all the other texts and the people who produce them are a part of the metacommunication. As such, “[m]etatekst is a model of the prototext” (Popovič, 1976, p. 227) and creates an intertextual continuity. Translation criticism, as it works with the same prototext as the translation, therefore falls under the category of metatext and forms the third chain of communication (Popovič, 1973). In this case, the primary communication chain is built by the source text and the second one (metacommunication) by the translation itself.

As Popovič (1976) puts translation criticism alongside translation and other literary forms that derive from a text, he opens up a discussion about the status of translation criticism as well. Every criticism of a translation thus becomes a reaction to a translation (Špirk, 2009), with the critic producing a metatext that shares an “inter-textual continuity” with both the source text and the target text (Popovič, 1976, p. 225). Adapting this viewpoint, Odrekivska (2017) argues that the interaction between the metatexts themselves might even overshadow the relationship between the metatexts and the prototext. Even though she does not put

particular emphasis on translation criticism, Odrekivska (2017) points out that the conversation between the metatexts can create the conditions for a retranslation.

The potential necessity for a retranslation constitutes the core of Berman's (1995) translation criticism model as well. As Berman (1995) attempts to find "a *consensual* [emphasis in original] basis of judgment" (p. 6), he underscores the importance of translation criticism as a "life-giving [...] act" (p. 79). After providing the reader with a translation criticism of John Donne's poetry into French and Spanish, Berman (1995) concludes by sharing his hopes that his analysis offers the reader a clear and detailed picture of "the global and historical space of [...] a retranslation" (p. 199). In short, Berman (1995) believes that translation criticism should be "productive" (p. 23), as it engages in a conversation with the existing metatexts, paving the way for additional ones in form of retranslations. While analyzing a translation, the critic lays out the groundwork for a retranslation in case the translation has failed, thus creating the perfect space for a retranslation to emerge.

Berman's (1995) translation criticism model consists of six stages, and these are: the reading and rereading of the translation, the reading of the source text, the research on the translator, the comparative analysis and evaluation, and the preparation of the space for retranslation (if necessary). In six steps, Berman's model (1995) allows him to investigate the "confrontation" (p. 5) between the source text and the translation with the goal of providing information to the readers. It should be mentioned that the categories are not limited to the texts themselves. As the third stage consists of analyzing the "translating position," "translation project," and "translation horizon" (Berman, 1995, p. 66), the criticism model attempts to explore the whole translation process. Consequently, France (1996) states that the model proposed by Berman (1995) challenges the perception of the "invisibility" (Venuti,

1995) of the translator, bringing the criticism of translations to the same esteem as the one of non-translated literary works.

One common point in both Van den Broeck (1985) and Berman's (1995) translation criticism models is their emphasis on literary works. As such, their models leave out other types of translation without offering an explicit reason for this choice. Despite being published at an earlier date than the two scholars, Reiss (1971) warns of the danger of focusing on one genre and attempting to generalize the findings to "*all* [emphasis in original] texts" (p. 7). Reiss (1971) points out that she does the opposite, by starting from the general and then moving to the particular categories and genres. To achieve this, she (1974) uses Bühler's (1965) three functions of language and differentiates between the informative, expressive, and operative text types. As for texts that do not only include linguistic but also non-linguistic media, Reiss (1971) uses the term "audio-medial" (p. 43), increasing the material that can be criticized from a Translation Studies perspective immensely.

Reiss' translation criticism model and text typology places the function of the texts in the center. This emphasis on the function builds the basis for Skopos theory, which argues that the purpose of a translation determines the translation choices and strategies by the translator (Vermeer, 1978). Vermeer (1986, p. 42) takes this argument even further and states that the source text has been "dethroned" by the *skopos*. However, Reiss' (1971) criticism model is in a middle ground between the purpose and the source text as the dominant force behind how a translation is produced, since unlike Vermeer (1986), she argues that it is not the purpose of the translation but the function of the source text that determines the translation strategies. Therefore, when Reiss (1971) proposes translation methods for the translators and evaluation criteria for the critics of translations, she does not

disregard the source text and states that there can be “no critique without a comparison with the original” (p. 9).

Even though Reiss (1971) gives priority to the source text, there are still several issues with using the function of texts as the core criteria while categorizing them. To illustrate, Snell-Hornby (1990) is one of the scholars who points out that the function of literary works may not be easily determined. Similarly, Kohlmayer (1988) deems Reiss’ text types as inapplicable to literary works, as such works do not offer the reader a single way of interaction. Despite the criticisms, Reiss’ (1971) model is highly influential for translation criticism and Translation Studies as a discipline. By acknowledging different text types, Reiss (1971) paves the way for an inclusive translation criticism that does not limit itself to literary texts.

2.4 Methodology

Throughout the thesis, I carried out a multimodal video game translation criticism analysis of the two translations of W3WH. Therefore, the primary sources that I used are the video game W3WH in English, the official translation into Turkish produced by 23 Studios, and the fan translation into Turkish prepared by the fan group in *Donanım Haber*. The video game is regarded as a complex multimodal text, in which various modes come together and shape the player’s gameplay experience. Even though only the textual elements are translated in both translations, this does not prevent the critic to question to what extent the translators have taken into consideration the fact that they are working on a multimodal text which is supposed to be played and enjoyed. Therefore, the criticism involves the acoustic, graphic, and visual elements in the video game.

As I traced the translators' decisions and strategies, I applied the translation criticism models proposed by Reiss (1971) and Berman (1995). The reason for combining the two models is even though Reiss (1971) makes it possible for video games to be analyzed under the category of audio-medial text type, she does not offer a detailed step-by-step criticism model that can be followed. On the other hand, Berman's (1995) model can be comfortably applied because of its detailed instructions and examples. However, he solely focuses on literary translation, meaning that video games, or any other audiovisual product for that matter, do not have a place in the model. A combination of these two models makes a systematic translation criticism of a video game and its translations possible.

One point worth mentioning here is that Berman's (1995) criticism model is intended to criticize a single translation of a work and its source text. Nevertheless, Berman (1995) also argues that the criticism might involve the other translations of the same work, indicating Berman's goal of achieving a thorough investigation of translator strategies. This thesis is against the idea of bringing one of the translations to a higher position. As such, the two translations were analyzed alongside each other, resulting in a comparative analysis that focuses on three multimodal texts. As the thesis proposes to integrate the multimodal aspects of the video game into the criticism, the data is presented in forms of images of game content that allow the reader to understand the context in a more complete way.

As for the individual steps of the translation criticism, Berman's model was followed. The parts in the original that require particular consideration as well as examples that display the translators' strategies were offered alongside visual data. Information about the translators, their backgrounds, and experiences were presented as well, as "going to the translator is an essential methodological turning point"

(Berman, 1995, p. 57). This stage was succeeded by the purpose of the translation and how the translators “internalize” the task and the translation norms of the target culture (Berman, 1995, p. 58). It is precisely the extent and mode of this internalization, or compromise, that the criticism intends to explore further by studying the two translations. Lastly, the thesis carried out a comparative analysis of the textual elements, considering the multimodal nature of the video game and the translations at the same time.

As *The Witcher* games are based on the books of Sapkowski, the literary works and their translation journeys are relevant for the criticism. This does not mean that the literary works determine the translators’ decisions, but the existence of a connection to *The Witcher* works and their translations, or the lack of a connection for that matter, might highlight fans’ expectations and possibly certain translation choices. Accordingly, this criticism attempts to focus on the translations of video games into Turkish, but it also aims to offer a holistic picture of translation of fantasy works in various media.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF *THE WITCHER*

3.1 A short biography of Andrzej Sapkowski

Andrzej Sapkowski is one of the most influential fantasy writers in not only Europe but the whole world. His novels and stories, in particular *The Witcher* saga, have brought him worldwide fame and made him one of the two most well-known contemporary Polish authors alongside Jacek Dukaj (Pindel, 2021). With an active writing career of over 35 years, Sapkowski's works have been translated into over 30 languages, making him a respected figure in literary circles.

Sapkowski was born in 1948 in the Polish city of Łódź and studied economics at the state university in his hometown. Although he started a career as a sales representative, he entered the literary world shortly afterwards as a translator of fantasy works, notably translating Cyril Kornbluth's short story "The Words of Guru" into Polish. His interest in other writers from the world, such as Ray Bradbury and Harry Harrison, reveals that Sapkowski's relationship with the fantasy and science fiction genres started at an early age (Flamma, 2020). In an interview featured in his biography written by Flamma (2020), Sapkowski points out that when he started his writing career as a fantasy writer, Tolkien was the only name who could be considered canon, indicating an influence of Tolkien's style and approach to fantasy on his own. Nevertheless, it would not be accurate to describe Sapkowski's way of writing as an imitation of Tolkien's, as Sapkowski has been successful to create fantasy works in Polish as well as to establish the heroic-fantasy genre in his country (Julkowska & Werner, 2018).

Even though Sapkowski has not limited his literary work to the fantasy genre alone, a major part of his popularity comes from *The Witcher* saga. Having said that, his *Hussite Trilogy* has also brought him renown, especially in the Slavic world. In contrast to his *The Witcher*, this trilogy is a successful example of historical fantasy, mixing Polish history with fictional elements. It is hardly surprising that the Slavic world was particularly interested in Sapkowski's *Hussite Trilogy*, as the development of historical fiction as an independent genre is particularly visible in Poland and Russia (Julkowska & Werner, 2018).

Thanks to his successful literary career, Sapkowski has become a widely researched figure in academia as well. The collection edited by Dudziński and Płoszaj (2016) features a bibliography of research on Sapkowski's works consisting of 100 studies. The three categories in which the existing research is listed are the studies on Sapkowski's novels and stories on *The Witcher* saga, Sapkowski's other works, and adaptations of Sapkowski's works. It should be noted that this bibliography is limited to research in Poland and to the studies until the year 2015, which is exactly the release year of W3WH, making it possible to assume that the popularity of the author and therefore the amount of research on him has been increasing steadily.

3.2 Historical Overview of *The Witcher*

The Witcher book collection was written by Andrzej Sapkowski, a Polish writer who earned worldwide fame thanks to his literary works. The majority of his works are fantasy novels that are heavily influenced by Slavic mythology, Polish folklore, and medieval literature. As the author's most famous work, *The Witcher* saga consists of a series of critically acclaimed novels and has been translated into numerous

languages, reaching international renown. The first works related to *The Witcher* were short stories that were published in the Polish magazine *Fantastyka* in 1986. A part of these short stories was published in book format in the following years.

The book collection consists of eight books: two short story collections, five books of the saga, and one standalone novel. Even though all the events take place in the same universe, the publication timeline does not follow the chronology of the depicted events. The stories are set in an unnamed continent with small kingdoms and duchies, and this continent is occupied by not only humans but also different creatures, including elves, dwarves, and monsters. The protagonist in the stories is Geralt of Rivia, a monster hunter, also called a witcher. Even though witchers are mercenaries that turn into emotionless soldiers after their training, Geralt is an exception and does not lose his emotions. As a result, he finds himself in the middle of political intrigues and love stories.

As Geralt travels the Continent and takes on contracts to slay monsters that endanger the people, his complex character and sense of righteousness bring him recognition as well as notoriety. Despite being arguably the most famous witcher of his time, his advanced combat skills and witty nature are usually not enough to save him from trouble. Geralt is haunted by his past and the poor choices he made, resulting in a deeply flawed but also a relatable character. Sapkowski's efficient work as a storyteller has turned Geralt into a memorable character whose development and compelling story has captivated fans for decades. It is precisely this strong basis that has allowed Geralt in particular and *The Witcher* saga in general to be translated into different media, making it possible for fans to engage with the story in different ways.

Even though Sapkowski's fame started with his books and continued with the video games, Sapkowski is reluctant to acknowledge the role of the games. In one interview, he claims that the video game company "bravely conceals the game's origins" and states that he himself "made the games popular" (Bajda, 2017). However, in the same interview, he also gives the games credit, as they "in some capacity might have boosted" the sales of the books (Bajda, 2017). This does not reflect his stance towards using game-related material in the books, which he opposes strongly by saying that foreign publishers are doing "a disservice by painting the books with artwork borrowed from the games and including game advertisements and game related blurbs inside" (Purchase, 2012).

After its initial beginning with short stories and novels, *The Witcher* has then become a media franchise that encompasses various media forms. Alongside the video game series, of which the third game and its two translations form the topic of this thesis, there are also movies, television series, animations, graphic novels, board games, card games, and even a musical that contribute to *The Witcher* saga and thus pop culture. As the number of media increases, the inconsistencies in terms of narrative and world depiction among the productions becomes visible as well. To what extent these different works commit to or contradict the canon is not within the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, from a Translation Studies perspective, the translations of the books and the popular Netflix series into Turkish might still be relevant, even though both are presented to the public years after W3WH was translated into Turkish.

3.3 W3WH

W3WH is the third installment of the fantasy and action RPG series based on Sapkowski's *The Witcher* saga. Succeeding *The Witcher* and *The Witcher 2: Assassin of Kings* (W2AoK), W3WH was released on 19th May 2015 for Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4 as well as Xbox One. The video game was developed by CD Projekt Red, and its distribution was carried out by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment and Bandai Namco Entertainment. W3WH's success started even before its release, winning 206 awards by 23rd March 2015, and thus breaking the record for "most awards won by a videogame prior to release" (Guinness World Records: Gamer's edition, 2016, p. 141). As a result, it is no surprise that W3WH had a massive impact in the gaming world; the game reached the mark of 4 million sales in two weeks alone (Wawro, 2015), arriving at a total of 40 million sales in 2022 (LeBlanc, 2022).

Similar to Sapkowski's books, the protagonist of W3WH is the monster hunter, or witcher, Geralt of Rivia who travels across the "war-torn, monster infested" (Steam, 2023) Continent while tracking Ciri, his adopted daughter. Ciri possesses unique supernatural abilities and is therefore pursued by the mysterious organization Wild Hunt that aims to use Ciri's powers for its bad intentions. Even though the choices that the player makes shape how the story unfolds, the main storyline revolves around Geralt's attempts to reach Ciri before the Wild Hunt can succeed in its vigorous pursuit. During his quest to find her, Geralt comes across numerous factions, individuals, and monsters, and the choices of the player at these encounters determine the progression of the story.

W3WH is an open world video game, meaning that the players are able to roam the virtual world and discover its depths at their own pace. This freedom to progress with the game's objectives is further enriched by numerous side quests as

well as mini games, most notably the card game Gwent. Even though each player's speed will be different, an average player requires over 50 hours to complete the game's main storyline alone (Llewelyn, 2022), whereas a completionist player who wishes to discover all the details of the game by checking the alternate choices, reaching different endings, and playing through the expansion packs might need close to 700 hours (Glagowski, 2021). In addition to the complex and thought-provoking choices that the players need to make, the highly versatile and detailed combat system accompanied by advanced graphics contributes to the game's success, making it one of the most well-known RPGs worldwide.

The lasting popularity of W3WH can partly be attributed to the new content that CD Projekt Red has been adding to the video game. Alongside the downloadable content that the players receive after purchasing W3WH, there are two separate expansions that add new items, quests, characters, and locations to the base game. The first expansion, *Hearts of Stone*, was released on 13th October 2015, whereas the second one, *Blood and Wine*, followed less than a year later on 31st May 2016. As late as 14th December 2022, after 7 years since the video game's official release, W3WH received another update and saw significant additions and extensive changes. Even though the focus of this "next-gen update" lies on technical improvements, such as enhancing the game's graphics and creating a more fluid gameplay experience for the players, the update also includes new quests in addition to armor and swords inspired by the Netflix series of the saga. The latest update and the expansions demonstrate the efforts of CD Projekt Red to extend the lifespan of W3WH, and the company seems to be successful in its aim, as the game's popularity remains to this day.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSLATION CRITICISM OF THE OFFICIAL AND FAN TRANSLATIONS OF W3WH

4.1 Background information about the translations

The fan translation was released on 26th March 2016 by a group of fans organized in *Donanim Haber*, an online forum that specializes in technology and technological products. On 16th September 2015, the process started when a user created a topic within the subcategory of “video game patches” and in a now edited and therefore unavailable message stated his intention to translate W3WH into Turkish. Even though this user started the translation on his own, after listening to other users’ comments about the task being impossible to finish alone, he slowly formed a group of translators and took on the role of project manager of the fan translation. It is important to note that despite the translation being carried out by a group of 10 people, the fan translators managed to involve the other users by making them a part of the decision-making process. To illustrate, important decisions regarding what to do with proper names or monster names were always reached according to the wishes and preferences of the fans (Txsmelih, 2015a).

The fan translation group started the translation process without any intention of earning money, and they repeatedly refused other fans’ offers to support them financially throughout the process. They argued that the reason behind their decision to translate W3WH is making it available for as many players as possible, and since it is a video game that involves a rich world and numerous languages varieties, ranging from grandiloquent language to regionalisms, the fan translators stated that it constitutes a challenge even for the people who are proficient in English

(yamaci1771, 2015d). Because of the technical difficulties, they pointed out that their translation would only be available for the computer users, leaving the console users out (Txsmelih, 2015b). As the only way for console users to benefit from the fan translation is convincing CD Projekt Red to make it official, the translator group contacted the developer company various times, but the responses they received were largely negative while leaving the door open for discussions at a later time (_Witcher_, 2016a).

As mentioned above, the first version of the fan translation was released on 26th March 2016, indicating that the team managed to translate 900.000 words in little over 6 months. The pace of the fan translation made several forum users question the quality of the translation (Mega Therion, 2015), and to answer these criticisms, the fan translators shared screenshots and videos from their translation. These early peeks into the translation were another way to enable the fans to become involved in the process by receiving feedback. After all, the fan translators repeatedly emphasized that the translation is done for the fans by the fans, highlighting that the translation was shaped according to the comments of the fans. Even though several fans were unsure about the quality of the fan translation, the reactions after the release were largely positive (busterr, 2016).

The first release consisted of the translation of the base game W3WH, sixteen free downloadable contents, and one expansion that is sold separately, *Hearts of Stone*. It should be noted that even though another expansion, *Blood and Wine*, had been announced by CD Projekt Red at that time, it was still in the making. The fan translation group pledged to translate the last expansion into Turkish as well (tzakhi, 2016), while working on the existing fan translation to improve its quality at the same time. To ease the feedback process, they created a Google Document where the

fans could write their comments and indicate the changes they wish to see implemented in the next version of the translation (Basteryus, 2016). As a result, it can be argued that even though the small group of translators did the majority of the translation work as well as the necessary technical changes to the data that they worked with, the fan translation also has the characteristics of a massive collaborative translation.

On 11th August 2016, CD Projekt Red announced the planned release of a special *Game of the Year* (GOTY) edition on 30th August 2016, consisting of the base game as well as the two expansions. In the meantime, the fan translators released the translation of the *Blood and Wine* expansion, thus completing the translation of the video game as well as both expansions on 23rd of August 2016. The next day, CD Projekt Red as well as the distributors announced that the upcoming GOTY edition would include the Turkish translation of the video game, causing an uproar in the online forum. The announcements demonstrated that the official translation was in the making, and 23 Studios had been working on it since 2015, even before the fan translation started (Şen, 2016).

The official translation is produced by 23 Studios, a localization company that was founded in 2009, and one of the first Turkish companies to offer localization services. They provide their clients with “text & audio localization, QA and content creation” services (23 Studios, 2023), and they have worked with prominent companies, including Ubisoft, SEGA, EA, and Netflix. According to their webpage, the company consists of 60 employees that love games, emphasizing the company’s gamer-friendly character (23 Studios, 2023). This particular emphasis creates a connection between the game community and the company, which they further

strengthen by arguing that the company is a recognized and experienced actor in the gaming ecosystem.

The relationship between 23 Studios and *The Witcher* saga does not start with W3WH, as several translators who produced the Turkish fan translation of W2AoK are part of the company. This fan translation is a unique case, as it became the official translation of the game thanks to the efforts of the project leader of the translation, Gökhan Halil Düzgün. In the forum of W2AoK, there is an interview of Düzgün who explains how the fan translation was accepted and implemented by CD Projekt Red. In the interview, he explains that he contacted Marcin Iwiński, the CEO of CD Projekt Red, to ask him whether he can translate W2AoK into Turkish (The Witcher, 2012). He also tells Iwiński about *Oyun Çeviri*, a web page that offers translations of video games to the gaming community, both in forms of fan and official translations. After Iwiński's response stating that Düzgün can contact him about a potential translation into Turkish when the game is released, Düzgün writes him another email, and this sets the stage for the official translation, which is done without any form of financial payment in return (The Witcher, 2012).

Düzgün and his translator group later joined 23 Studios, and they actively tried to convince CD Projekt Red to produce an official translation of W3WH even before the release of the game. There is a petition started by Düzgün to raise awareness on *The Witcher* saga, explaining how the second game was translated by a group led by him (Change, 2013). He highlights that the experience he and his team gained in the years after the release of W2AoK might enable the translators to create an even better translation of the upcoming game, but for this to happen, CD Projekt Red needs to be convinced that there is a considerable interest in the Turkish gamer

community in *The Witcher* saga. However, as it only managed to reach 5513 signatures, it can be argued that this initiative was not a fruitful one.

Considering the backstory of the previous game and how it was translated into Turkish (The Witcher, 2012), it is not surprising to see that the fan translators of W3WH hoped to make their translation official. As they aimed to make the game understandable and reach as many people as possible, making the translation official seemed the perfect way of achieving this. Nevertheless, the reluctance of CD Projekt Red to admit the ongoing work on the official translation resulted in the fan translators staying hopeful, contacting the company and even asking the fans in the forum to voice their support for the fan translation becoming official.

Consequently, after the announcement regarding 23 Studios' official translation, there seems to be a tension between the two translation groups, as the fan translators felt themselves cheated because of the secrecy of the official translation project (Txsmelih, 2016). On the other hand, 23 Studios argued that due to confidential business agreements, it was not possible to inform the fan translators about the ongoing process (Şen, 2016). The comment written by 23 Studios representative Şen (2016) that was addressed to the fan translators was shared in various platforms, including the *Donanım Haber* forum itself, to explain the company's dilemma over how to behave regarding the fan translation efforts. Nevertheless, various fan translators as well as several fans were not happy with the justification, criticizing 23 Studios for joining in this "dishonest" action (nyanaa, 2016).

It is important to note that even after the release of the official translation, the fan translators continued working on their translation. As a result, both the official translation and the fan translation have been receiving updates and corrections since

their releases. The latest version of the fan translation was posted on 8th January 2023, whereas the last patch that implemented changes to the official translation was released on 14th December 2022 as part of the next-gen update. Therefore, it becomes clear that the fan translation group decided not to stop developing their translation, even after the official translation became widely used. The fans that wish to play the game with Turkish translation now have a choice between the two options. The fan translation requires the players to download it and set it up, whereas the official translation is featured in the video game by default. It is interesting to note that the fans on *Donanim Haber* criticized the quality of the official translation and repeatedly called the fan translation better, and this demonstrates that there are notable differences between the two products.

It is important to note that there is a difference in the self-depiction of the two groups. 23 Studios describes itself as a localization company (23 Studios, 2023), and its team that worked on the video game prefers the term localization for its product, in line with the company's description of itself. On the other hand, the fan group that formed on the forum designates its work as fan translation. The fan translators' and the fans' conception of the term localization is mixed. Several members of the fan translation team identify the status of official localization as a goal that they strive for, but as a translation strategy on the micro level, they consider localization as something that they aim to minimize. Numerous fans also point out that they stick to the fan translation after the work of 23 Studios is released because of the latter's certain localization choices, such as the translation of “witcher.”

4.2 The translation of “witcher”

The term “witcher” receives a significant amount of attention in every translation project on Sapkowski’s work, as it gives the literary saga and the game series its name. “Witcher” is the English translation of the Polish term “wiedźmin,” consisting of “wiedźma” (witch) and the suffix “-in” which gives the word its patronymic character. “Wiedźmin” is a neologism of Sapkowski, and it is the name given to monster hunters who turn into emotionless mercenaries after their extensive training and subjection to mutagens that give them superhuman abilities. Even though it can be found in dictionaries nowadays, it was not used in Polish when the author published his first story “Wiedźmin” in the Polish magazine *Fantastyka* in 1986. This story is also featured in the second book of the book series, *Ostatnie Życzenie* (1993), even though the book is the first of the collection from a chronological viewpoint.

It should be noted that the short story was translated into English three times, and in each translation, the term “wiedźmin” is translated differently. The first translation of the story by Agnieszka Fulińska is featured in the collection *Chosen by Fate: Zajdel Award Winners Anthology* (2000). Sapkowski’s story is one of the contemporary fantasy works featured in the anthology, and the story is presented as “Hexer,” which is also the commonly used German translation for the term “wiedźmin.” The Polish movie *Wiedźmin* (2001) and the series *Wiedźmin* (2002) are also advertised to the English-speaking audience as “Hexer,” demonstrating that Fulińska’s choice received at least some acceptance. As for the connotations of “hexer” in English, since the term “hex” is associated with bad luck and ominousness, the choice by Fulińska reflects the way witchers are viewed by society. As mentioned by Drewniak (2019), it is believed that this is the choice supported by

Sapkowski himself for the translation of his works into English, but there is no reliable source to confirm the authenticity of this claim.

The second publication of the story is in *The Last Wish* (2007), the translation of Sapkowski's *Ostatnie Życzenie* (1993). In this book, the translator Danusia Stok chooses to use the term "witcher" instead of the already established term "hexer." Nevertheless, the term is generally believed to be coined by Adrian Chmielarz, one of the most prominent figures in the Polish video game industry (Purchase, 2015). As a matter of fact, Purchase (2015) uses various screenshots of an unfinished video game by Chmielarz, which has the title "Witcher." However, this video game was not completed, and in 2002, CD Projekt bought the rights of *The Witcher* saga from Sapkowski. CD Projekt released the first game, *The Witcher*, depicting Sapkowski's world in 2007, the same year as the publication of *The Last Wish* (2007).

Despite the success of the first video game of the saga to introduce Sapkowski's world to the English-speaking world, there has been another attempt to come up with a different translation for the term "wiedźmin" in English. The third suggestion comes from Michael Kandel, a prominent translator of science fiction into English. He is the editor and translator of *A Polish Book of Monsters* (2010), a story collection that features five science fiction and fantasy stories from Polish literature. One of the stories is Sapkowski's first story of the saga, and it is presented as "The Spellmaker." As a whole, Kandel's translation can be described as a "violent domestication" because of the changes of proper names that weaken the Polish characteristics of the story (Drewniak, 2019, p. 219).

It is important to mention that in addition to its publication in the collection, the story "The Spellmaker" is also included in the box set of the first video game *The Witcher* in 2007, meaning that CD Projekt Red benefited from Kandel's translation

even before the publication date of *A Polish Book of Monsters* (2010). As such, it becomes clear that CD Projekt Red attempted to increase the popularity of the saga and to boost sales by using Kandel's work, although there are significant differences between the game and Kandel's translation. These differences include the names of the characters, places, and monsters, but the crucial difference is that Kandel does not use the term "witcher" at all in his translation (Guttfeld, 2017). Despite the existing discrepancy in the use of the terms, CD Projekt Red thanks Kandel in the credits of the game, demonstrating the collaboration between the two actors.

CD Projekt Red released W2AoK in 2011 and W3WH in 2015, and as the games gained immense popularity, the other alternatives for "wiedźmin" became essentially eliminated. As for the Turkish context, it can be argued that there had been two poles until the fan translation process started in 2015. In the Turkish translations of the first and second games of the series, the term "witcher" is translated as "efsunger," whereas in the translation of the comics, another alternative, "cadieril," is used. The Turkish term "efsunger" is coined by Düzgün and his team, consisting of the archaic word "efsun" that can be translated as "charm" or "spell" and the ending "-ger," meaning "maker" or "doer." "Cadieril," on the other hand, combines the term "cadı" that can be translated as "witch" with "eril," an adjective meaning "masculine."

Considering the already existing translations of *The Witcher* saga, the fan translators were faced with a single and undisputed term in English as well as two choices in Turkish. To decide how to deal with the term, the fan translators asked the fans on the forum for their opinion, trying to emphasize that the fans' preferences would always be taken into consideration. The answers to this question demonstrate a mixed attitude towards "efsunger," whereas the other alternative is not even taken

into consideration. Various fans praise “efsunger” as a creative equivalent to “witcher” (fitzzgerald, 2016), whereas others claim that as a made-up term, it neither has a strong connotation nor a place in pop culture (Adol125, 2016). The same viewpoint is also defended by one of the fan translators, who argues that “efsunger,” denotes someone who is an expert spellmaker, whereas the main source of the witchers’ power is their skills with the sword instead of spells.

The issue of translating “witcher” is one of the main differences between the official translation and the fan translation. In the official translation, the term “witcher” is translated as “efsunger” into Turkish, whereas in the fan translation, it is left in its English form. By choosing “efsunger,” the official translation keeps a consistent terminology throughout the video games of the saga, as this is the term used in the second game of the series as well. In contrast to this, the fan translators prefer borrowing the term directly from English. Of course, whether the borrowing took place before the fan translators is a valid question, as in our global world where products travel rapidly beyond national and cultural borders, the “foreign” “witcher” can be more familiar or even meaningful than the supposedly native “efsunger.”

4.3 The user interface

4.3.1 The main menu

The main menu is the screen that the user comes across after the game successfully loads. As such, it forms the first stage of the gameplay experience and welcomes the players to the video game. To this date, not much attention has been paid to the importance of main menus in research on video game translation. If main menus are taken into consideration at all, the general assumption is that a style guide is to be followed, meaning that consistency of gaming terminology takes precedence over the

translator's creativity. To illustrate, in her research on *Beyond Good and Evil*, Van Oers (2014, p. 130) leaves out all "non-diegetic" elements that do not add anything to the story and decides to focus on the narrative, as she points out that user-interface texts, including menus, can generally be considered technical texts due to their translation often relying on specific guidelines and principles. Even though this categorization successfully limits the scope of her research, the thesis takes the menus and the "non-diegetic" category as a whole into consideration, as the analysis of these elements might unearth the strategies of the translators by highlighting the differences between the two W3WH translations.

As most video games include a main menu, there are notable similarities in the ways video games use the existing gaming terminology. Alongside the general gaming terminology, a video game developer company may also use a template for the main menus of its video games. In addition, the genre of the video game might also prove to be an influential factor in the shaping of the menu. To illustrate, an indie game can choose to offer a simplistic main menu with a catchy tune that attracts the players, whereas a story-rich fantasy game might utilize its content by featuring the characters as well as the songs in its main menu. Therefore, the translators try to make sure that the main menu, as the central hub, greets the player and allows a smooth initiation process for the video game. In this regard, keeping the consistency of terminology and overcoming the limitations of space are of paramount importance (Wille, 2017). Inconsistent terminology might cause confusion and hamper the interest of the player even before trying out the game, whereas text strings that are clearly incomplete can leave the audience in the dark or give the impression of sloppy work.

4.3.2 The capitalized *I* and *İ* problem

One of the most striking differences between the fan translation and the official translation is the use of the Turkish capital letter *İ*. Unlike many European languages where the dotted lowercase *i* loses the dot in its capitalized form, Turkish is one of the few languages where the *i* retains the dot, as there is a separate *ı* and its capitalized form *I*. Historically, the unique letters of Turkish caused various problems for coding, affecting products that are developed abroad and then brought to Turkey, such as Microsoft Office pieces, mobile phones, and video games. In addition to Turkish having several letters that other European languages do not feature, Turkish letters *ı* and *i* require a modification in terms of case mapping and case sensitivity. In cases where the developers do not pay special attention to the differences of the Turkish alphabet, the app may not be able to display the letters or allow the user to enter text accurately, resulting in frustration or confusion.

Unlike the other characteristically Turkish uppercase letters, such as *Ş*, *Ç*, or *Ğ*, there only appears to be a compatibility problem in the official translation for the letter *İ* in the translations of W3WH. One interesting thing to note is that even though *İ* is displayed without any problems if it is the first letter of a word, it seems to turn into an *I* when this is not the case. This issue is present in the whole game and therefore not limited to the main menu, Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that the formatting and the development of W3WH are not entirely suitable for Turkish.



Figure 1. The main menu in the fan translation



Figure 2. The main menu in the official translation

The fan translation overcomes the difficulty, as the word “İndirilebilir İçerikler” is displayed with all its uppercase *İ* letters without any problems. In the forum, one of the fan translators shared a post on 30th November 2015 and elaborated

on the issue, informing the fans about the problem (yamaci1771, 2015e). He hypothesized that since none of the other official translation languages of W3WH have *İ* it is likely that the way the game has been coded does not support the letter at all, and that it likely could not be solved. In addition, the translator also points out that acquiring the status of the official translation would enable the fan translation team to resolve the issue rapidly by seeking support from the programmers of the game developer company.

On 3rd December 2015, the same translator from the fan translation group shared a new post and announced that he managed to fix the display of uppercase *İ* (yamaci1771, 2015f). By playing with the data of the game, he overcomes the problem and creates one of the most visible differences between the fan translation and the official translation. The fan translator manages to come up with a solution thanks to his individual effort as well as personal freedom to play with the data of the game, even without any help from the developing company. Even though the use of *I* instead of *İ* does not cause confusion regarding the meanings of phrases, it can be stated that it helps the fan translation to have a more professional appearance. Of course, this is partly paradoxical, as the fan translator also believed that the official translation status would be the solution to the problem by securing access to the game developing company.

When the main menus of the fan translation and the official translation are compared, there are not many terminological differences of relevance. One can argue that the fan translators choose to use longer and explanatory terms for the main menu items in contrast to the official translation team, but the difference in length does not seem to be problematic. Nevertheless, there are various exceptions to this where the length of the translation results in an incomplete segment. One example of these

exceptions would be in the settings of the main menu where the player has the option to choose the language of the game. For the option for “Spanish (Latin American), the fan translation uses “İspanyolca (Latin Amerika aksanıyla)” [Spanish (with the accent of Latin America)] but the last two letters are not visible (see Figure 3).

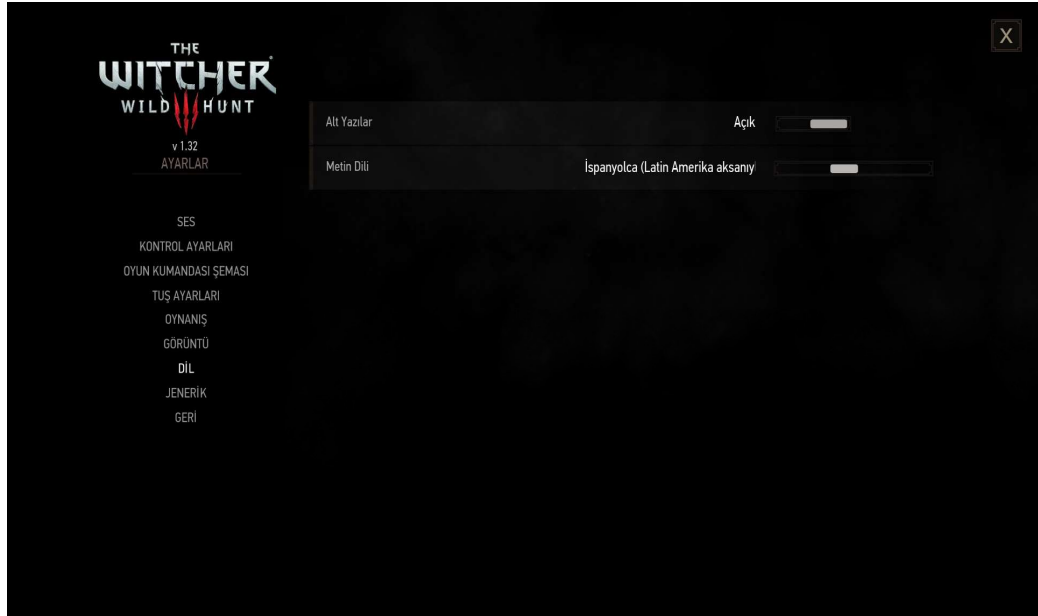


Figure 3. The language selection menu in the fan translation

Figure 4 shows that the official translation does not suffer from the same problem, as it chooses a shorter translation by “İspanyolca (Latin Amerika).” One could also argue that the fan translation’s addition of “aksanıyla” [with the accent of] does not only cause space constraints but also reduces Latin American Spanish to a mere accent instead of a variety of Spanish with pronunciation as well as vocabulary and grammar differences from Peninsular Spanish. Unlike the fan translation’s choice, the shorter version preferred by the official translation avoids the discussion on Spanish language variations and fits the translation into the given space.

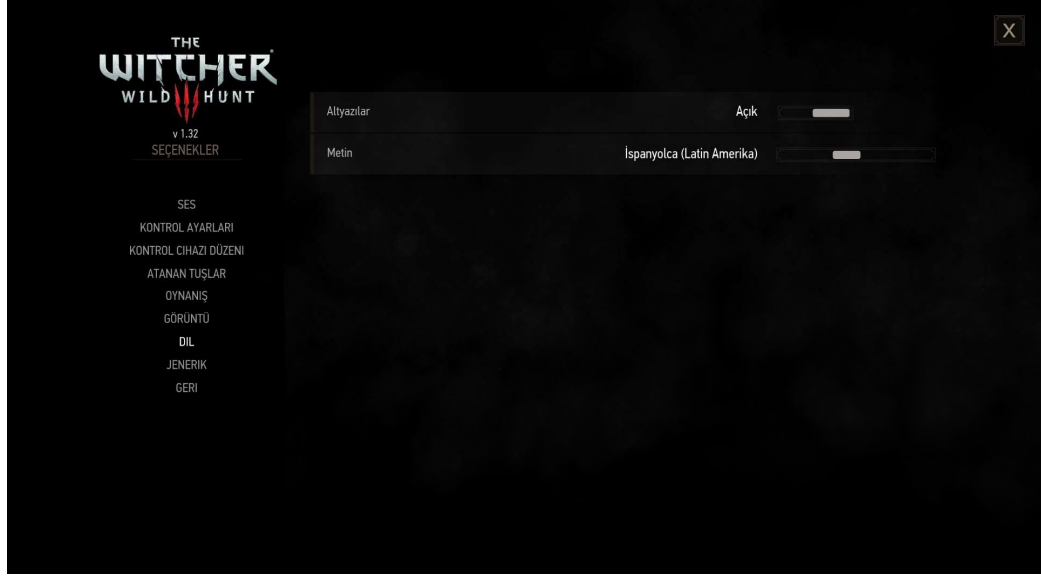


Figure 4. The language selection menu in the official translation

4.3.3 Inconsistencies in using capital letters

In addition to space limitation, capitalization is another issue that creates a difference between the fan translation and the official translation. In the main menu items, the English version has a consistent capitalization system, as the headings for the options themselves are completely capitalized, whereas only the first letter in the text of the individual setting items is capitalized. One can question whether this is relevant for a video game translation criticism, but inconsistencies in this category, similar to all other categories, might change the translation's perception by the players. A seemingly haphazard capitalization practice may cause confusion, resulting in the player needing more time to understand the main menu items and thus delaying the player's journey in the narrative. Figure 5 shows that in the official translation, the English version's strategy of capitalizing the first letter is repeated without any exceptions.



Figure 5. The gameplay settings in the fan translation

Even though the fan translation uses capitalizations in some of the settings, this does not apply to all the words, causing inconsistencies (see Figure 6). It is likely that this is a testing error and will be corrected in the next versions of the fan translation. The impact of capitalization on the gameplay experience is likely to be limited as well, since the player does not advance in the story while checking this menu. While capitalization inconsistencies might be dangerous in the story because of causing reduced readability and decreased immersion, they are not nearly as problematic in the menu. In any case, it can be stated that the official translation looks more organized and systematic regarding orthography in the main menu sections.

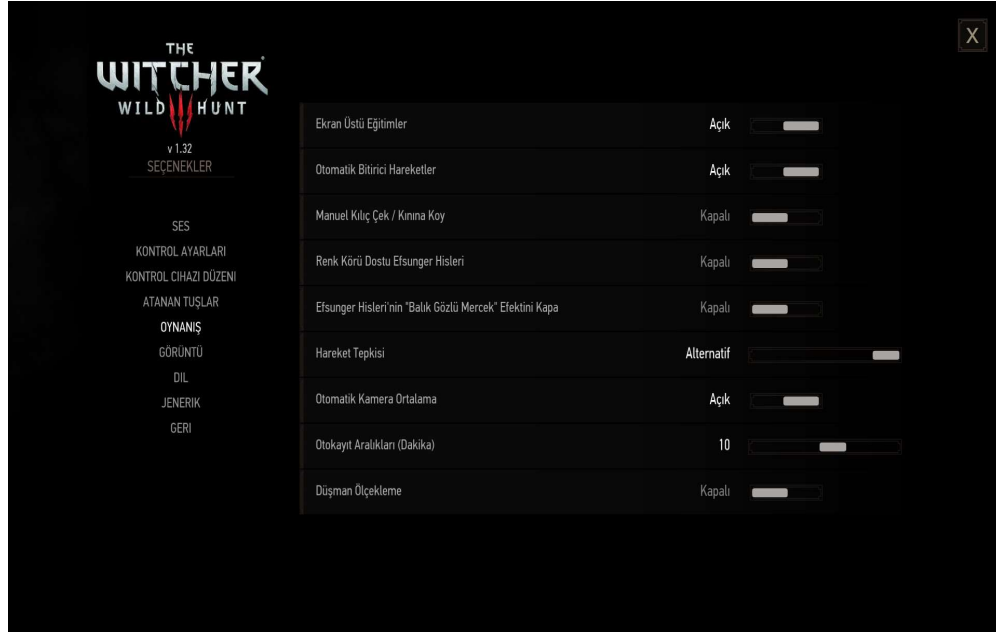


Figure 6. The gameplay settings in the official translation

4.4 The in-game menu and components

Unlike the main menu, which the player comes across at the start of the game, the in-game menu is accessed while playing the game. In order to open the in-game menu, the player typically presses a button, stopping the game action. The in-game menu can consist of various features, including changing the settings, saving the progress of the session, loading an already saved game, seeking help and tutorial information, and if present, viewing the options related to the story and gameplay. An easily accessible in-game menu allows the player to progress in the game and have a break when necessary. In W3WH, other than the generic options that the majority of video games feature, the player also has access to his Gwent deck. Gwent is a card game that the players can play while playing W3WH, and it was also released as a stand-alone video game in 2018.

In addition to the Gwent deck, the player can also check the tutorial section where practical information is offered to facilitate the gameplay experience. Other

items included in the in-game menu are bestiary, character list, books, crafting, alchemy, inventory, world map, quests, character, and meditation. The player can open all these items by using their respective shortcuts, allowing rapid access to the components of the in-game menu. Even though all in-game menu items are taken into consideration for the thesis, a selection of the items and their two translations are offered to the reader, as several issues are not unique to these sections and therefore are applicable to and more visible in other sections. The thesis limits itself to a detailed discussion of bestiary, character list, and books, as the majority of the issues in the other sections are directly applicable to these three categories.

4.4.1 Bestiary

Bestiaries are monster encyclopedias which provide their readers with information regarding creatures' characteristics, origins, and natures (Stang & Trammell, 2020). Even though bestiaries became popular in the Middle Ages, the practice of cataloging real or fictitious creatures can be traced back to Ancient Greece (Baxter, 1998). The purpose of these works is to create a meeting point between the human and the nonhuman, shaped by curiosity as well as bewilderment and fear (Hawhee, 2017). As such, bestiaries were often used for scientific purposes, in particular for zoology and history, with one of the earliest examples being *Natural History* written by Pliny the Elder.

Despite their uses in sciences, bestiaries did not always present the readers factual information, featuring exaggerations and fantastical elements. Their mythical nature is the reason why literary works and video games depicting fantasy worlds commonly utilize bestiaries. The use of bestiaries in video games is by no means a new phenomenon, as numerous classics, such as *Final Fantasy* and *Pokémon* include

a bestiary (Kohler, 2016). It can be argued that bestiaries in video games demonstrate the otherness of the creatures listed, emphasizing their nature as targets for the player (Stang & Trammell, 2020). As bestiaries guide the players in their journey by manifesting in what ways the creatures belong to the video game's world, they form a significant part of the lore.

In W3WH, the bestiary is one of the tools that the player can reach through the in-game menu or directly by a shortcut. It provides the players with comprehensive and detailed information about the monsters they come across. In other words, the bestiary in the video game is strongly tied to the gameplay, since the players only have access to the monsters they have encountered thus far. When the player contacts a monster, the bestiary is updated, and an image of the monster is provided alongside a quote from the game world and background information. If there are any weaknesses of the monster, they are also listed, making it possible for the player to use the most efficient tools in a fight. Lastly, as illustrated in Figure 7, the monsters are categorized instead of a completely alphabetical order to enable easy navigation.



Figure 7. The bestiary entry of noonwraiths

The bestiary is particularly important from a translation point of view, as it contains the names of all the monsters in the video game. Since the protagonist is a witcher who is a well-known professional monster hunter, monsters are a centerpiece of numerous stories in W3WH. Similar to other fantasy writers, Sapkowski used his creativity effectively while describing the monsters in his world, benefiting from numerous languages, mythologies, and cultures. As culture-dependent items, the translation of monster names might have a profound effect on the immersion in the video game. Therefore, it is worth investigating the methods and strategies adopted by both the fan translators and the official translators.

The divergence between the fan translation and the official translation starts at the term bestiary itself. The fan translators choose to translate it as “yaratık ansiklopedisi,” whereas the official translators prefer “yaratık külliyatı.” The official translation combines the dated word “külliyyat,” which means the entirety of an author’s work, with “yaratık” standing for creature, whereas the fan translation uses

the more common “ansiklopedi” [encyclopedia]. It should be noted that the fan translators’ choice has changed two times until the latest version. From a chronological viewpoint, the first translation used by the fan translators was “canavar sözlüğü” which can be translated as a “monster dictionary.” However, with an update, the fan translation started to use the dated term “risale-i mahlukat” [booklet on monsters] which was ultimately scrapped for the newest translation of “yaratık ansiklopedisi.”

It is interesting to see an important term changing three times over a translation’s lifespan. As it was introduced silently, the second change is particularly interesting. After one user realized the first change and questioned it, one of the fan translators explains that with the new translation of “risale-i mahlukat,” the fan translation team is ultimately trying to fill a gap in the fantasy genre terminology in Turkish (_ Witcher_, 2016b). The translator adds that the team is aware of their choice looking “makeshift” and that they are willing to change it if the majority of the fans are not satisfied with it. The fans’ reaction to this translation is mixed, as some fans praise the choice for reflecting the datedness of the era, whereas others prefer a simpler term instead of the archaic choice. The fan translators must have taken the negative criticisms into account as understood by their new and latest attempt. In its current state, the official translation features a dated term in contrast to the fan translation’s modern solution. The journey of bestiary in different fan translation versions provides valuable information about the expectations of the fans. After all, the fan translators’ attempt to contribute to the fantasy genre in Turkish meets resistance from a significant portion of fans who do not want to sacrifice readability for a term that better reflects the medieval atmosphere of the video game.

Monsters have an important place in the fantasy genre in general, but in the case of *The Witcher*, they are an indispensable element of the story. For this reason, the translation of monster names is a challenge that requires certain strategies. It should be noted that a method that applies to all monster names is highly unlikely, as some creatures in *The Witcher* world were created by Sapkowski himself, whereas some others have well-established equivalents in the majority of languages. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify certain tendencies in both translations regarding their priorities while translating monster names.

From a translation point of view, it is possible to analyze the monsters in four categories, with the first category being the monsters that have been translated the same in both translations of W3WH. In this category, there are animals, such as bears, wolves, and dogs; popular monsters from mythologies, including werewolves, basilisks, jinns, golems, elementals, and vampires; and other monsters unique to the story, such as forktails, cockatrices, Wild Hunt hounds, and plague maidens. There are also monster names that have been treated as proper names and therefore left as they are in both translations, with the notable examples being Hagubman and Abaya. This stance is well-justified, as the game does not make it clear whether these names belong to a single monster or are given to a monster that is stronger than its peers.

In addition to the aforementioned groups, both translations have certain creative translation solutions in common as well. To illustrate, “drowner” is translated as “garkolan,” whereas “heyula” is used for “wraith” in the fan translation and the official translation. The former translation comes from the Turkish verb “gark olmak” [to drown], and these monsters are thought to be born when someone drowns and comes back in a different form. The latter translation, “heyula,” comes from Arabic and can be back translated into English as a “terrible ghost.” As these

monsters do not have bodies and terrify the players with their sounds as well as images, the translation conveys the characteristics of these creatures. By choosing these two translations over any other possibilities, both the fan translation and the official translation demonstrate that they have studied the previous games in the series, as both had been used in the official translation of the second game of the series. In other words, the official translation seems to aim at a consistent translation that relates to the previous games of the series, whereas the fan translation diverges from the previous games' translation choices when the fan translators or the majority of the fans do not approve of the choices. In a forum post, one of the fan translators clearly states that the group has benefitted from the official translations of the previous games as well (yamaci1771, 2016).

Despite the same and similar translation choices in both translations, there are numerous monster names that have been translated differently, and these differences can be investigated in various categories. Firstly, there are those monster names that are left as they are in one translation, whereas the other translation offers a Turkish equivalent. To illustrate, the monsters “mourntart” and “imp” are left as they are in the official translation in contrast to the fan translation's choices of “matem cadalozu” and “böcürt” respectively. Mourntart is a special type of grave hag, a common monster in W3WH that belongs to the group of necrophages. It is not clear whether mourntart is the name given to one grave hag that is stronger than the others of its kind, but the strategy of leaving the name as it is indicates that the official translation team has considered it a proper name. After all, both components of the monster's name, “mourn” and “tart,” are English words, and Turkish words could have been used to convey each word's meaning. This is precisely what the fan

translators do; they choose to explain the monster's name by translating "mourn" as "matem" [mourning] and "tart" as "cadalož" [vixen, hag].

The translation of the monster "imp" is similar to the example described; the official translation leaves the word as it is, whereas the fan translation prefers the term "böcürt." Imps are small demons that are common in various fantasy worlds, and even though they might be depicted in different forms, these mischievous creatures are generally small and ugly monsters with a demonic appearance. In W3WH, the player does not even see what an imp looks like, as the monster that is thought to be an imp turns out to be a doppler, or a shapeshifter. On the other hand, the fan translator's choice for imp is "böcürt," which is a term derived from "böcü." As this Turkish word denotes an imaginary ghost-like creature often used to scare children, the fan translation not only creates a new Turkish term for a highly common fantasy element but also indirectly completes the plot of the story, as the imp in the quest turns out to be imaginary.

Another interesting example is the monster "hym," a rare and extremely powerful specter that feeds on its victim's guilt. Hymns are created entirely for W3WH and therefore are not present in any of Sapkowski's works. From an etymological point of view, it is not clear where the word comes from, and as such, the official translation's decision to keep the term but write it according to its pronunciation as "haym" appears as one of the possible solutions. In contrast to "haym," the fan translation prefers to explain the monster's character by choosing "karabasan" [incubus/nightmare]. Similar to the translation of "böcürt," this case also demonstrates that the fan translators aim to enable the player to understand the monsters and their skillset, whereas the official translation reinforces the idea of the W3WH depicting a foreign world that the players explore and find out more about.

This foreignness aspect cannot be formulated as part of a general rule, as there are various other examples that hint at the exact opposite tendency in both translations. To illustrate, the dragon-type monster “wyvern” is left as it is in fan translation, but the official translation conveys it as “ejdersi” that combines “ejder” [dragon] and the suffix “-si” [like]. As such, the official translator team successfully draws a parallel between the appearances of wyverns and dragons, whereas the fan translation considers it a common fantasy element and keeps it in its foreign form, even without changing the spelling. In any case, this example seems to be the only monster name that the fan translation leaves unchanged in contrast to the official translation’s choice of finding a Turkish equivalent. Therefore, it can be argued that both translations aim to use a Turkish term for the monster names, but the fan translation has a higher tendency to achieve it.

The last category of monster names consists of the ones that are conveyed with newly coined Turkish terms in both translations. Even though the number of these monster names is lower in contrast to the similar translation choices, the existence of divergences demonstrates that both groups of translators use their creativity to find solutions that give both translations a unique character. It is precisely this group of monster names that offers the players two perspectives to the *Witcher* universe as well as two distinct gameplay experiences. Four notable examples that have an important role for the plot are dopplers, godlings, botchlings, and foglers.

Dopplers are shapeshifters who can appear in the form of any creature they have encountered, and the name of this monster comes from “double.” Both translations decide to translate “doppler” by using different terms related to appearance. The official translation chooses “suretçi” that combines “suret”

[shape/form] and the suffix “-çi” that denotes a profession or a characteristic of a person, whereas the fan translation decides on “bürüngen,” playing with the word “sürüngen” [reptile] but changing the verb to “bürünmek” [to wrap oneself in]. The idea of the fan translation is conveying dopplers as creatures that wrap themselves in other people’s appearances, and this is an accurate description. Even though it is not well-established, “bürüngen” is a term already used in fantasy works for shapeshifters. In any case, the adoption of the term by the fan translators highlights their openness to playful solutions to the challenge of monster name translation.

The strategy of creating a monster name by taking an already existing word and playing with it to describe the creature is not unique to “bürüngen” in fan translation. Another example of this method is visible in the translation of the monster “fogler.” As is understood from the name, foglers are monsters that appear in fog. These monsters can manipulate the fog to confuse and frighten their targets, and their appearance resembles a skeleton. In the fan translation, these monsters are therefore named “siskelet,” combining the words “sis” [mist] and “iskelet” [skeleton]. This example, similar to the previous one, demonstrates that fan translators use the opportunities to come up with creative solutions by playing with words, resulting in memorable names. In contrast, the official translation follows the structure of the English name and chooses “siscil,” combining the noun “sis” with the suffix “-cil” denoting a creature living in a certain area, in this case mists.

Replicating the structure of the monster name on the word level can be identified as a tendency for monster names in the official translation of W3WH. Botchlings are extremely dangerous monsters that resemble a malformed fetus. After the improper burial of a stillborn baby, an evil spirit occupies the body and attacks pregnant women and their unborn children. This monster’s name in the official

translation is given as “berbatçık,” derived from “berbat” [botch] and the diminutive suffix “-çık.” The structure of the monster’s name in English and the official translation are therefore in parallel to each other. On the other hand, the fan translation names the monster as “alkarısı,” a mythical creature from Turkish folklore that possesses and attacks women who have just given birth. In contrast to the official translation’s strategy to focus on the components that constitute the monster’s name, the fan translation prefers an already existing monster from Turkish mythology. As a matter of fact, botchling from W3WH is derived from “poroniec” from the Slavic mythology, which is a demon in the body of a stillborn fetus. As such, the decision of the fan translators to go back to folklore for an equivalent, albeit a different folklore, results in their translation choice reflecting the mythological roots of the video game and thus drawing a parallel in meaning. It should be noted that the fan translators’ first decision to translate “botchling” as “mel’un,” an archaic word meaning cursed, received criticism from the fans on the forum, resulting in the translators replacing it with “alkarısı.”

It is interesting to note that the exact opposite case is present in the translations as well. In other words, there are monster names that have been translated by an equivalent from the Turkish mythology in the official translation, whereas the fan translation did not follow the same approach. To illustrate, a sylvan is a rare monster with goat-like features that mainly lives in forests and stays away from humans, as humans mistake them for demons due to their horns. The fan translation adapts the spelling to Turkish and chooses to translate the name as “silvan,” whereas the official translation looks for a similar creature in Turkish mythology and comes up with “arçura” [archura], a spirit from the woodlands that can change its appearance. Even though silvans and archuras are different creatures,

they share certain characteristics that make it possible for the official translation to borrow the term from Turkish mythology.

The examples considered in this section demonstrate that the official translation and the fan translation utilized similar strategies but for different monster names. Both translations made use of Turkish mythology, adapted the orthography of Turkish, left the names as they are, or coined new terms. What seems to be unique to the fan translation are the playful translations, such as “bürüngen” and especially “siskelet”, but their number is not high. The bestiary and the translation of each monster’s name unearths the effort that both translator groups devoted to this section. Despite their differences, both translations combine the available translation methods and create a consistent monster volume on monsters.

4.4.2 Character list

Character names are components of a video game that take a serious amount of consideration in the development phase, and as such, the transfer of these elements to another language requires the translators’ creativity (Bernal Merino, 2008). The importance of character names is by no means limited to video games but is highly visible in all types of texts. While discussing genre as a concept, Kaindl (2019) points out that characters are among the categories that constitute the genre of a text. Although the names of the characters are an important factor for the translation process in general, they take an even more central place in a fantasy work, as such works depict a foreign world with its own rules, dynamics, places, and of course, characters. In a fantasy video game, the challenge for the translators when faced with character names then becomes enabling the players to stay immersed in the game while aiming to recognize the message that the names carry.

One factor that separates video games from literary works regarding the character names is the developers' attempts to leave character names unchanged as much as possible in all languages. These attempts of standardization enable players from different backgrounds to engage in discussions on the video game, which is only possible if they can understand and follow the characters and the storyline (Mangiron Hevia, 2007). In their study on video game translation and the translators' creativity in the process, Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006) offer various examples of video game characters whose names are changed for different languages and markets because of the already existing connotations in the target language. As they further highlight, such changes are justified by the freedom of the translators to make any change that they deem necessary, but they nonetheless require the approval of the developers. This is not the case for a fan translation, where the translators do not need the green light of the game developers for any individual translation strategies.

In the two translations of W3WH, the standardization of character names across languages seems to have played a major role, as the majority of the proper names have been left as they are. The names of the main characters as well as of the supporting characters remain identical in English and the two translations into Turkish. It can be argued that this translation strategy accounts for consistency by allowing players to recognize their favorite characters regardless of their language choices, creating a loyal international fan base. Considering that the first game of the series was translated into Turkish by a fan effort, the journey of *The Witcher* characters into Turkish started in their English versions. For this reason, it is not surprising that the English forms are particularly prevalent in the Turkish translations, perhaps even more than Sapkowski's Polish coinages and creations.

Even though the general tendency in both the official translation and the fan translation is to leave the character names as they are, there are several cases that are worth investigating. To illustrate, there are various characters whose names stand for their characteristics. One of the main characters in this category is Dandelion, a close friend of Geralt. Dandelion is a recurring character in *The Witcher* saga, appearing in multiple books and games. As a close friend of Geralt, Dandelion accompanies Geralt on numerous adventures. In addition to being a talented musician, poet, and writer, he also functions as the game's narrator, offering the reader a considerable number of texts that enable the player to progress in the game. Examples of these texts are the bestiary and the character list, which serve as valuable guides for the player. As a result, the commentaries of Dandelion in these sections often feature literary devices that reflect his writing style.

Dandelion is one of the characters who provides comic relief to the game, as his unique personality is often displayed through his sharp sense of humor and quick wit. In the Polish books, this character's name is Jaskier, the Polish word for "buttercup." Even though it is not clear why the flower dandelion is chosen in the English translation of Sapkowski's work, by using the name of a flower, the character's colorful nature is brought to the foreground. As various storylines in the saga demonstrate, Dandelion is a carefree individual whose love for women gets him into trouble, resulting in his life becoming exciting and lively. Dandelion's character is further emphasized by his colorful clothes. Figure 8 shows that even in his image in the characters section, his appearance of a bard in purple clothes is easily recognized by the player.

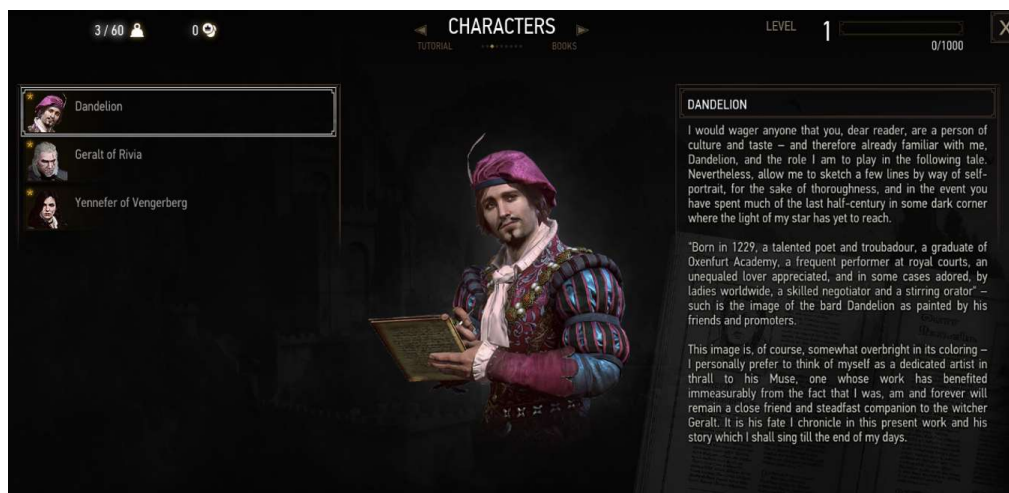


Figure 8. Dandelion's character entry page

Both the fan translation and the official translation keep the name Dandelion as it is, and there are certain arguments in support of this decision. As the Turkish translations of the previous games also choose to preserve the English name, it can be argued that both translations of W3WH aim at consistency. Keeping consistency across the games is especially relevant for the official translation, as various translators from 23 Studios are among the fan translators of the first two games. As for the fan translation of W3WH, keeping Dandelion is in parallel with the translation of various other terms, most notably “witcher.” Even though one fan on the forum implies that translating Dandelion to “Hindiba” [Dandelion] or a similar flower's name would be ridiculous (yusufulas, 2016), this is precisely how the name in English was coined from the Polish word for buttercup. Interestingly, the Netflix adaptation of *The Witcher* leaves the character's Polish name despite the language of the series being English, offering a third strategy.

Numerous characters in the video game have nicknames or aliases that either replace their names completely or accompany them. These additional names contribute to the story by highlighting a particular character's background and

personality. As illustrated in Figure 9, one of the antagonists of W3WH is Cyprian Wiley the younger, who is almost always referred to with his alias “Whoreson Junior.” Junior is a sadistic individual who carries out numerous illegal activities and is therefore one of the most dangerous and notorious people in the story. In this case, Junior’s alias stands for his bad characteristics and disrepute, and the player already has an impression even before coming across him and advancing in the story.

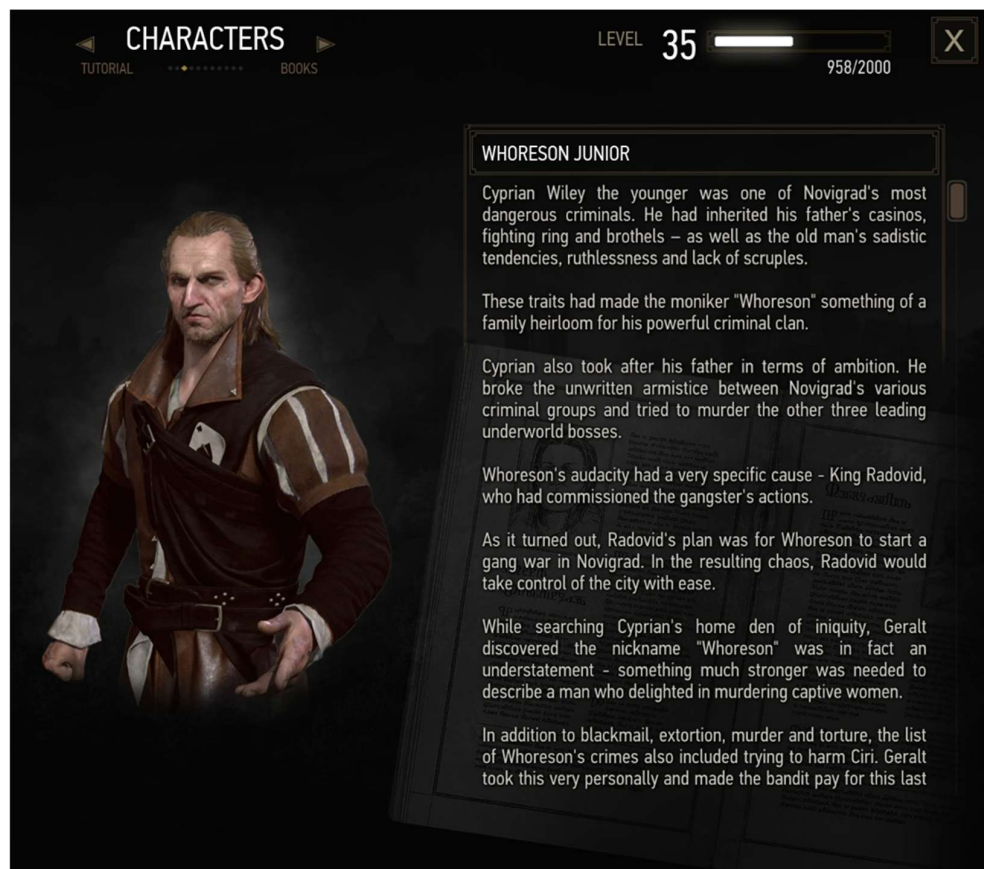


Figure 9. Junior’s character entry page

Junior’s name is translated differently in the two translations of W3WH. The official translation prefers to come up with the Turkish equivalent “Küçük Şerefsiz,” consisting of the adjective “küçük” [little/junior] and an insulting term that can be

translated as “crook.” Even though other back translations are also possible for the pejorative term, the datedness and the literary nature of the English term is not present in this Turkish translation. The translation still manages to capture the character’s vile nature successfully. On the other hand, the fan translation regards the alias as a proper noun and leaves it as the English noun. Through this choice, the fan translators demonstrate that they consider the character’s alias as a proper name that should not be changed for a different language audience. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the character’s real first name, Cyprian, is translated in the character entry page as “Paçoz,” a derogatory and offensive term indicating a person who does not pay attention to his or her looks. In other words, the fan translation leaves the alias unchanged but replaces the proper name with a new Turkish name that fails to reflect the character’s criminal and ruthless side (see Figure 10).



Figure 10. Junior’s character entry page in the fan translation

A similar difference in the translation strategy is visible in the translation of the character Gran, an elderly lady watching over orphaned children living in the swamp. Even though the player does not find out more about this character and her name's origin before progressing in the story, it is not difficult to realize that Gran is the name given to her by the children she takes care of. As the term is an informal way of addressing one's grandmother, the fan translation prefers "Nine," a term used for one's grandmother as well as an elderly lady in general. In contrast to this decision, the official translation leaves the English term, sacrificing a significant part of the character's meaning in the story, as the official translation does not make it clear why the orphaned kids would call a lady who is not related to them Gran.

This loss of meaning is also present in the translation of the name "The Crones," the three witches that the above-mentioned Gran serves to. The Crones are highly sinister beings who appear as three sisters and are known as the Ladies of the Wood. These witches are named Brewess, Weavess, and Whispess and function as one of the main antagonists in the whole video game. It should be noted that the individual names of these witches are based on their features, skills, or appearances. To illustrate, Brewess is seen to be the one who brews the potions and concoctions, whereas Weavess weaves the magical tapestries that the Crones utilize to communicate with others. The last of the Crones, Whispess, gets her name from a legend, which states that she caused a knight to lose his mind and commit suicide by constantly whispering into his ear.

The official translation displays an inconsistent strategy while dealing with the names of the Crones individually. Brewess, Weavess, and Whispess are translated as "Demleyici," "Dokumacı," and "Whispess" respectively, and even though the first two are coined similarly to the English names by combining a verb

and a suffix, the last name is left as it is. On the other hand, the fan translation prefers “Kazancı Hanım,” “Örmeci Hanım,” and “Fısıldayan Hanım.” These translation choices demonstrate the challenge in coming up with an equivalent for the witches’ names. In contrast to the official translation, the fan translation uses their alias, Ladies of the Wood, and combines it with the individual characteristics of the Crones. Therefore, Brewess becomes “The Boiler Lady,” whereas the remaining two are given the names “The Weaver Lady” and “The Whisperer Lady.” By creating a parallel structure, the fan translation conveys the sisterhood of the witches more efficiently than the official translation that fails to highlight the three Crones constituting a whole.

It can be argued that the non-translation of “Whispess” in the official translation is in fact not a deliberate translation choice but a mistake, and this can indeed be true. In the entry page of Brewess, “Whispess” is indeed mentioned as “Fısıltıcı,” preserving the meaning and emphasizing the trio’s inseparability. It is not the critic’s task or intention to turn the analysis into an error identification process. Nevertheless, such occurrences give the critic valuable insight into the quality control mechanisms. The general argument against integrating fan translations into translation criticism research has been the supposed low-quality of the translation product. Activities by fans have been considered as ad-hoc solutions because of the inexistence of an official and “professional” translation. Nevertheless, the monster names and their translations produced by the fan group and the official team show that the strategies are highly similar, albeit applied in different places and to a different degree.

4.4.3 Books

Books are a valuable tool in storytelling and are therefore by no means unique to W3WH. They can be a source of information about the universe in which the game takes place, providing additional details about characters and events. By enlightening the background of the world, books might constitute a significant element of the narrative, filling the gaps of the story as well as introducing new storylines. In addition to their function of forming the lore, they may also guide the player in the quests by providing clues. This help might be in the form of practical guidance as walkthroughs to contribute to the gameplay experience, as without certain hints the player could struggle with complex parts and puzzles, resulting in a loss in the gamer's enthusiasm.

Even though the majority of the books in W3WH are fictional works, this is not the case in all video games. Books are a unique tool for increasing the depth of the game universe, as they can be utilized to blur the line between real and fictional. This is especially true for RPGs where the player's immersion in the game is of paramount importance, as he or she takes the responsibility for the actions of the characters. Adding real and historical elements to the narrative by books is thus a strong and efficient method for ensuring the players' engagement in the game. One notable example from W3WH is the book "The Last Wish," which tells the story of Geralt and Yennefer. It is not difficult to realize the game pays homage to the creator of the saga, Sapkowski, as the name of the book in the game is the same as the first work of the book collection.

The variation in the genre of the books in a video game demonstrates the complexity of translation modes prevalent in the translation of the game. The book section might include poems, journals, letters, songs, or novels as literary works, but

a player can also come across tax reports, court edicts, or even subpoenas in the form of book items in a video game. This variety is highly visible in the case of W3WH as well. In the books section of the in-game menu, the player has access to all the books that are collected, and the books category consists of two sub-chapters. The first part is reserved for quest books that the player can or even must consult to advance in the story, whereas the second part includes books related to the lore. This separation allows the player to differentiate between the necessary sources and the texts that can be consulted when he or she wishes to explore the world further.

One of the elements that is prevalent in the W3WH is the language variety in the world. The game introduces a medieval setting with numerous races and therefore distinct speeches, but the common characteristic between these groups is a general datedness in language. It should be noted that the way Geralt comes across the books in the story is also realistic, as the character is able to collect dusty books from libraries and posts from notice boards in the villages. One of those posts is found in the province Velen and is titled “Appeal to Sir Geralt of Rivia, the Bridge his Crest” (see Figure 11). When Geralt picks up this post, he starts a new quest from the expansion pack *Blood and Wine*.

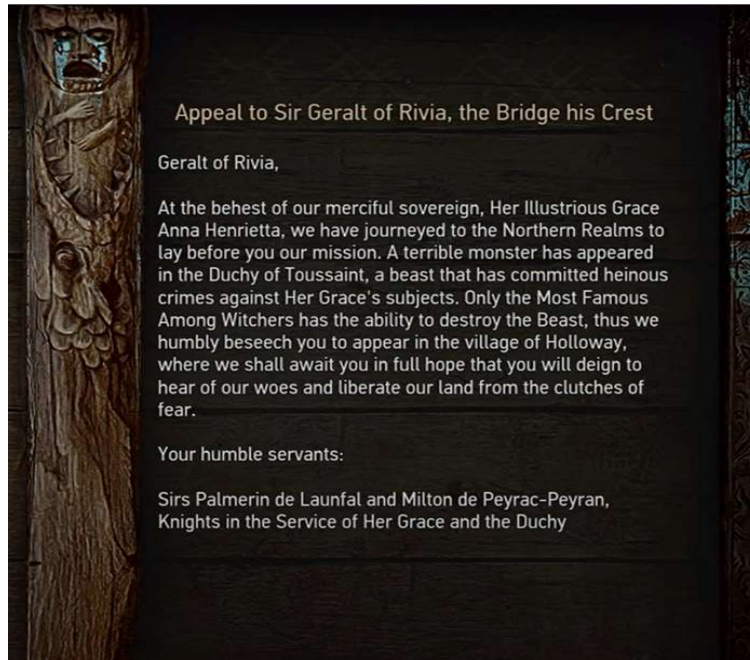


Figure 11. The letter by the knights

The notice is addressed to Geralt and informs him that he is invited to the Duchy of Toussaint, as the witcher's services are requested to eliminate an unnamed and particularly dangerous monster in the area. This text is a successful example that demonstrates the dated language in the world. This appeal is written by two knights in the service of the duchess; therefore, the wording is particularly grandiloquent and formal, as visible by the use of words such as "behest," "to journey," "heinous," and "beseech." The ending of the notice with the phrase "Your humble servants" is another component that contributes to the archaism of the letter, further strengthening the medieval flavor of the game.

The translations of the game also aim to recreate this dated language on the word level. As illustrated in Figure 12, "Her Illustrious Grace Anna Henrietta" is translated as "Düşes Hazretleri Anna Henrietta." The Turkish word for "duchess" is combined with "Hazretleri," a relatively flexible term used for a respected person or

his or her office alongside the official titles, which explains the addition of “Düşes” despite not being stated in the letter in English. The fan translators manage to correctly use the term, as the structure in English could not have been reproduced in the same manner without the addition of the Duchess’s title. Another example is the translation of “appear” as “zuhur etmek,” a visibly literary verb that successfully reflects the setting. One element that distorts the grandiloquent language in the fan translation is the addressing of Geralt by the second person singular form. This is naturally not an issue for English which does not differentiate between the second person singular and plural forms, but for Turkish, this creates a major difference by affecting the respectful and literary tone of the letter. The intention to create a medieval setting can be crippled by inconsistent choices that might not escape the eye of a careful player.

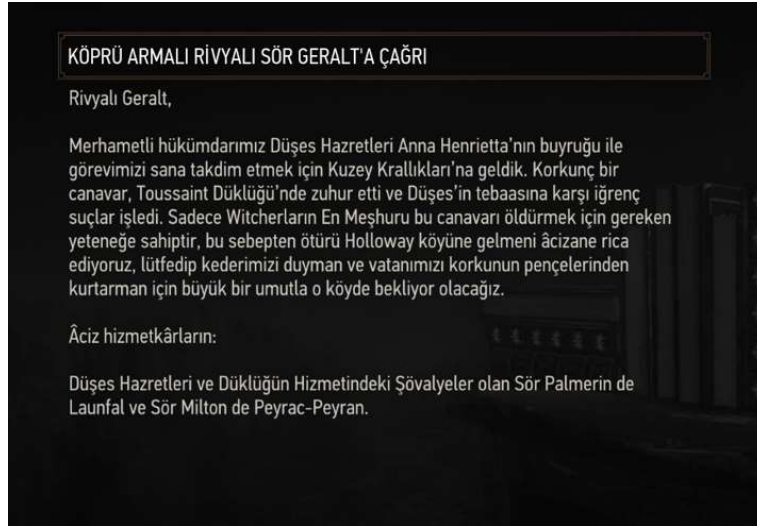


Figure 12. The letter by the knights in the fan translation

The official translation adopts a similar strategy and uses archaic words to depict the feudal world that is marked by an old-fashioned discourse in the eyes of

the player. For the title of Anna Henrietta, the official translation uses “Haşmetmeapları,” a title used for foreign sovereigns in the days of the Ottoman Empire (see Figure 13). In contrast to the choice of the fan translation, “Haşmetmeapları” has entirely disappeared from modern language and thus manages to convey the foreignness and the related mysterious power of the Duchess. It is interesting to note that the word “Beast” is capitalized in the English text, and the official translation also capitalizes the term “Yaratık.” This might seem trivial to the reader at first, but the capital letter comes from the name “The Beast of Beauclair,” which is given to the creature by the folk. Even though the player does not know it at first, capitalization in this case emphasizes the peculiarity of the case. Indeed, the monster in question is a higher vampire, an extremely rare and dangerous type of vampire in W3WH. In the official translation, the attention to capitalization intrigues the player and puts additional stress on the danger presented by the monster.

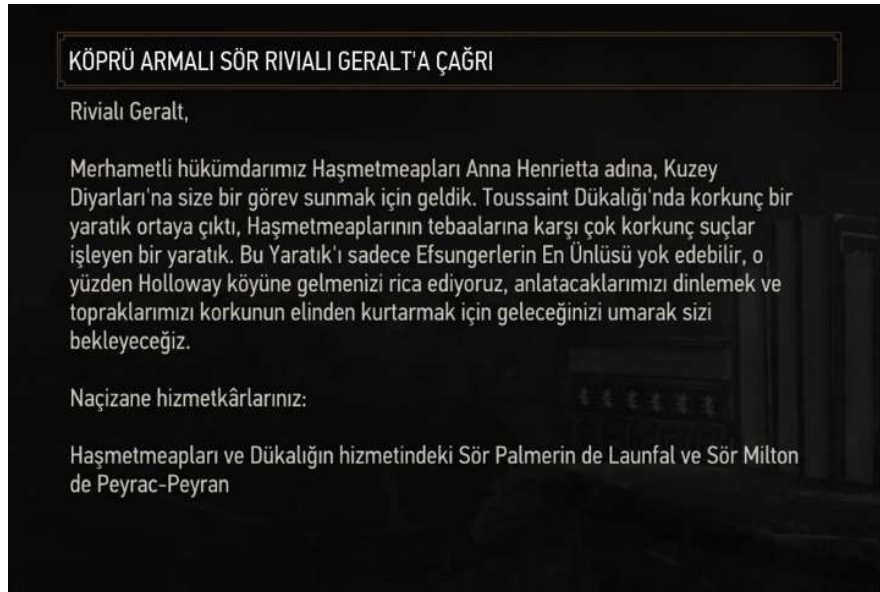


Figure 13. The letter by the knights in the official translation

The game's focus on royalty and political intrigues does not change the fact that the common folk have an important part in the narrative. W3WH's successful depiction of the common people who are also impacted by the game of thrones, wars between the factions, and most notably, monster attacks, can be seen as one of the reasons why the game has a strong fan base. Depicting the Continent with a sense of realism is only possible through the incorporation of the people living in the villages, and the game does a remarkable job in emphasizing the rich texture of the population. Throughout his journey, Geralt comes across numerous people from the common folk, and in addition to these interactions, there are various texts written by them which lack the grandiloquence of the aristocracy.

In the quest *Novigrad, the Closed City*, Geralt investigates a house and finds a letter written by a bandit called Fritz. Figure 14 shows that Fritz addresses his two partners and mentions a treasure that he intends to hide because of the turmoil in the city. Even though not much is known about Fritz and his background, the tone of his letter reveals his lower social status and education level. Fritz uses profane language as well as slang, and the vocabulary and the grammar in the letter is noticeably simple. Even though the translation strategy for this letter might seem straightforward at first, recreating the tone of Fritz as a member of the common folk might involve different considerations of the cultural contexts of both the game itself and the target audience.

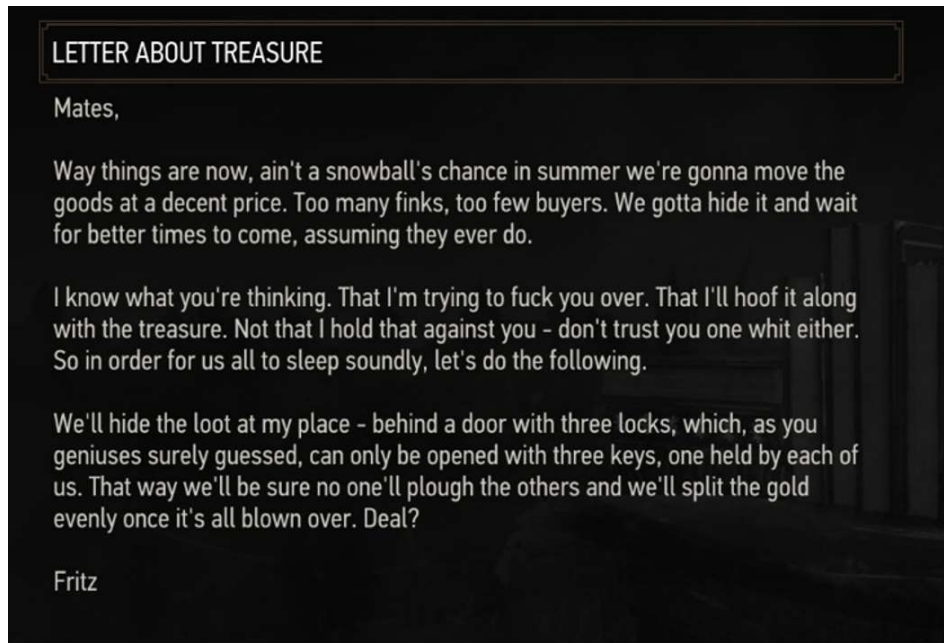


Figure 14. Fritz's letter

Fritz starts his letter with “Way things are now,” omitting the article “the” in the beginning. In the same sentence, he uses the commonly used non-standard contraction “ain’t” as well as the colloquial forms “gonna” and “gotta.” Furthermore, the use of profanity and informal phrases, such as “hoof it along,” brings the letter’s tone closer to a dialogue, since it lacks the refined characteristics that an official text possesses. The directness of the letter is further emphasized by the one word ending “Deal?” that can be perceived as not only casual but abrupt or even rude.

Accordingly, in a more formal mode of communication, such as a letter, the tone used by Fritz would not be accepted and therefore creates a significant difference with the other official writings that the player encounters.

In the two translations of the game, both groups strive to convey the unsophisticated language present in the letter. Nevertheless, the fan translation’s attempts seem to have been limited to the word or phrase level. As illustrated in Figure 15, the profanity phrase in the English letter is translated as “kelek atmak,” an

idiom that falls under the category of slang. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the vulgar tone of the source is softened by this choice, as “kelek atmak” is by no means vulgar. In other words, from the perspective of the meaning, the Turkish phrase successfully conveys trickery and deception, but this efficiency is accomplished by sacrificing the profanity of the source. The element of obscene language use is a topic that has been discussed on the forum as well, and the fan translators repeatedly state that they aim to defend “the originality” of the game in this regard (yamaci1771, 2015a). Even though the importance of profanity as a key characteristic of W3WH can be disputed, the fan translators’ choice is a justified position. However, as this example demonstrates, the fan translation also chooses to weaken the obscenity level in the language in certain places despite their initial goal.

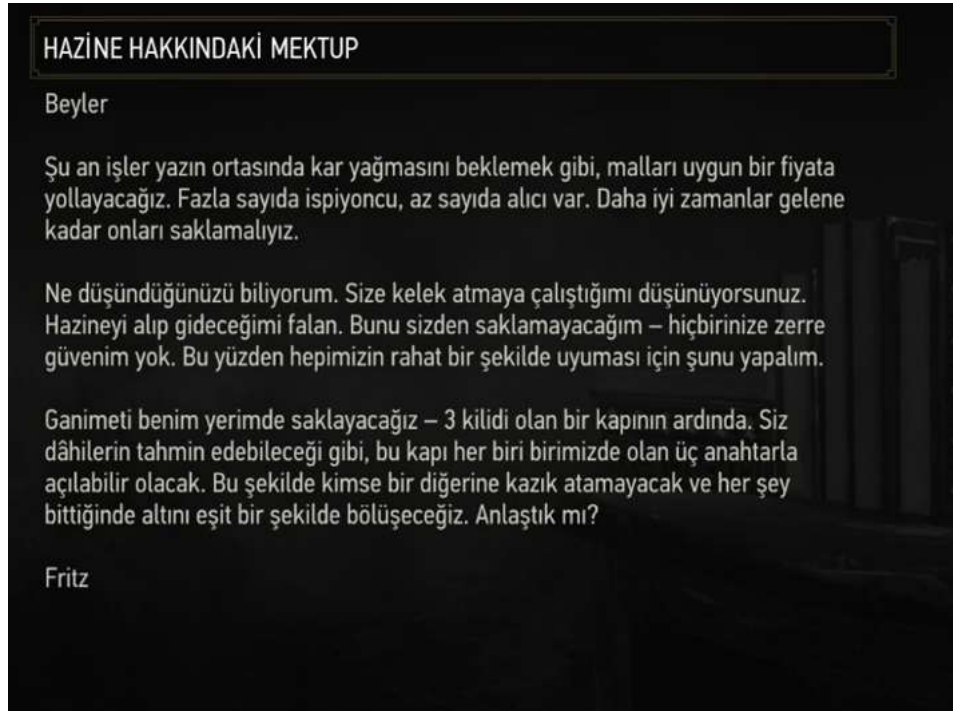


Figure 15. Fritz’s letter in the fan translation

One important element that needs to be taken into consideration is the idiom in the beginning of the letter. Fritz inverts the sentence structure and uses the idiom “a snowball’s chance in summer” for their chances to sell their goods for a satisfying price, and this has a meaning for the story. The player comes across this letter in Novigrad, a city that is suffering from purges initiated by the religious authorities in the city in addition to the raging war that has reached the city’s doorstep. As a result, the letter serves as background information to remind the player about the potential dangers in the quest. It is for these reasons that Fritz suggests storing the goods for some time and looking for customers in case the turmoil ends. As such, Fritz uses the idiom “a snowball’s chance in summer” to describe the severity of the situation in the city. However, the fan translation translates the idiom literally, and then adds that they are going to send the products for a good price, resulting in two contradictory statements. This can be caused by the inverted and nonstandard sentence structure in English, and the translation does not hinder the understanding of the player, but it still might cause confusion and fail to convey the dangerous situation in the city.

In the official translation, the most striking feature of the letter is the standard language use. This is achieved mostly through the lack of incomplete sentence structure. Sentences such as “Too many finks, too few buyers,” or “That I’ll hoof it along with the treasure” are examples that demonstrate how Fritz’s tone draws near to a speaking tone that is marked by breaks in discourse (see Figure 16). The official translation follows a different path and often uses the standard sentence structure. To illustrate, even though both translations turn “Too many finks, too few buyers” into a complete sentence, the official translation takes this strategy further and does the same with “That I’ll hoof it along with the treasure” as well, demonstrating the standardization of language as a translation strategy. This is worth mentioning, as the

fan translation achieves an informal tone by translating the same sentence as “Hazineyi alıp gideceğimi falan.” The use of the term “falan,” which is a common discourse marker used solely in spoken Turkish, distorts the written tone of the letter, which is not the case in the official translation.

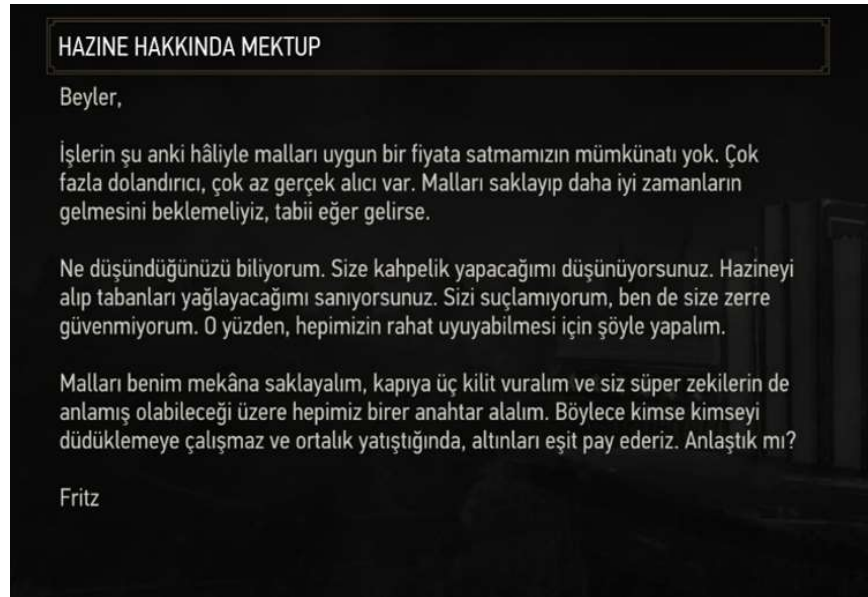


Figure 16. Fritz’s letter in the official translation

Another important difference between the two translations is the use of punctuation marks, most notably dash. Dash is a punctuation mark that is commonly used in English to signal a pause in thought, and in contrast to a semicolon, dashes are less formal ways to connect sentences or phrases. In Turkish, however, dash is not a popular punctuation mark and is used for a different purpose, which is indicating a dialogue in written texts. From an orthographic standpoint, the fan translation’s decision to preserve the dash despite the punctuation rules in Turkish is a mistake. However, this decision is a clear sign for the importance given by the fan translators for preserving the “originality” of the text, at least on a formal and

segment-based level. In contrast to the fan translation, the official translation overcomes the issue of dash in the text by altering the sentence structure and using a comma. Nevertheless, these changes give the letter a standardized character, disregarding the writer's background and language use.

Although the fan translators often legitimize their translation choices by suggesting they aim to retain the “originality” of the game world, there are certain examples that highlight this strategy's compatibility with creative translation solutions. One example that has also been discussed and criticized on the forum is about a note found in the village of Oreton. The player comes across a note with the title “Scriblar Neyded” on the notice board in the village, and this note does not initiate a quest (see Figure 17). In other words, whether the player takes the note does not make a difference in the narrative, as Geralt does not meet the writer of the note, “Willuhs.” This is a short note, and the writer states his wish to find someone who can help him write notices. The entirety of the notice is marked by broken English, notable examples being the use of “o” instead of “of,” the misspelling of “needed” as “neyded” and of “writing” as “ritin.” The contrast between the need for written communication and the writer's poor language skills creates a comical situation that aims to add entertainment value to the game.

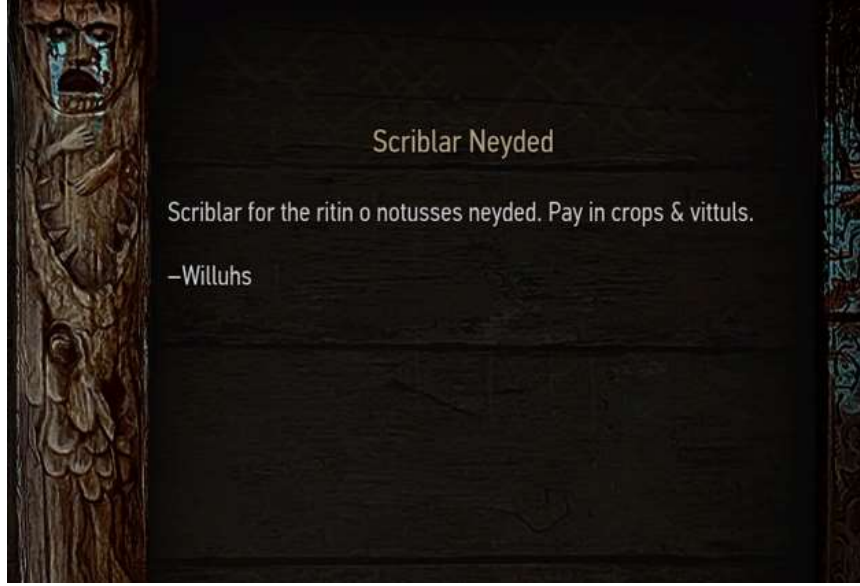


Figure 17. The post written by “Willuhs”

The translation of this note is one of the instances where the fan translation was changed because of the negative feedback from the fans. Figure 18 shows that in the first version, the phrase is translated as “Yazu yazmak için katup lazım ula uşağum. Her türlü anlaşıyoruz.” As one can realize from the excessive use of the letter *u*, the fan translators choose the Black Sea dialect for the broken language present in the note. The Black Sea dialect is arguably one of the most recognizable dialects in Turkish due to its widespread adoption in pop culture, most notably in Temel and Dursun jokes. These jokes portray Laz people as simple-minded and naive, and because of the inherent stereotypes, such jokes can be regarded as culturally sensitive or outright offensive. In any case, the fan translators’ decision to use the Black Sea dialect in this notice creates a connection between the game and Temel and Dursun jokes, which, similar to the notice in the game, usually involve situational humor and wordplay.

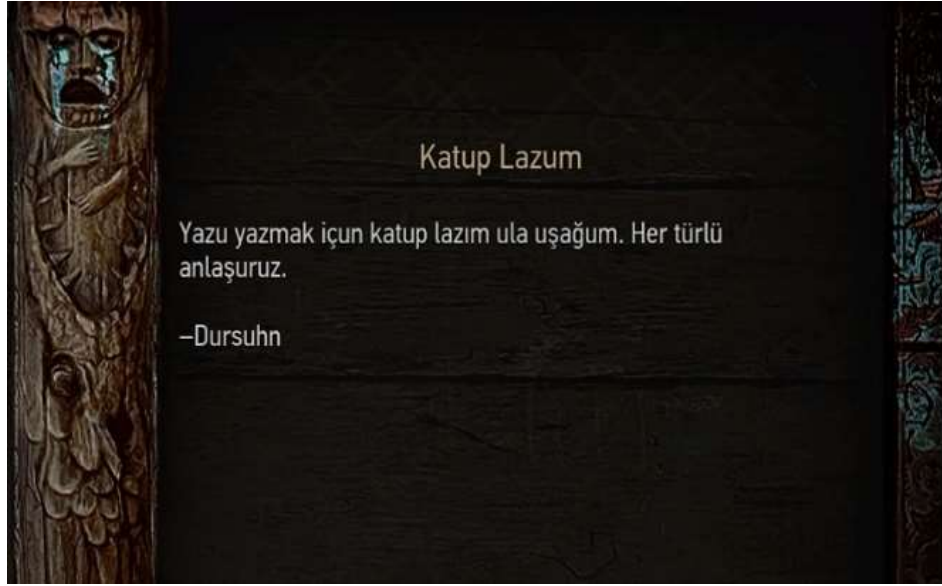


Figure 18. The post written by “Willuhs” in the fan translation before the update

Even though the witty character of the notice as well as the Black Sea dialect are preserved, there is an updated version of the fan translation that omits the word “uşağum.” “Uşağum” is a term of endearment that is used almost solely in the Black Sea region with this particular meaning, and the addition of the term serves as a major indicator for the Black Sea dialect. The decision of the fan translators to use this dialect for the notice has sparked a discussion on the forum, with various fans criticizing the fan translators for being naive for using this translation strategy and hoping for their work to become official (Powered by Plants, 2017). The criticism illustrates that the game universe is considered sacred and any additions from the target culture that distort the foreignness of the game should have no place in the translation. Therefore, the change of the name “Willuhs” to “Dursuhn,” referring to Temel and Dursun jokes, is considered as a grave error in various comments. As illustrated in Figure 19, the fan translators seem to have attempted to find a middle ground between the two camps by deleting the two most visible signs of the Black

Sea connotation, “uşıađum” and the name at the end, “Dursuhn,” despite preserving the more subtle touches. This response from the fan translation group is a striking example of how feedback from the fans has shaped the fan translation.

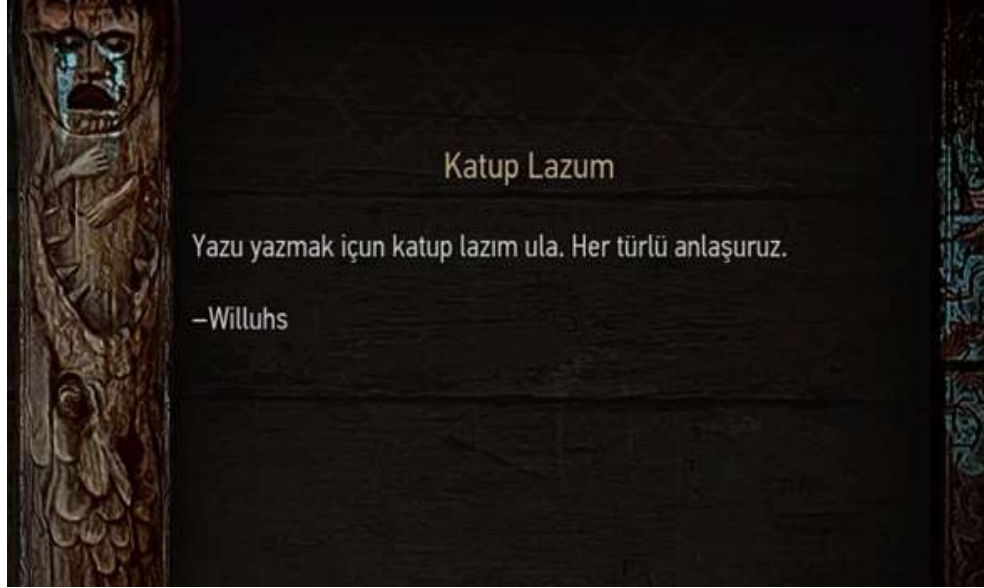


Figure 19. The post written by “Willuhs” in the fan translation after the update

The official translation’s strategy is similar to the fan translation in terms of the use of a dialect to convey the nonstandardness of language. However, the official translation team has chosen a dialect that does not have the rich connotations of the Black Sea dialect. The spelling of “maaş” [wage] as “mayış,” the missing “e” in “ödencek” alongside other word choices hint at an Aegean dialect in the translation, indicating that both translation teams considered dialects as an efficient tool to recreate the nuances present in the source text (see Figure 20). Even though the official translation manages to produce a translation that is characterized by humor, the choice of the Aegean dialect is noteworthy, as it is not featured as prominently as the Black Sea dialect in different forms of entertainment media. As such, it can be

argued that the official translation team has aimed to minimize the connotations of the dialect and applied it to emphasize the humorous tone of the text. On the other hand, the inconsistency in the translation of the term “scriblar” might create confusion for the player, as the translation in the title as “gadib” differs from the use in the notice, “katup.”

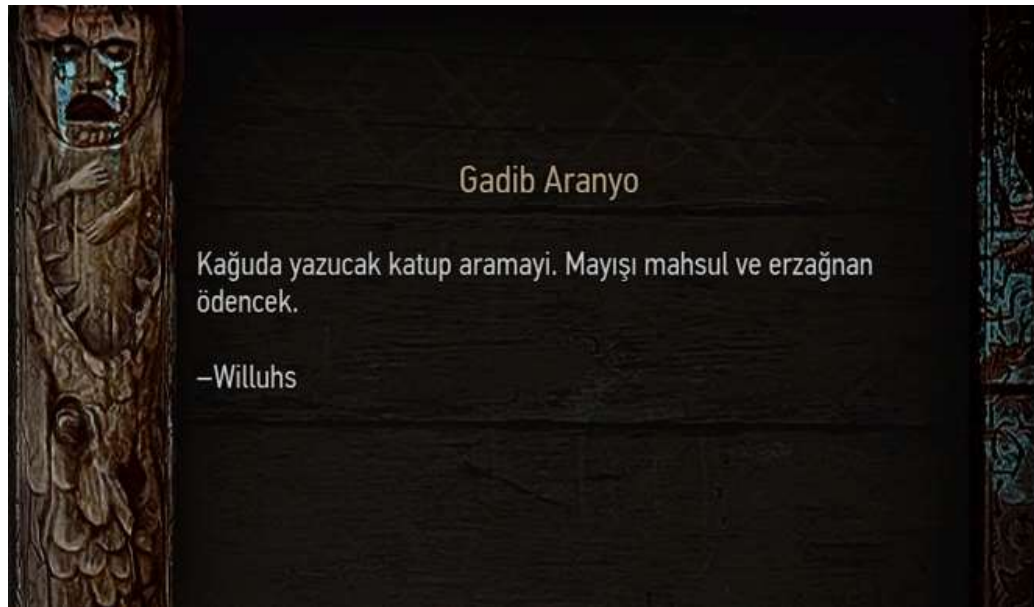


Figure 20. The post written by “Willuhs” in the official translation

4.5 Cutscenes

Cutscenes are “in-game cinematics” that are usually non-interactive (Bernal-Merino, 2013, p. 413), i.e., the player largely has no control over the character’s actions. They can be considered “full-fledged movies” (O’Hagan, 2018, p. 145) and contribute immensely to the development of the characters, allowing the narrative to progress. Cutscenes are also one of the main reasons why video games are considered works of art (Fernández Costales, 2014). However, the reactions of players to cutscenes have been mixed due to their non-interactive nature (Newman, 2004). To illustrate, as

cutscenes are pre-rendered sequences, taking the players' chance to control the characters and putting them in a passive position can be considered "an unwelcome invasion" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith, & Tosca, 2019, p. 226). In any case, many video games that are produced today feature cutscenes, and their role in advancing the narrative cannot be disregarded. There is even a separate game category called "cinematic games" (Newman, 2009, p. 19).

It can definitely be argued that cinematic elements in video games create a similarity between video games and movies, but there are also various significant distinctions to be made. O'Hagan (2007) identifies the purpose of cutscenes as enabling the plot to continue or giving the players a reward for advancing the story up to a certain point in the video game. Nevertheless, Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2019) argue that in addition to those points suggested by O'Hagan (2007), cutscenes can also be a tool to utilize the latest cinema techniques to enrich the gameplay experience of the players. As the graphics in the cutscenes are more advanced than in the gameplay, these scenes are a valuable means to maximize the players' immersion in the game world.

In order to increase the players' engagement with the video game, cutscenes are usually dubbed or subtitled. The use of these two translation modes foregrounds the close connection between video game translation and AVT (Pettini, 2017, p. 36), even though the former typically encompasses a wider variety of translation types, including but not limited to technical, literary, legal, and medical translation. Moreover, the subtitling and dubbing practices in cutscenes usually have a different function and therefore a distinct character than the same modes in movies (O'Hagan, 2007). One particularly noticeable difference in dubbing for cutscenes is that alongside the dubbed speech, intralingual subtitles are offered to the player

(Mangiron & O'Hagan, 2006). On the other hand, the interlingual subtitles in cutscenes in the absence of dubbing generally disappear faster than in a movie, and less attention is given to keeping the semantic units intact (Mangiron & O'Hagan, 2006).

Due to the substantial number of cutscenes and their variety, it is not possible to investigate all or even the majority of the cutscenes in W3WH. However, a translation critic can analyze the specific examples that reflect the characteristics of both the video game and the respective translations in detail. There are numerous scenes that fall under this category, and one category that is worth examining involves the trolls. In W3WH, trolls are giant humanoid creatures that the players come across in several quests. Even though trolls are portrayed as simple-minded, they are capable of communicating with humans or with other trolls, albeit with broken language. The language of the trolls is characterized by grammar mistakes, inverted sentence structure, and mispronunciations. As a result, the translation of the trolls' conversations is a challenge for the translators who are faced with humorous elements that occur due to repeated failures in communication.

One of the quests where Geralt meets and interacts with a troll is *Count Reuven's Treasure*, a main quest that each player must complete before advancing in the story. In this quest, Sigismund Dijkstra asks Geralt for his help to find his lost treasure in exchange for Dijkstra's support for locating Geralt's friend's Dandelion. In the vault where the treasure was stored, Geralt meets the troll Bart, who was assigned by Dijkstra to protect the treasure but failed to achieve this task. Geralt communicates with the troll to gather information about the heist; however, as illustrated in Figure 21, this proves to be a challenging endeavor due to the troll's intellectual capacities.



Figure 21. Dijkstra, Bart, and Bart's way of speaking

The image from the cutscene depicts Bart in the background, visibly upset because of his guilt for failing in his task and disappointing Dijkstra. Bart blames himself and states, "Bart bad... Bart make Sigi lose chorfun," and even a short excerpt such as this offers valuable insight into the language of trolls (see Figure 22). In his first sentence, Bart avoids the verb "to be," which demonstrates his low level of intellect, as "to be" is one of the most commonly used and essential verbs in the English language. In the remaining part of his explanation, Bart uses a present tense verb in an incorrect way, as the incident took place in the past. Moreover, the troll also displays his confusion with the word "fortune," which he fails to comprehend and therefore utters as "chorfun." Even though these mistakes do not hinder communication completely, they constitute a challenge for not only Geralt but also the players themselves.

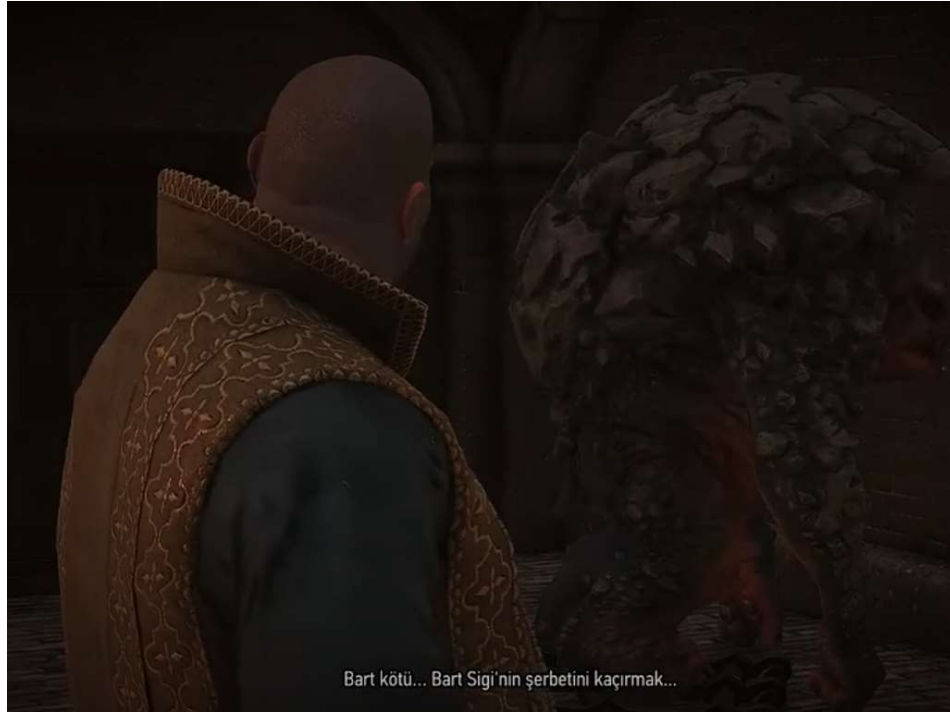


Figure 22. Dijkstra, Bart, and Bart's way of speaking in the fan translation

The two translations of W3WH reflect the simplicity of Bart's language via different strategies. A common characteristic of both translations is the simplified grammatical structure. To illustrate, the fan translation leaves the verb in the second sentence with its infinitive form instead of conjugating it and thus resulting in a broken language. However, the meaning of the verb "kaçırmak" does not suit this context entirely. As mentioned above, Bart is feeling guilty because of failing at his duty to protect the treasure, which explains why he uses the verb "lose" in his sentence. The verb "kaçırmak" preferred by the fan translation indeed has the same meaning, but it is the secondary meaning of the verb. The other meanings of the verb such as "to abduct" or "to steal" distort the meaning and tell a different story, making it possible for the player to be confused with the turn of events. As for "chorfun," the fan translation uses a different method. Instead of inverting the word, the fan translators decide for an unrelated term that is pronounced similarly to the Turkish

word for “fortune,” “servet.” The use of “şerbet” [sherbet] instead of “servet” captures the comedy in the scene, offering an alternative solution to the wordplay in the scene.

The official translation pays attention to the features of the troll language as well, and the simple use of grammar appears as a common strategy for both translations. The way this simplicity is achieved separates the translations from each other. Unlike using the infinitive form of the verb, the official translation utilizes the auxiliary verb “yapmak” (see Figure 23). Alongside the inversion of the Turkish word for “servet,” to “verset,” the official translation creates a tone that resembles a child’s speech. Despite the conjugation of the auxiliary verb in the past tense, the sentences preserve their broken character, as the troll talks about himself in the third person and thus uses the wrong conjugation. In both translations, Bart’s speech successfully entertains the player due to its humor element.



Figure 23. Dijkstra, Bart, and Bart’s way of speaking in the official translation

In addition to being a significant part of the lore, the language use of the trolls is a deliberate attempt to reflect their character as well as intelligence level. For this reason, it can be argued that the consistency of the troll language is one of the numerous distinct components that make up the W3WH experience for the player. The issue of consistency becomes especially relevant for the fan translation because of various other translation choices that might hinder the players' immersion in the game. To illustrate, when Geralt goes to Bart without Dijkstra being present, he asks the troll about what happened to discover more about the break-in. In one scene, after Geralt's comments that the troll might be bored because of his duty to guard the treasure at all times, Bart replies that he spends a lot of his time thinking, to which Geralt mockingly reacts by stating that Bart does not look like a thinker. Figure 24 shows that in the fan translation, the term "thinker" is translated by an archaic word, "mütefekkir." This choice captures the satirical character of Geralt particularly effectively, but Bart uses the same word in his answer as well. This might be a problematic decision, as it is unlikely to expect a troll who fails at uttering the word "servet" properly to understand the archaic "mütefekkir" and pronounce it correctly. The official translation does not follow the same path and prefers a simpler term, "düşünür," and this decision suits the language of the trolls better.



Figure 24. Bart's response to Geralt after he mocks the troll

One of the most famous scenes in W3WH involves the performance of the song “Wolven Storm,” which is also called Priscilla’s song. In his quest to find his daughter Ciri, Geralt discovers that his friend Dandelion is missing. Suspecting that Dandelion’s disappearance cannot be for a good reason, Geralt decides to take action and find his good friend, and in the quest *Broken Flowers*, Geralt listens to the singer Priscilla perform a captivating song. It is no coincidence that the song’s title refers to the alias of Geralt, White Wolf, as the whole song depicts the love story of Geralt and Yennefer. In addition to its emotional lyrics and memorable melody, the song explains to the player how the undying love of both parties came into existence, securing an important spot within the lore. “Wolven Storm” has become an important pop culture material as well. Especially after its inclusion in the W3WH original soundtrack album, numerous artists have produced covers of the song. The song lyrics are as follows:

These scars have long yearned for your tender caress.
 To bind our fortunes, damn what the stars own.
 Rend my heart open, then your love profess.
 A winding, weaving fate to which we both atone
 You flee my dream come the morning.
 Your scent – berries tart, lilac sweet
 To dream of raven locks entwisted, stormy.
 Of violet eyes, glistening as you weep
 The wolf I will follow into the storm.
 To find your heart, its passion displaced
 By ire ever growing, hardening into stone.
 Amidst the cold to hold you in a heated embrace
 You flee my dream come morning.
 Your scent – berries tart, lilac sweet
 To dream of raven locks entwisted, stormy
 Of violet eyes, glistening as you weep
 I know not if fate would have us live as one.
 Or if by love's blind chance we've been bound
 The wish I whispered, when it all began.
 Did it forge a love you might never have found?
 You flee my dream come the morning.
 Your scent -- berries tart, lilac sweet
 To dream of raven locks, stormy
 Of violet eyes, glistening as you weep. (Steam, 2023)

The translation of the song has been a topic of discussion on the fan translation forum, as the beauty and popularity of the song allowed it to reach the Turkish audience even before the release of both translations. In the forum, the first discussion on the song starts on 6th October 2015 when one user posts a YouTube video with his own fan translation of the song, suggesting that it might prove useful for the fan translation group (Legolas777, 2015). As a response, one of the translators thanks the user but dismisses the idea because he states that he has already translated the song and that the suggested translation by the fan disregards various crucial components of the song (yamaci1771, 2015b). Even though the video on YouTube is not available anymore, the criticism directed by the fan translator, albeit harsh, emphasizes his attention to the song's place within the story. Nevertheless, he also acknowledges that he skimmed through the video, which gives his comment a more aggressive tone than he perhaps intended. This aggressive tone reaches its peak

at the end of the comment where the fan translator points out that the translation provided by the fan completely differs from the story in the song.

Another response from the same translator to a different user's suggested translation of the song displays a slightly patronizing attitude as well. On 1st November 2015, a user shared the result of his effort to translate the chorus of the song, and the user indicates that he is not satisfied with the results (George of Kagen, 2015). In any case, the user's attempts to translate the song, even if he considers them futile, demonstrates the motivation of the fans' wish to become involved with the fan translation process. This wish is in parallel with the fan translation group's repeated emphasis on the translation being produced for the fans, as both sides display enthusiasm to work with each other. Nevertheless, the fan translator rejects the suggestion and offers a correction, adding the crude remark that the user "should leave the job to them [fan translation team]" (yamaci1771, 2015c).

The discussions on "Wolven Storm" and its translation successfully highlight the complicated nature of song translation. Even though it would not be accurate to attribute the reaction of a single translator to the whole fan translation group, in a collective project that relies on support from the fans to submit their suggestions or even corrections, the tone of the aforementioned criticisms by the fan translator appears particularly strong. With this in mind, the fan translators themselves had to update their translation of Priscilla's song (see Table 1). A massive translation project that is carried out not for money purposes but out of love for the material at hand can be expected to involve others who want to improve the quality of the work.

Table 1. A Comparison Between the Fan Translation Before and After the Update

The fan translation before update	The fan translation after update
Bu yaralar, şefkatli öpücüklerine hasret kaldı, kaderlerimizin birleşmesi, yıldızlara mı kaldı?	Bu yaralar şefkatli ellerine hasret kaldı, kaderlerimizin birleşmesi, yıldızlara mı kaldı?
Parçalansın o yüreğim ki aşkın içine nüfuz etsin. Bu kaderi ancak biz örer, biz dokuruz.	Parçala yüreğimi, sevgini hissedeyim damarlarımda. Kaçamayız kaderimizden, mecburuz buna
Sabah olunca rüyamı terk ediyorsun. Üzümlü tart, eflatun şekeri kokun burnumda	Sabah olunca terk ettin rüyamı. Leylak ve üzüm kokun burnumda
Simsiyah dalgalı saçların, ağladıkça parıldayan eflatun gözlerin, aklımda.	Unutamıyorum o kapkara dalgalı saçlarını, gözyaşı döktükçe ışıldayan eflatun gözlerini
Özlemimi unutmuş kalbine ulaşmak için fırtınanın sonuna kadar takip edeceğim Kurt'un,	Senin için Kurt, fırtınalara göğüs gererim. Aşkımızı unutmuş kalbine ulaşmaktır niyetim
Kalbinin sertliği, artan öfkesiyle daha da sertleşiyor, onu yumuşatmaya şefkatli kollarım ne güne duruyor?	Öfkelendikçe taşlaşıyor yüreğin. Bırak kendini şefkatli kollarıma ki yumuşasın
Kaderin birlikte yaşamamıza izin vermeyeceğini biliyordum, ancak aşkın kör talihiyle birbirimize bağlı kalabilirdik	Kaderin birlikte yaşamamıza izin vermeyeceğini biliyordum, ancak aşkın kör talihiyle birbirimize bağlı kalabilirdik
Her şeyi başlatan, kulaklarına fısıldadığım o dilek, asla bulamayacağın bir aşkı mı yarattı?	Her şeyi başlatan, kulaklarına fısıldadığım o dilek, asla bulamayacağın bir aşkı mı yarattı?

The updated song features various changes, and there are several minor changes, such as inverting the sentence structure or preferring a synonym over the previous choice. However, one of the changes can be considered as a major one. The chorus describes the scent of Yennefer as “berries tart lilac sweet,” and this description is one of the first things that players come across after starting the game. Throughout his journey to find Yennefer, Geralt describes his lover often as wearing black clothes and smelling of lilac and gooseberries. *Lilac and Gooseberries* is also the second main quest of the game, following the tutorial. As such, the player immediately recognizes the protagonists of the love story in the song to be Geralt and Yennefer. It is therefore no coincidence that the camera immediately jumps to Geralt when Priscilla utters the word “berry” in the chorus (see Figure 25).



Figure 25. Geralt recognizing his own love story in the song

The fan translation before the update describes the scent in a different way by suggesting “Üzümlü tart, eflatun şekeri” [grape tart, violet candy], and this choice is questionable. The translation of the scent can be challenged not for describing a different scent but for causing an inconsistency in the story. The fan translators are

consistent with their translation of the trademark scent up until this point in the story, and they depict the way Yennefer smells as “leylak ve bektaşı üzümü,” which is a literal translation of the English phrase (see Figure 26). However, this being the case, the chorus of the song loses one of its most striking connotations, failing to create a connection between Geralt and the performance. This missing component seems to have been realized by the fan translation team as well, as they change the phrase to “leylak ve üzüm.” In its updated form, the chorus manages to indicate the characters of the love story without any inconsistencies.



Figure 26. Geralt describing Yennefer’s scent while searching for her

The official translation group translates the song in a more poetic way, and this is achieved largely by the inverted sentence structure. As a matter of fact, all the stanzas in the official translation are written in an inverted way. It is difficult to determine whether the official translation overuses this technique, as the English song utilizes it as well. An example for this strategy would be the stanza “The wolf I

will follow into the storm,” adding emphasis to the alias of Geralt as well as contributing to the song’s literary style. As for the scent of Yennefer, the part of the chorus is translated as “Tenin mayhoş böğürtlen ve leylak koktuğundan,” [because your skin smells of tart blackberries and lilacs]. It is interesting to note that the same inconsistency issue that was present in fan translation before the update can be observed here as well, albeit partly. Even though the official translation, similar to the fan translation, describes Yennefer’s scent with the literal translation “leylak ve bektaşı üzümü,” the type of the fruit is slightly changed. However, since the flower’s name is still the same, this slight change does not cause a visible inconsistency. The song in the official translation is presented as followed:

Bu yaralar ne zamandır narin dokunuşuna hasret.
Sönsün tüm yıldızlar, ömrümüzü bir etmeyen
Kalbimi aç bak, sar onu aşkınla fethet.
Bağlasın bizi kader, cilvesi bitmek bilmeyen
Çekip gittin rüyalarımdaya gün doğduğunda.
Tenin mayhoş böğürtlen ve leylak koktuğundan
Rüyalarımdaya gamlı kuzgunlar, fırtınalar olduğundan.
Ela gözlerini görüyorum, ağladıkça parıldayıp durduğunda
Sürüyorum kurdun izini fırtınada.
Bulmak için aşk mahrumu kalbini tam ardında.
Öfkeyle büyüyor, taş kesiyor oluruna.
Sıcacık kalbine sarılıyorum soğukun tam alnında
Çekip gittin rüyalarımdaya gün doğduğunda.
Tenin mayhoş böğürtlen ve leylak koktuğundan
Rüyalarımdaya gamlı kuzgunlar, fırtınalar olduğundan.
Ela gözlerini görüyorum, ağladıkça parıldayıp durduğunda
Bilmem izin verir mi kader kavuşmamıza.
Yoksa kor talihin diyeceği mi var bir olmamıza?
Bir dilek tuttum, tüm bunlar başladığında.
Dileğim yitik bir aşkı mı körükledi imkânsızken tadılmaya?
Çekip gittin rüyalarımdaya gün doğduğunda.
Tenin mayhoş böğürtlen ve leylak koktuğundan
Rüyalarımdaya gamlı kuzgunlar, fırtınalar olduğundan.
Ela gözlerini görüyorum, ağladıkça parıldayıp durduğunda. (Steam, 2023)

In conclusion, “Wolven Storm” is one of the most popular parts of W3WH, and its translation demonstrates the challenges of song translation. The song connects to the storyline while pleasing the player thanks to its lyrical depth, emotional

resonance, and its singer's vocal performance. The analysis of the song's translations into Turkish highlight that the fan translators needed to update the song, and one notable difference between the two versions is the description of Yennefer's scent. The striking feature of the official translation is the creation of poetic effect through the use of inverted sentence structure and a rhyme scheme. Both translations manage to convey the meaning of the song for the narrative and transfer the esthetic character of it into Turkish.

In the main quest *The Beast of White Orchard*, Geralt and his witcher friend Vesemir are asked to complete a contract and hunt a griffin in exchange for information about Yennefer's location. During this quest, Geralt tracks the griffin and locates its nest, where he comes across a dead griffin. As illustrated in Figure 27, the player carries out an autopsy of the griffin to find out more about how to hunt its mate. In this sequence, there are no dialogue options for the player to determine the outcome of the process. Nevertheless, the players can choose which information they receive as well as listening to the monologue more than once.



Figure 27. Geralt investigating the griffin's corpse

Although there are not many differences between the two translations in this section, this case is still relevant because it demonstrates the importance of multimodality for video games. As griffins are monsters that have the body of a lion and the head of an eagle, this section features a list of terms from bird anatomy. A player doing this quest in English comes across numerous words, such as “shaft,” “beak,” “coat,” “claws,” and “barb.” The presence of such terms highlights the variety of expertise that can be necessary for the translator to display, but multimodality may also offer a certain degree of comfort. To illustrate, while identifying the age of the griffin, Geralt is able to reach a conclusion thanks to the color of the hairs in the griffin’s coat. The fan translation uses “post” [coat] while discussing the griffin’s body, and the camera immediately shows the player the griffin’s corpse (see Figure 28). This allows the player to follow what is being stated in an easier way.



Figure 28. Geralt investigating the griffin’s corpse in the fan translation

In contrast to the fan translation, the official translation prefers the term “kürk” [fur] for “coat” (see Figure 29), which is not accurate from a zoological point of view, as eagles have feathers, whereas lions have manes. Nevertheless, the visual element in the scene enables the player to follow the scene without any confusion. With the griffin’s corpse also displayed during the autopsy, the player is given information via different modes.



Figure 29. Geralt investigating the griffin’s corpse in the official translation

This example underlines the importance of multimodality and the role it plays in video game translation. The official translation’s choice is not accurate due to the body of the griffin, but the verbal element is featured alongside the visual, which prevents confusion. As the griffin’s body or the body part that is relevant for the category is displayed, the information that the player receives is provided through different modes, which makes up for any translation decisions that can be challenged. Therefore, the presence of different modes constitutes an integral part of the critic’s analysis.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I offered a video game translation criticism model that attempts to integrate all the components of a video game in the analysis. To this end, I investigated the renowned video game W3WH and its official translation and the fan translation into Turkish. I examined how the translations came into being, shedding light on the translation processes as witnessed by the fans. Moreover, I attempted to explore the translation strategies of the respective translation teams, identifying common points as well as divergences. In this regard, the video game was treated as a multimodal text, and the translations were accordingly studied with the video game's multimodal character in mind.

In Chapter 2, I introduced the theoretical framework and methodology of the thesis, starting with a discussion on the use of “translation” for the transfer of video games into other languages. “Translation” is preferred to the widely used “localization” to emphasize the former term's sophisticated nature and inclusiveness, building upon the concept of “translation of multimedia interactive entertainment software” (Bernal-Merino, 2013, 141). After challenging “localization” as the dominant term to describe video game translation processes, I offered a discussion on translation criticism and its development within Translation Studies. Although the translation criticism model used in this thesis is mainly influenced by the work on Reiss (1971) and Berman (1995), the ideas of other scholars who have shaped translation criticism, including Nida (1964), Popovič (1973; 1975a; 1975b; 1976), and van den Broeck (1985) are analyzed as well. The video game translation criticism used in this thesis is built on the perspectives and suggestions of the

abovementioned scholars as well as Kaindl's (2013) studies on multimodality, in particular on his "multimodal conception of translation" (p. 49).

In Chapter 3, I analyzed the historical background of *The Witcher* saga, with a particular emphasis on the books and the video games. In this regard, Sapkowski is considered not only the creator of the saga but also a key figure whose influence reaches beyond the literary works. As Sapkowski's books and their journey to other languages provide the foundation of the video games, I aimed at a deeper understanding of the W3WH by focusing on the author's background. Further, Sapkowski's importance as a fantasy writer is emphasized, as regardless of the media, works of *The Witcher* saga display the characteristics of the fantasy genre. Lastly, I visited the development stages of W3WH and followed the process chronologically, discussing the reasons for the popularity of the video game. I argue that the video game has managed to remain in-demand thanks to its engaging storylines, relatable characters, advanced control mechanics, and later updates.

In Chapter 4, I carried out the video game translation criticism of W3WH in English and its two translations in Turkish. This criticism was in the form of a comparative analysis that investigates the translation strategies of the respective translation groups. In this criticism, I attempted not to give priority to a single translation, as the purpose of the analysis was not to evaluate but to describe, question, and understand. The task of evaluating the translations is reserved for the fans, and in this regard, it can be argued that both translations have survived the test of time. Even though the official translation has largely superseded the fan translation due to the former being available to all players once they purchase the game, the fan translation topic on the forum is still alive and active. The fact that there are still discussions on the fan translation as well as requests for the translators

to translate the latest next-gen update is the clearest sign of fan translation's success in bonding with the fans and creating a loyal base.

The translation criticism started by discussing the background information on the two translations. The focus here is on the fan translation, as the fan translators managed to involve the fans on the forum, making it possible to follow the translators' steps after each progress update. Such a detailed step by step analysis was not possible for the official translation. Although there were corrections and updates to the official translation, they were not caused by fan reactions. In other words, the involvement of the fans was non-existent for the official translation, whereas the fan translators not only consulted the fans during the translation process but also asked them to engage in discussions and make corrections after the launch of their translation.

The translation of the coined term "witcher" was analyzed as a significant difference between the official translation and the fan translation. This discussion involved the term's origin in the literary works of Sapkowski, other suggestions for "witcher" in Turkish, and how "witcher" came into being in the first place. As the criticism demonstrated, the strategy of preferring the English terms can be considered a slight tendency in the fan translation. Even though "witcher" is the most striking example of this method, there are various other proper names that the fan translation leaves unchanged despite the official translation's decisions to use Turkish words. This tendency is worth noting, as it indicates the fan translators' slight preference for English terms in their translation.

I carried out the criticism by focusing on the video game components, starting with the main menu. Main menus are largely overlooked in the analysis of a video game and its translation, as they are considered uninteresting due to their technical

character. This might generally be true, but as the first screen that greets the player, the main menu marks the starting point for the player's immersion in the video game. For the official translation, the main menu also marks the first place where the player comes across the capitalized *I* and *Ī* problem. The fan translators found a way around the problem by changing the format of the letters, applying an ad-hoc solution that managed to solve the problem permanently. In this particular case, the freedom of the fan translators allowed them to change the game data, which would be out of the question for the official translation team. It is also interesting to note that the fan translators mentioned formatting issues as a potential problem that can most easily be solved by achieving the status of the official translation. In this case, it was not the support from the development company but the translators' creativity as well as their liberty to play with the game data that solved the problem.

Despite providing a solution to the capitalized *I* and *Ī* problem, the fan translation features numerous inconsistencies in capitalization. This might hint at the tendency of the quality control mechanism driven by the fans to overlook issues about formatting, as long as the player is able to understand the instructions and navigate through the menu. The official translation, on the other hand, demonstrates a method that applies to all the items in the main menu. The success in creating a consistent translation with regard to capitalization indicates the presence of a style guide and a functioning quality control mechanism.

As for the in-game menu sections, the categories that I investigated are bestiary, character list, and books. One can criticize the exclusion of the remaining categories as preventing the criticism from analyzing the entirety of the video game, but it is the task of the critic to evaluate the sections and choose the ones that are most relevant for a translation criticism. Bestiary, character list, and books offer us a

fruitful discussion, and the criticism prioritized these categories due to their prevalence as categories of fantasy genre analyses. Therefore, the translation criticism considers W3WH not only as an RPG but also a multimodal work from the fantasy genre. Moreover, the issues described in these categories largely encompass the ones from the other sections.

In all the sections from the in-game menu that were discussed in this thesis, there are certain similarities regarding translation strategies. To illustrate, both translation teams made use of Turkish mythology while translating monster names, and there are instances where the teams coined new terms. Although the strategies are similar, it is not possible to detect a trend, as the translation groups did not predominantly follow a unified approach while translating. One point that is unique to the fan translation is the change of terms after receiving negative criticism from the fans. The updates for the official translation are for correction purposes, whereas the fan translators discussed their translations and explained their reasoning. In cases where the majority of the fans were not happy with a certain term, it was replaced by a different one to appease the fans.

The last category that I investigated in the criticism involved cutscenes. Cutscenes prominently display the strong multimodal character of video games, and they emphasize video games' place in AVT. Due to W3WH's long and complex storyline, the number of cutscenes that can be analyzed is virtually unlimited. For this thesis, I focused on one cutscene sequence that depicts the troll language, another one that features a song, and one that shows the autopsy of a griffin. As for the troll language, both translation teams managed to convey its simplicity, succeeding in recreating the humor inherent in the video game. Both translations use different methods to convey the language of the trolls, and this demonstrates the

existence of a variety of strategies that the translators can choose from. In the case of the song, it becomes evident that the two translations devoted considerable effort to the numerous elements that give the song prominence in the story. Both teams attempted to translate the song by taking its literary language as well as significance for the overall narrative into consideration. One striking feature in the fan translation is the decision to change and update their choices according to the criticism they receive from the fans. The translation of the cutscene that shows the autopsy, on the other hand, highlights the importance of multimodal elements in the translation of the video game, as the visual mode may make up for any misunderstandings resulting from translation choices.

Four research questions were answered in the study through a comparative and systematical video game translation criticism. The first research question regarding the impact of multimodal elements on the translation of video games is answered by an analysis of the different sections in W3WH. Each category that was considered in the criticism highlights a combination of different modes in meaning-making, starting from the main menu. These modes and their interaction with each other are significant for not only the player but also the translators. The translation choices of the two groups demonstrated the attention paid by them to the interactive and non-verbal elements that create the gaming experience for the player.

The second research question regarding the differences between the translation groups' strategies was answered mainly by the textual analysis component of the translation criticism. There are notable perspective differences that the criticism managed to bring to the foreground, the most visible one being the translation of the term "witcher." Nevertheless, it is difficult to generalize the strategies of the groups, as similar approaches were adopted for several challenges,

such as monster names, proper names, and varieties in language use. The updates of the fan translation showed fan translators' readiness to listen to the fans' feedback, which resulted in the removal of innovative solutions. The updates that modified the official translation were for correction purposes rather than offering an alternative to appease the fans. On the other hand, the fan translators' freedom to change the game data gave them the opportunity to reach solutions that the official translation group could not achieve, such as the capitalized letter *I* and *I* issue.

The third research question regarding the influence of the saga on the respective translations was answered by revisiting the preceding works as well as the influence of the previous games. Emphasis was placed on the literary works, as they are the starting point of the saga. The discussions on the forum showed that the fan translators consulted Sapkowski's work in especially disputed topics, such as the translation of the term "witcher" and monster names. In other words, the fan translators viewed W3WH as a part of the lore. In contrast to this approach, the official translation team limited the influence of Sapkowski's work on their translation strategies. The official translation team displayed a consistent attitude with their work on the previous titles, utilizing the translation choices that had been used previously. The fan translation challenged various suggestions from the previous games and offered alternatives, but this strategy was legitimized by highlighting the choices where they agreed with the previous games. The fan translation thus confronts the translations of the previous games and embraces them at the same time, attempting to establish a middle ground.

The fourth research question regarding the coexistence of both translations was answered by the translation criticism carried out in the study. Both translations have their fan bases that support one translation team's choices and criticize the other

side. The announcement of the official translation caused an uproar among the fans active on the forum who were not content with the developer's attempts to hide the ongoing official translation process. As a result, the fans who had started to use the fan translation took a negative attitude towards the official translation. Despite the official translation team's moderate language in their statements, the disappointment of the fan translators as well as the fans supporting them formed two camps with hard-line views. Although there are certain highly visible differences between the two translations in terms of the translation strategies, the division between the two camps is largely emotional, with the fan translators considering themselves the victims. The two works are able to coexist despite the discrepancy in the respective teams' self-depiction. Although the fan translators criticize 23 Studios and their work for numerous translation decisions, several fans challenge the fan translators as well, referring to the fan translators' complaints about 23 Studios and accusing them of carrying out exactly what they criticize.

There are certain limitations to my study that are worth mentioning. Firstly, even though a translation criticism focuses on a single work and its translations, this brings up the issue of generalizability of the findings. Criticizing other video games and their translations would prove useful to compare the results and analyze other contexts as well as genres. As such, it should be acknowledged that my study serves as an introduction to integrate translation criticism into video game translation research. Naturally, research on other video games and genres might benefit from diverse theoretical frameworks, both within and outside translation criticism theory. However, multimodality serves as a fruitful point of departure for the analysis of video game translations, and the case of W3WH is unique in the sense that it offers two translations into the same language.

Another limitation of the study is the time and space constraints inherent in a video game translation criticism. Especially in a video game such as W3WH, it is virtually impossible to offer a discussion on all the translation choices. The logical choice in this case seems to be focusing on a specific part of a feature of the video game, but it was the goal of my criticism to consider sections that are mostly disregarded, such as the main menu, to offer a holistic analysis. Therefore, the thesis attempted to select a smaller number of texts that provide a meaningful representation of the translators' strategies and preferences.

Further research on video game translation can focus on different video games by departing from other theoretical bases. The central point of my research was W3WH and its translations into Turkish as multimodal texts, which is why the participants in the processes and the perception of the translations were involved in the study via secondary sources. The use of the forum and online contributions can be criticized for not being representative of all the people who worked on or consumed the translation product. Nevertheless, the forum is chosen as the channel through which the fan translators connected with the fans, and even 23 Studios posted on the forum to explain its side of the translation story of W3WH. The use of the forum and the Internet for the analysis is therefore a justified position, but further interviews, surveys, or questionnaires can be conducted to reach a larger sample and collect more diverse perspectives.

Sarıgül (2020) studied the localization process in the official translation of W3WH and the fan translation of Dota 2, and my study both complements and challenges his findings. To illustrate, Sarıgül's (2020) arguments for the less hierarchical structure of the fan translator groups and the feedback mechanism through the fans appear to be applicable for the fan translators of W3WH. However,

his finding on the fan translation limiting itself to the players' expectations in contrast to the official translators' tendency to come up with novel translations and methods is not entirely in line with the present findings. The fan translators' choice to preserve the term "witcher" in its English form supports Sarigül's (2020) findings, but strategies such as the visible addition of the Black Sea dialect and the change of the translation of "bestiary" are clear signs of the fan translators' attempts to devise innovative solutions. For the two translations, it is apparent that the translation processes and the role of the actors who take part are different. A translation criticism of the two translations revealed that this difference is reflected in the translators' strategies.

Lastly, my study challenges the dominant view of the localization industry that translation is, by definition, a limited concept. Translation remains a complex activity that is highly dynamic and therefore capable of reacting to the developments of the world. According to this view, localization does not challenge translation but enriches it by emphasizing the recent emergence and widespread adoption of technology. Translation Studies has acknowledged this trend as well and has been increasingly focusing on the impact of technology, introducing new fields of analysis, such as multimodality.

As multimodality can be observed in virtually any text (Gambier, 2006), the discussion changes its nature from whether multimodality exists to how Translation Studies can investigate it. After all, multimodality is the norm, not the exception (Kaindl, 2013). This phenomenon is directly linked to the technological advancements that create new forms of multimodal text, which the discipline has the tools and theoretical bases to study efficiently. In this endeavor, the concept of translation proves useful, as it enables a wider conception of text that goes beyond

the verbal element. My thesis implements this idea by analyzing a video game and its translations into Turkish as texts that create meaning for the players via several modes. The video game's multimodal character determines how the game is enjoyed and therefore marks the importance of studying the different modes together.

It is true that new forms of texts have emerged, such as the video game as a multimodal text, but as my analysis demonstrates, translation criticism is still a valuable tool to study translations, regardless of their complexity. Therefore, Translation Studies and the localization industry have a lot to learn from each other, and the collaboration of both sides will be particularly beneficial, as they can complement each other by offering different perspectives.

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