

# Translation and Localisation in Video Games

## Making Entertainment Software Global

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Video Games**

Making Entertainment Software  
Global  
*Miguel Á. Bernal-Merino*

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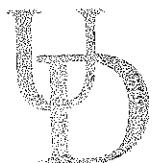
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## 2 Games, Markets and Translation

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Multimedia interactive software encompasses a wide variety of products, from the games pre-installed on our personal computers to those on our mobile phones; from corporate services websites to government information, lottery and gambling websites; from educational resources and private professional training to the purely recreational and from the applications enjoyed by all ages to those rated 'adults only'. This research focuses specifically on those products that are widely available to the general public known as video games, also referred to as multimedia interactive entertainment software (MIES). Due to market pressures, many games will often have a 'port' (rendition) on many of today's different gaming platforms—Sony's desktop PS3 and PS4, Portable PS Vita, Microsoft's Xbox 360 and Xbox One, Nintendo's Wii, Wii U, DS and 3DS—as well as on personal computers based on Windows OS (operating system), but also Mac OS and Linux OS, mobile phones, smart phones and tablet computers.

So as to capitalise on their marketing campaigns and to minimise the effects of piracy, game publishers aim for a simultaneous international release, often abbreviated as 'sim-ship', in an absolute minimum of five languages (English, French, Italian, German and Spanish, referred to in industry circles by the acronym E-FIGS), often more depending on games and markets (Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Swedish). Despite its rather tentative beginnings in the 1970s, the game industry has grown rapidly in many countries around the world, and as is shown in Figure 1.1 below by the Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE 2012: 16), it is a successful contender as a leisure occupation across Europe, together with socialising with friends, reading, watching television, going to the cinema, listening to music, web browsing etcetera.

According to the consumer research report published by ISFE in 2010, interactive software sales in the European market exceeded the €8 billion mark in 2009 ([www.isfe.eu/industry-facts](http://www.isfe.eu/industry-facts)), while revenue in the United States reached \$15.9 billion in the same year (according to ESA's diachronic analysis published in 2011), and €7.4 billion in the Asia-Pacific region in 2006 ([www.theesa.com/facts/index.asp](http://www.theesa.com/facts/index.asp)). When all the platforms and related

## BROADER MEDIA AND ACTIVITIES INTEREST: (FAIRLY/VERY INTERESTED) (ALL ONLINE RESPONDENTS - EURO AVERAGE)

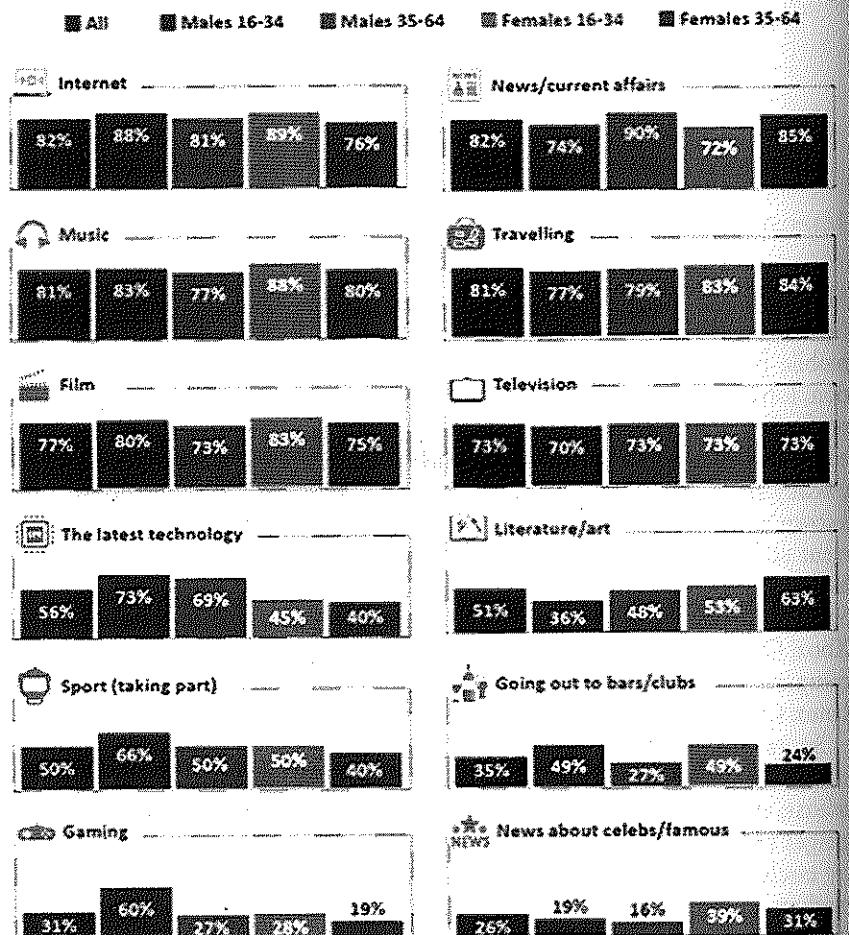


Figure 2.1 Entertainment activities preferred by Europeans. © ISFE. All rights reserved.

business opportunities are calculated, the total revenue for the global video game industry (PC, console, online, mobile and advertising) for 2015 are forecasted at more than \$300 billion by reputable market reports. Figure 2.2 (below) shows the known revenues from all game-related markets and their foreseeable steady growth, as highlighted by market reports such as those by PricewaterhouseCoopers and Digi-Capital.

An important factor concerning Figure 2.2, seen from the point of view of this research, is that more than two-thirds of this income was generated

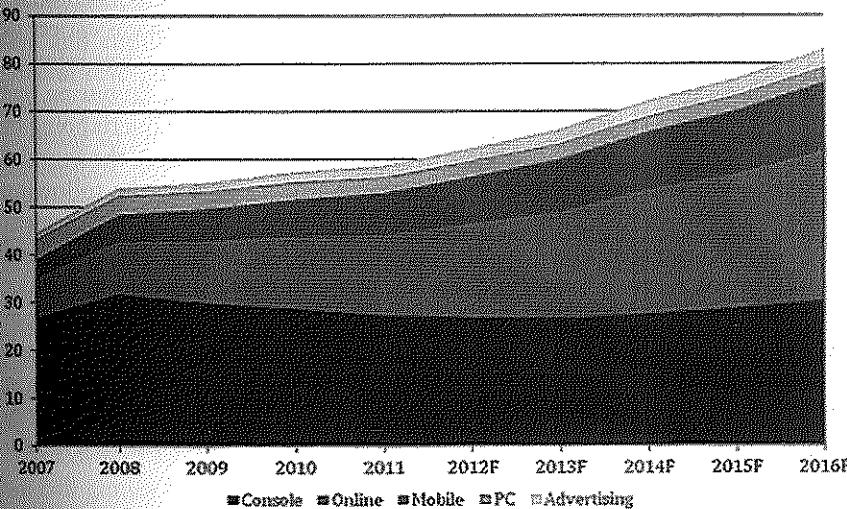


Figure 2.2 Global video game sector revenue forecast in \$B

by localised versions of original video games, thus highlighting the relevance of localisation to the entertainment industry in general and the video game industry in particular. There can be little doubt that localisation is a prominent and growing new professional practice for translators, and that there is a role for Translation Studies and universities in terms of the training required for this new skill as well as the research into a professional activity which, in certain aspects, may challenge to traditional theoretical models in translation because of the implications of their interactivity and the international simultaneous shipment model the game industry employs.

Given the relative youth of the game industry, and in order to carry out research in this novel area, it is important to identify and distinguish between the terms employed in this field and to clarify the realities embodied by these terms, so that the complexities and nuances of the translation and localisation of video games can be fully appreciated and understood. The most common terms used to refer to MIES are explained in the following pages in an attempt to provide a taxonomy that could be of assistance when used for further research in this area.

### 2.1 TOWARDS A CLASSIFICATION OF TERMS RELATING TO VIDEO GAME PRODUCTS

Although there are several books on video games and their design currently in existence, such as Crawford (2003), and Thompson *et al.* (2007), none of them really deals with basic terminology, a factor which points towards

the assumption that everybody apparently agrees on the principal terms and the right context in which to use them. The issue is that the wide variety of terms currently in use concerning this increasingly popular pastime refers to slightly different realities since they follow different criteria, favouring one particular viewpoint over another. As a result, there is some overlapping of definitions, a fact which necessitates clarification in order to lay the foundations for a clear understanding of the material discussed in the following chapters as well as to clarify the essential object of study of the present research. Surprisingly, many of these terms have not been formally defined despite having been around for decades, or there is constant debate about some of them. For this reason, I have had to source my definitions both from general and specialised sources. This is, to my knowledge, the first time such inventory and grouping has been tried. In the following pages, the terms in question have been divided into two groups according to how broad or specific they are. Consequently, they have been arranged under the two labels: comprehensive terms and narrow terms.

### 2.1.1 Comprehensive Terms

The following terms have been grouped under the label of ‘comprehensive terms’. All of these are terms that can be understood to be more inclusive not only across age ranges, but also across game types, modes of play, complementary equipment, devices, gadgets and platforms. This section includes the following 5 terms: ‘game’, ‘electronic game’, ‘digital game’, ‘multimedia entertainment software’, and ‘video game’.

#### 2.1.1.1 Game

The term ‘game’ can be considered as the hypernym par excellence. Though the act of playing is universal, the themes and activities themselves may not be. Games may involve one or many players and, although there is normally an element of competition, their main objective is the amusement of the people participating actively by playing, or passively by watching those playing. There are many types of games, for example, cards, football, billiards, catch, charades, marbles, I spy, dice, connect 4, grownups, video games and many more, each involving different rules and props. Some of these have probably existed for millennia; others may be invented, at any point in the future, by anybody.

Recently, a considerable body of research has been undertaken into developmental psychology, a part of which has focused on play therapy in which games are perceived as a way of learning lifelong skills in a safe environment; it is in this context that new tools and technologies, such as video games, have a definitive role to play. In a review, which he coordinated on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in early years education, Whitebread (2006: 96) states that adventure and simulation games “have much to offer in relation to the development of children’s abilities

as creative problem solvers”. Some of the most internationally comprehensive and enduring examples might include games such as catch, chess or general role-playing, and this inclination towards recreational play among humans is currently being utilised both by industry and society in general in order to enhance the process of learning. These games are undertaken for serious purposes, and are, thus, referred to as ‘serious games’. They are mainly used to assist professional training and for raising awareness of social issues. Some of these games can be found on Tagd ([www.tagd.org.uk](http://www.tagd.org.uk)), a Unicef UK website initiative aiming to provide “a network of young people in the UK who are committed to children’s rights”. Further examples of socially minded video games can be found in the official websites of Unicef Canada (Unicef 2013: online) and United Nations Cyber Shool Bus (UN 2002: online). These games are explored further in Section 2.2.

According to certain authors, such as Wittgenstein (1958), the activities we call games have very little or nothing in common. This may be one of the reasons why, despite the many attempted definitions and descriptions of games that have been proposed over the years, we are still unclear as to how to identify and categorise them, apparently an essential prerequisite for a discussion of their localisation for the enjoyment of other cultures. Huizinga’s definition (1950: 15), one of the earliest and most often quoted, looks at games from a rather ethnographic perspective:

A game is a free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life as being ‘not serious’, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.

Today’s video games would certainly fit within the free formation of social groupings and the absorbing elements mentioned in this definition, although, in some cases, they could be seen to challenge the idea of ‘no material interest’, since there are many individuals and companies whose main commercial activity is game playing. Their main objective is to sell game fans access to advanced levels and game avatars within the various playing universes that players either do not have the time or the skills to obtain themselves.

Another definition, more recent and perhaps more in touch with modern games, is the one proposed by Juul (2003: 34):

A game is a rule-based system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels emotionally

attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable.

What both definitions have in common is the certain or even intense emotional involvement of the players, something that is very relevant to the game industry and game localisation practice alike, because the localised versions of the games must elicit the same, or a similar kind of, response from their local consumers, maintaining the “look and feel” (LISA 2003: online) of the original game. This issue is explained and analysed in Chapter 4.

Because of their ever-increasing popularity and the large amount of media exposure that video games have acquired over the past ten years or so, the term ‘game’ is recognised as the most generic within the realm of recreational activities. However, it has also become a shortened form used to refer to the young MIES industry, often referred to as the game industry by both the specialised and the general press. It is a frequent occurrence that, nowadays, many people use the superordinate or hypernym ‘game’ to refer to ‘video game’. We frequently encounter this use of the term in the names of international conferences (such as the *Game Developers Conference*), magazines (*Game Developers*), TV channels (*Game Network*), retailers (*Game*), TV programmes (*Gamer TV*), video game press websites (*Gamespot*) and game translation and localisation companies (*Gameloc*), to name but a few. The shorter term seems to be very popular and is well understood by the general public, not only in the English speaking world, but also in Spain and many other Hispanic countries, where we come across local branches of the same franchise (such as the retailer *Game*) and translated versions of publications and websites (*EuroGamer.es*) that retain the English name and branding, capitalising on the ‘cool factor’ that is still associated with the use of English words. Since this is a study focusing on video game translation and localisation, the term ‘game’ is always used in these pages to refer to ‘video game’ (unless stated otherwise) in order to avoid repetition. Nuances will be explained if and when necessary.

### 2.1.1.2 Electronic Game

‘Electronic game’ is probably the most comprehensive term within early twentieth century game technology, even though the original game machines were actually electro-mechanic, since they had no computer chip. Strictly speaking, any interactive game operated by silicon-chip computer circuitry is an ‘electronic game’. However, not all ‘electronic games’ are ‘video games’, since the ‘video’ part of the term refers to the primary feedback device, that is, a television set or an LCD screen. Therefore, the fruit and darts machines which furnished many recreational premises and clubs for decades are not ‘video games’ but ‘electronic games’. The first of these machines, often referred to as the ‘one-arm-bandit’, was invented in 1887, and the first slot machine, in 1891 ([www.arcade-history.com](http://www.arcade-history.com)). In

fact, these machines were so popular at the time that, by 1911, they had been banned in some American states, a fact which ironically helped to pave the way for the later development of Las Vegas as the biggest casino city in the world (*ibid.*).

Pinball machines became very popular after World War II, and although their ancestor the ‘Bagatelle-table’ dates from the late nineteenth century, the first coin-operated pinball machines did not appear until 1931 (BMI Gaming 2001: online). Nowadays almost all recreational machines have a digital component, and many may utilise a video display of some sort, but they belong to the electro-mechanic, or electronic, game group and are not included in the present research, where only modern mainstream video games are discussed.

### 2.1.1.3 Digital Game

The term ‘digital game’ is a fairly recent term deriving from the fashionable adjective ‘digital’; examples of its use would include: ‘digital camera’, ‘digital era’, ‘digital generation’ and the like. The term ‘digital’ has the virtue of referring to the technology that makes it possible, and, as such, when used in its more generic form, it encompasses a number of categories which include ‘computer games’. It is not, however, a term widely used in the game industry, although it can be found sometimes on websites that specialise in the study of game principles and theories, such as [www.ludology.org](http://www.ludology.org). It is also the preferred term used by DIGRA (Digital Game Research Association), because it is able to “embrace arcade, computer, console, and mobile games in all their diversity” (Kerr 2006: 3).

### 2.1.1.4 Multimedia Interactive Entertainment Software

The term ‘multimedia interactive entertainment software’ (MIES) is a descriptive one which aims for a clear delineation of the parameters of the concept and products to which it refers. Any software, as the creator and controller of a virtual machine, is always interactive in the sense that it requires activation by a user. It is also the case that entertainment is, in essence, interactive since it often involves two parties: the consumer requiring amusement and the product or service providing it. ‘Multimedia’ is a noun that frequently functions as an adjective. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the term appeared in the 1950s. A few years later, it was adopted by the computer industry to highlight the idea that their technology offered not only word processing on screen, but also audio and image editing, and not long after that, music and video playback, as well as three dimensional graphics. The term ‘multimedia’ is almost always linked to, or associated with, technology, and as far back as the 1970s, video games developers have made a point of capitalising on technological advances embracing the whole computer industry. Nowadays, most video games combine rich user interfaces, realistic 3-D graphics, 5.1 speech, music and sound effects.

'Software' could be described as a set of instructions that tell a computer what to do. The term differentiates these features from 'hardware', which encompasses the physical components of a computer system. Since computers were initially invented as a work tool with the functional aim of storing, retrieving, and processing data faster than humans could, it is important to add the 'entertainment' qualifier, so as to frame these software products (video games) clearly at the same level as the products from the cinema and the TV industries.

'Multimedia interactive entertainment software' is an accurate term with which to describe video games, and the acronym MIES solves the length problem. It incorporates the key concepts that set video games apart from other forms of entertainment, namely that they are multichannel entertainment products, with an emphasis on interactivity and the consistent feeling of commanding the game experience in contrast with what happens with the more passive experience of reading books or watching films.

### 2.1.1.5 Video Game

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)) states that the term 'video game' can be used in a generic sense to refer to 'electronic games, computer games and video games'. The term itself apparently suffers from some orthographic instability and can be found written as a single word, 'videogame'; as a hyphenated word, 'video-game'; or as two words, 'video game', without any apparent difference in meaning. The *OED* favours the two-word term because it seems to be more consistent with other similar terms in the English language, such as 'card game', 'football game' or 'board game' ([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)). The two-word version is used most widely, both by the general public and by the game industry, and is the spelling most commonly found in the specialised press. For these reasons, it has been chosen as the preferred term and spelling for the present study.

The term 'video game' did not appear until the late 1960s when, as he recalls on his website, Ralph Baer, chief engineer at Sanders Associates, came up with the idea of making "home video games" or "TV games", using regular television sets ([www.ralphbaer.com](http://www.ralphbaer.com)). Although similar terms such as 'video arcade games' had already been in circulation for some time, owing to the popularity of arcades as a location at which they were played, it only appeared in print for the first time in *Business Week* on the 10th of November, 1973 ([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)).

When it comes to a definition, most general sources consulted by ordinary people and players seem to agree:

- The *OED* defines video game as "a game played by electronically manipulating images displayed on a television screen". ([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com))
- The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* describes a video game as "an electronic game played by means of images on a video screen and often emphasizing fast action". ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com))

- The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states succinctly "also called computer game or electronic game, it is any interactive game operated by computer circuitry". ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com))
- *Wikipedia* specifies that a video game "is an electronic game that involves interaction with a user interface to generate visual feedback on a video device". (<http://en.wikipedia.org>)

These definitions, although technically correct, are too broad to illustrate the variety and complexity of video games. None of them takes into account the apparent orthographic instability, evidence, perhaps, both of their complexity as well as testifying to a lack of interest among lexicographers. Even game scholars, such as Frasca (2001: 4), have put forward rather general definitions, stating that video games include "any form of computer-based entertainment software, either textual or image-based, using any electronic platform such a personal computer or console and involving one or multiple players in a physical or networked environment". Taking into account the variety of today's game industry, a definition is likely to become broader before scholars and professionals are able to reach a unanimous agreement on the most appropriate terms.

Indeed, the debate continues with game studies researchers, such as Newman (2004: 91), apparently struggling to distinguish between the play elements and the narrative aspects of the games. For instance, terms such as 'cyberdrama' are used within one of the most recent related disciplines, ludology. The cybernetic nature of the medium is highlighted, with an additional allusion to the dramatic conflict requiring the intervention of the gamer by way of a machine in order to be resolved (Murray 2004). Mateas (in Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan 2004: 19) prefers the term 'interactive drama' because, from his point of view, video games are stories that are unravelled by the player's unique reactions, prioritising, therefore, the idea of constant intervention by the player.

However, although it is true that some games do not tell much of a story, they do require a variety of skills, however, such as good hand-eye coordination, puzzle-solving skills, dancing in tempo or singing in tune. The demographics of video games are equally varied, being evenly spread among all age groups and genders. In fact, according to ISFE ([www.isfe.eu/industry-facts](http://www.isfe.eu/industry-facts)), and ESA, the Entertainment Software Association ([www.theesa.com/facts/index.asp](http://www.theesa.com/facts/index.asp)), the average age of players in the EU and the US is almost forty; 42 per cent of players are female. According to PEGI, the Pan European Game Information age rating system ([www.pegi.info](http://www.pegi.info)), only 9.8 per cent of the total games sold in Europe in 2011 are rated for adults only.

In contrast with the image portrayed by anti-video game lobbies and tabloids, many games involve sports activities, strategic thinking, resource management, problem solving, teamwork, driving, world building, group loyalty and role playing. This wide array of activities requires different skills

from players, and caters for different tastes and types of play. Immensely popular games, such as the *Brain Training* franchise published by Nintendo (2005–2011), have proved that activities normally associated with school homework (such as reading, spelling, counting and basic algebra) can be turned into a successful video game. There are, in fact, so many different games (the subject matter being almost as broad as human activity itself) that it is difficult to suggest a comprehensive, all-encompassing definition. Despite being an extremely interesting topic, the task of defining the concept of play and games, and their implications from an anthropological and a philosophical point of view is, strictly speaking, beyond the scope of the present research.

For the purpose of this study, a tighter and more functional definition is suggested: a video game is a multimedia interactive form of entertainment for one or more individuals, powered by computer hardware and software, controlled by a peripheral (a control pad, a keyboard, a mouse, a joystick, a game pad, a motion controller, a steering wheel, a video camera, etc.), and displayed on some kind of screen (a television set, an LCD or plasma monitor, or a portable display). They can be used as entertainment or as part of a serious educational or training programme (they are sometimes referred to as ‘edutainment’ or ‘serious games’), with the advantage that they are fully independent computer applications offering detailed feedback to players in terms of their performance (through sound, animations, videos, or written reports) with regards to the activities for which they have been programmed without any external supervision. Thematically, they can portray any topic, activity, or parallel universe which the human imagination is able to conjure up and, although it is true that video games started as basic action-driven pastimes through arcades, this is no longer the case, and new gameplay has been developed in order to incorporate complex narratives, as well as cooperative team-playing, strategizing, and so on.

## 2.1.2 Narrow Terms

There is a second group of terms with a much narrower scope in which video game products are compartmentalised even further. Four main categories into which games can be grouped are proposed in Table 2.1, below:

This classification takes into account the existence of the most commonly used terms, in order to articulate a clear structure for the benefit of the present research. It is worth noting that these terms have been coined at different times, but that most are still in current use, adding to the potential terminological confusion. Of course, they belong in different contexts and were originally used by different groups of people (such as players, journalists and industry professionals). Nowadays, due to the success and proliferation of video game products, they often coexist and overlap in many different ways. Definitions and explanations for each of them have been proposed in the sections which follow.

Table 2.1 Parameters within which to classify video games

Location of play	Gaming platform	Mode of distribution	Type of market
arcade game	console game	pre-packaged game	mainstream
desktop game	computer game	browser game	game
portable game	handheld console game mobile game	pre-installed game	serious game casual game

### 2.1.2.1 Location of Play

This group of terms refers to the physical space or place where the actual play takes place: in an amusement arcade, on a home desktop system or, more recently, on a portable device.

#### ARCADE GAME

The term ‘arcade game’ was originally used to refer to all those games to be found in penny arcades at the beginning of the twentieth century and included other popular games, such as foosball and pinball tables, referring therefore to the place as much as to the video games themselves. The first arcade video game was *Computer Space* created in 1971 by Nolan Bushnell and commercialised by Nutting Associates ([www.Gamespot.co.uk](http://www.Gamespot.co.uk)). Everything in these arcade video games (the monitor, the speakers and the controllers) was physically built into a big wooden box often decorated with artistic representations of the game in order to attract players. Amusement arcades were very popular throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and they contributed significantly to the development of today’s entertainment software industry. With the exception of some gamer communities in Japan (Ars Technica 2012: online), arcades are less fashionable in the twenty-first century because many people have their own digital entertainment systems which they can use as they please, at home or elsewhere. Nevertheless, they have not totally disappeared and are still commercially successful, as the continuing success of the Trocadero arcades in central London proves.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, the term has evolved and, as a consequence, the meaning has narrowed considerably. It is now often used to refer to a type of game with particularly good design and mechanics, effectively applying the pioneering principles that made those first video games (such as *Space Invaders*, *Super Mario* and *Pac-Man*) so popular, and marking the beginning of a new era in entertainment products and services. In fact, these arcade games are so popular nowadays that they can still be found in their original form among retro-fans, and in new updated versions to suit new hardware, including computers, home consoles and even mobile phones. These products possessed simple game mechanics and are often regarded as models of

good playability, a concept that is also relevant to game localisation and that is fully analysed and illustrated in Section 2.4.

#### DESKTOP GAME

The term ‘desktop game’ refers to games played on consoles and computers often in a domestic context, but also in Internet cafes and other public spaces, and where the gaming device has a fixed dedicated space, such as a game room or a game club. It is generally used in order to differentiate these games from arcade and portable games. The concept may be often linked to family entertainment, due to the fact that, in many households, gaming is increasingly sharing the limelight with the television, aided by the fact that these gaming devices can play music CDs, video DVDs, and the PlayStation 3 consoles can also play high definition Blu-ray Discs. Consoles are easily connected to the main television set in the living room, while computers tend to require their own dedicated monitor, which allows for a higher display resolution than that of regular television sets (although this difference is diminishing rapidly with the new HD TV standards). Desktop games tend to be the most polished interactive entertainment products, offering the highest audio and video quality, together with a more flexible control scheme, such as keyboards, mouse, game pads, joysticks, driving wheels, cameras and the like.

#### PORTABLE GAME

This term refers to games designed for pocket devices, including PDAs, handheld consoles, classic mobile phones, modern smart phones or other gadgets such as Tamagochi<sup>2</sup> and LeapFrog<sup>3</sup> devices. Portable games tend to be significantly smaller in size due to the hardware limitations in terms of storage capabilities, multimedia rendering power, and overall processing performance. However, portable games have greatly improved over the last few decades, due to competition in the industry and the implementation of the latest microchip technology, as we can see in the iPhone and the PlayStation Vita. Despite their high resolution, the size limitations of the screens on these portable devices directly affects the type and amount of text that can be displayed, a fact which, in turn, impinges on the user interface design and its localisation due to the complex and demanding requirements of each language and their particular character sets. This issue is fully analysed and explained in Chapter 4.

#### 2.1.2.2 Gaming Platform

This group of terms is classified according to the hardware, that is, the actual device used to play the video games. These include: console games, computer games, handheld console games and mobile games.

#### CONSOLE GAME

Within the context of the game industry, and from the hardware point of view, consoles can be referred to as game-dedicated computers. In order to

maximise return on investment, very often the same title is released for a variety of gaming platforms. This may require slight changes in the design or the input of completely different developing teams, depending on the hardware capabilities and the branding requirements of the particular device. As with the personal computer market, there used to be many different game console brands, such as *Odyssey*, *Atari*, *Famicom/NES* and *Dreamcast*, but Sony’s *PlayStation* outperformed all its rivals and reigned supreme for almost ten years until, in the last quarter of 2001, *Nintendo* and *Microsoft* entered the arena with the *GameCube* and *Xbox*, respectively (Waters 2001b: online). *PlayStation* remained unchallenged up until the end of the 1990s and, with the new century, the era of “the console wars” began (Stuart 2011: online), with the three big multinational companies competing to maintain and expand their share of the market with their latest hardware: *PlayStation 3* and *PS Vita*, *Nintendo Wii* and *3DS*, and *Xbox 360*.

As a result of the increase in development costs of the Triple A titles craved by the public, nowadays most game developing companies and publishers design their products for all the main gaming platforms. A good example of the significance of this escalation in cost is demonstrated by the transformation of the *Final Fantasy* franchise. It was created by Square Enix in 1987 and, more than twenty years later, it is still producing new instalments in the series. Both the developer and its games had been exclusive to *PlayStation* for twenty years, but in July 2008, Square Enix made an announcement that would signal a turning point in the game industry: *Final Fantasy XIII* would become a multiplatform game as a result of the growing trend in the global market (Sheffield 2008: online). As has been mentioned earlier, console games tend to be ideal for fast-paced games such as sports, driving, fighting and shooting games, with clear, simple mechanics and intuitive gameplay due to the limitations of controllers and the pickup-and-play<sup>4</sup> philosophy behind the whole console game concept.

#### COMPUTER GAME

The term ‘computer games’ refers to the nature of the actual machine required to create, and often to play, the game. In this sense, all contemporary video games are also computer games. The term, however, seems to have narrowed and shifted slightly, and is often used to refer to the type of platform utilised to play the games, in contrast with, and as an alternative to, desktop consoles and portable devices.

The computer platform option is very clear-cut nowadays, since there are only two contenders, namely the PC and the Mac. As Apple’s Mac computer is very rarely used for playing at all, when people mention computer gaming, they are most often referring to PCs. In the 1980s, there were many computer brands that developed products specifically for the nascent home computing market, all of them competing for a position as the platform of choice for both office computing and home entertainment. Spectrum, Amstrad and Commodore were three of the most popular, globally, and

they provided the perfect springboard for the Spanish game programming *aficionados*, many of whom are currently in charge of the Spanish game development industry.

Computer games are therefore video games where the specifications have been adjusted to suit computer hardware. Thanks to their mouse and extensive keyboard,<sup>5</sup> computers have always been considered ideal for tactical, strategic and simulation games, whereas consoles are normally designed for action games, where control buttons have to be reduced to a minimum for ease of use with a control pad.<sup>6</sup> Many players favour computers as a gaming platform because they can be upgraded modularly *ad infinitum*, as distinct from the console set boxes. This means that hard-core gamers can actually match and even surpass the technical specifications of the computers used to develop the game, thus obtaining a more intense and powerful gaming experience.

#### HANDHELD (CONSOLE) GAME

Handheld consoles are game-dedicated pocket devices. The first handheld devices appeared in 1976 (Graham 1982: 37) and came with one pre-installed game in its built-in memory, so people could only play one single game on that particular device. Fans had to wait until 1979 for the idea of interchangeable game cartridges to be made possible by Microvision (*ibid.*), followed by Nintendo with the popular Game Boy in the 1980s, and its successive redesigns. It is fair to say that, despite competition, Nintendo is still the unrivalled leader in the handheld market. By the end of 2008, there were only two clear contenders: Nintendo's DS and Sony's PSP (*ibid.*); all other challengers and previous models had either disappeared or were in the process of being phased out. Handheld consoles have considerable storage restrictions, limited display capabilities, and reduced processing power, all of which affects localisation (see Chapter 4). Although they can only play the less sophisticated games, they have been relatively successful, due to their lower price and convenient size, gaining popularity among people of both genders and of all ages (BBC 2006: online).

#### MOBILE GAME

The term 'mobile games' refers to video games that are designed to be played on mobile phones, in other words, they are physically portable although they cannot be played on handheld consoles. In the technological race for more clients, mobile phone manufacturers and independent game developing companies are encouraging their engineers to design mobile phones which can be used for all kinds of entertainment purposes, such as listening to radio broadcasts and music, watching television, browsing the Internet, taking photographs, watching videos and, of course, playing quality video games. Nowadays, the average mobile phone handset includes several pre-installed 'demos' and the games can be downloaded cheaply and easily according to user requirements, by using wireless application protocols (WAP) and

third-generation telecommunication services (3G and 4G) offered by telephone and cable companies.

Traditionally, mobile games were seen by both game developers and players alike as unappealing, mainly due to their lack of processing power, low resolution screens and the poor controls employed by mobile phones. Mobile phones are currently being designed with multimedia and gaming capabilities in mind, and they represent an area of enormous growth potential, for both the game and the mobile phone industry. According to Mitchell's (2007), the online market was valued at £9 billion in 2007, and it would continue to grow to £12.5 billion by 2012.

Some of the most advanced technologies for mobile phones were demonstrated at the Game Developers Conference held in San Francisco in March 2009, technologies that included high-resolution 3-D engines and motion sensors, with Apple's iPhone leading the way (Krzykowski 2009). Games of a quality vastly superior to those offered by desktop consoles only a few years ago are already appearing on new handsets. A variety of game genres are also being developed for mobile phones, including sports, music, action-adventure, brain training, strategy and role-playing games. Another benefit of mobile phones relative to the game industry is that there are an estimated 4.1 billion telephone subscribers worldwide (Tryhorn 2009) with constant, direct access to mobile services. This enormous potential, combined with the fact that these games are faster and cheaper to produce, makes this platform a favourite with the game industry. The projections were already clear saying that, by the end of 2011, mobile and online gaming would be generating half of the total global revenue for the video game industry (Merel 2011, PricewaterhouseCoopers 2008). This proved to be correct.

#### 2.1.2.3 Mode of Distribution

The group of terms, included under the heading 'mode of distribution', refers to the manner in which users acquire or have access to the video game, and include: pre-packaged games, browser games and pre-installed games.

#### PRE-PACKAGED GAME

The term 'pre-packaged games' alludes mainly to the mode of distribution. These are a type of game that can be purchased over the counter, in high-street shops. They tend to come accompanied by glossy packaging and merchandising intended to attract and to help boost sales with extra content such as stickers, posters, T-shirts, figurines, comic-books, etc. In order to reach consumers, these games require retail outlets as intermediaries; in fact, this is the most traditional and still quite popular mode of distribution (because Internet speeds fluctuate so much from one location to another), since many game users derive enjoyment from the browsing and shopping physical experience. They are, however, losing ground to browser games in terms of popularity, owing to the fact that Internet providers

are improving on speed and bandwidth reliability, changing distribution channels and consumer preferences. Although pre-packaged games may ultimately disappear, video game distribution modes are bound to remain varied for many years to come to cater for all the markets open to interactive entertainment.

#### BROWSER GAME

The ‘browser game’, sometimes referred to as the ‘web-based game’, is a term which refers to all the games that can only be acquired and played by using an Internet connection and a web browser, with the games being downloaded directly onto the consumers’ home computers. The browser game family is made up of free small games, such as those that can be found on websites like the Warner-Brothers kids’ ([www.kidswb.com/games](http://www.kidswb.com/games)), as well as highly elaborate subscription-only MMO games, such as *Eve Online* (CCP 2003–present).

Thanks to the continuous expansion of fibre optic telecommunication networks in many cities around the world, the advent of high-speed Internet connections has catapulted the demand for this type of interactive entertainment service. In addition, many stand-alone games incorporate excellent Internet capabilities, which means that the games can be played with people from all over the world, dramatically increasing the gaming hours with downloadable expansion packs, and turning what used to be a solo experience, due to its technical limitations, into a highly social one. The bigger the fan base, the more multicultural the players, and the more important the localisation effort. While browser games, such as those that can be played through Facebook, only have a few hundreds or thousands of words that need to be translated, Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs), such as *World of Warcraft*, can have millions of words.

There are also several online game distribution services with a slightly different business model. The most popular ones are Xbox Live, PS Network, although Steam is growing in popularity partly because it offers games from a wider variety of developers than the previous two.

#### PRE-INSTALLED GAME

The term ‘pre-installed game’ refers to those games that are pre-loaded on a device when consumers acquire it. It applies, for example, to games that ship together with the operating system of the device in question, such as *Minesweeper* for PCs, or *Snake* for Nokia phones, *Marble Blast Gold* for iMacs, or *Solitaire* for PDAs. These games are often seen as a little sample designed to attract users and remind them that the device in question can be used for entertainment, encouraging them to purchase updated, improved products. The mechanics tend to be simple and are easy to pick up without requiring complicated instructions, so that their localisation is easier to manage when compared with big commercial Triple A titles.

#### 2.1.2.4 Type of Market

The last three terms used to refer to video games, and presented above in Table 2.1, that is, games which are referred to according to the type of market for which they have been designed (mainstream games, serious games and casual games), are directly linked to several aspects of modern society. Their impact is so marked that it has been deemed essential to analyse the wide range of products available, as well as the penetration of games and game-like applications in almost all social and professional activities, in order to comprehend the relevance of these products in today’s world. Such an analysis will also shed light on why we need to study game translation and localisation in order to understand its principles and improve its processes. For this reason, the game categories associated with a particular type of market are explained in the following section.

## 2.2 THE PENETRATION OF VIDEO GAMES IN TODAY’S WORLD

In an affinity with Bakhtin’s concept of the grotesque body, children’s narratives are rarely allowed to settle in one format, making an almost infinite journey from picture book to comic strip, to graphic novel, to prose novel, to audio-cassette, to film, to CD-ROM.

(Sainsbury 1998: 262)

What Sainsbury highlights about children’s narratives can in fact be applied to almost any type of artistic creation (Bernal-Merino 2009a). Entertainment industries have been working together for many years, but it is only now that the success of their joint ventures can be fully appreciated, mainly due to the large number of followers that they attract and the huge budgets with which they operate which, according to Crossley (2010: online), amount to an average of \$28 million. The following subsections elaborate on and illustrate each of the three remaining game categories with a view to assisting outsiders to comprehend the extent of video game penetration into people’s lives. These three terms correspond with the standard three categories used by the game industry when talking about markets in a broad sense. These are: ‘mainstream games’ (those that are purely entertaining), ‘serious games’ (those with a high professional or educational value), and ‘casual games’ (simple mobile and browser games that require little skill and time commitment).

### 2.2.1 Mainstream Games

These entertainment software products currently represent the core business of the video game industry, because of the revenue generated by them and their value in terms of attracting consumers. They are often multimillion

dollar projects that can take two to three years to complete and require the labour of multiple teams of creative and talented professionals. Although there may be significant differences, they are all designed with the aim of providing top quality entertainment. This is one of the most important reasons why they are often linked with established entertainment industries such as the cinema, television, literature and the toy and music industries.

Whether it takes place in a cinema or elsewhere, watching films has long been one of the favourite recreational activities for people all over the world since the invention of cinema in 1895. From the classic black and white silent films to today's 3-D colour blockbusters with Dolby Pro Logic surround sound and CGI enhancement,<sup>7</sup> the video game sector has had a clear example to follow, at least in terms of success and mainstream acceptability. The cinema industry has always seemed glamorous, and the entertainment software industry has often joined forces with film studios to increase their popularity and market share. The 1980s saw the fruition of some of these early joint ventures, with titles such as *ET: The Extra-Terrestrial*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Star Wars* or *Alice in Wonderland*, which despite having limited success as video games can be deemed to be pioneers of this particular trend. Nowadays, it is almost impossible to think of an important cinema release that does not come with a simultaneous official video game version. Even in the United Kingdom and Spain, where the cinema industry has less influence than in Hollywood, there are good examples of this sort of collaboration, with films such as *007: Quantum of Solace* and *Torrente: El brazo tonto de la ley*.

The success of these games depends on finding the right balance between the viewing experience offered by the film and the way gamers can interact with the virtual representation of the cinematic adventure. These video games tend to use as many assets as possible from the film, and are therefore likely to have video and audio extracts from the motion picture itself. Sometimes the main actors may be called to the game studio to allow graphic designers to create a 3-D model for their game avatar, or to record a few extra lines to add audio feedback and realism to the interactivity. The translation of these two popular types of entertainment product (films and video games) shares the fact that a considerable amount of dialogue has to be lip-synched, a fact that curtails the options available to translators working in this area (Chaume 2004a: 66), and leads to the intrusion of calques and false friends in the target language (Bernal-Merino 2002: 45). This aspect is analysed in Section 3.2.3.2 and 4.2.2.

Originally, game-based films appealed only to a very small, niche audience, but as new directors, with better knowledge of entertainment software and new perspectives on filming, have brought their vision to audiences, these productions have seen a notable increase both in terms of quality and popularity. It is still relatively unusual to see these films constituting big box-office successes, although titles such as *Tomb Raider*, with the popular actress Angelina Jolie acting the game's main character, Lara Croft, have

demonstrated that equal success is possible by generating almost \$275 million worldwide in 2001 ([www.boxofficemojo.com](http://www.boxofficemojo.com)). The number of games and tickets sold may vary enormously, but the partnership between these two powerful entertainment industries seems to be going from strength to strength. Other examples are *Super Mario Bros.* (Morton 1993), *Street Fighter* (De Souza 1994), *Resident Evil* (Anderson 2002), and *Dead or Alive* (Yuen 2006), *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* (Newell 2010), *Silent Hill: Revelation 3D* (Bassett 2012).

As has been mentioned earlier, the stereotype of the teenage boy playing video games in the darkness of his bedroom is no longer an accurate representation of the demographics of players. Young adults account for the biggest section of the market for the video game industry, but they are represented by both male and female players, and other sectors of the population are also finding products they can enjoy. According to a BBC survey on UK players published in December 2005, almost 100 per cent of children under fifteen years of age play video games and do so regularly (Pratchett 2005: online). The other two main recreational activities when at home included watching the television and reading. It is no accident, then, that there are games based on most of the well-liked novels and characters belonging to children's literature. In fact, the same book often has a variety of game interpretations that are specifically designed with different age groups in mind. Some of the most popular and fertile teenage fantasy titles which have been turned into video games include such classics as *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Harry Potter*.

All of these are licensed games and they have to remain faithful to the original style and spirit of the literary classics from which they originate. Game creators need to find a compromise between using part of a favourite story and, at the same time, creating an adventure that not only caters to the fans' enthusiasm but also makes use of their prior knowledge without spoiling the overall game experience. The translation of these games is often marked by the same high degree of creativity which is displayed in the literary works themselves, although it is complicated by difficulties characteristic of interactive media and its constraints (see Section 4.3). If there is an existing translation of the books in the target culture, research concerning the terminology and style previously used is mandatory. If they have not been introduced into the target culture, the game translator will have to find imaginative but appropriate solutions with which to enhance the game experience (Bernal-Merino 2009a).

Even though most book-based games mainly use works from popular teenage literature, where there is a clear predilection for action and prototypical heroic characters, there are also some game designers who aim to emphasise the fact that it is possible for games to represent a new mode of artistic expression. These multimedia interactive software applications can be used to tell all manner of stories as well as to teach about the human

condition. One remarkable example is *Les Misérables: The Game of the Book*, developed independently by Chris Tolworthy and based on the literary masterpiece written by the French author Victor Hugo, in 1862. Tolworthy's intention is to demonstrate that games can be used to tell the most celebrated stories and to make literary classics accessible to all in an uncomplicated and amusing way, yet without detracting from their intrinsic value. Other examples are *Fahrenheit 451*, where the player has to save books from being burnt by firemen following direct orders from a dictatorial government, as in Bradbury's homonymous novel, originally published in 1920. A final representative example is *La Abadía del Crimen*, a game based on the fashionable and well-liked novel by Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, published in English in 1984. The original was a very popular Spanish game that was later shipped in Spanish to a number of countries around Europe thanks to its good reputation. The game was never translated into any other language. In this game, players become Guillermo de Baskerville and his disciple, Adzo de Melk, and it is their task to investigate the crimes committed in the Abbey, which is apparently under the control of evil forces.

Most popular comic books, from the sentimental to the quirky or the heroic, have one (or several) video game version(s), where players can enjoy acting their favourite comic book characters. These games take advantage of the colourful and attractive graphic style displayed in comic books, a style which can now be easily reproduced in a computer environment. Video games based on cartoons are equally fashionable. Whether they have been created for adults, teenagers or for children, these creations have always been a source of inspiration to game developers from the moment computers reached the point at which they were able to render characters such as *Spider-man*, *Astérix*, *Mortadelo y Filemón*, or *SpongeBob*.

As society becomes increasingly accustomed to technology, and computers and gadgets become an everyday feature of people's routine, both at home and at school, the demand for games for younger children will inevitably grow, catering for different age groups and targeting their main interests and leisure activities. Evidence of this can be seen in the wide variety of video games that are based on toys designed both for boys and girls, such as Barbie, Action Man, Lego or the Bratz dolls.

Sports competitions and championships provide another source of inspiration to game developers and a good investment for publishers, as they tend to adhere to yearly cycles, a fact which lends itself perfectly to the frequent releases necessary for generating revenue. Most sporting events are likely to have a video game incarnation, which is unsurprising, since television and radio broadcasts of these events, together with all kinds of publications and websites, enabling the enjoyment of sports fans from every age group within the comfort of their home. Nowadays, we can see video game renditions of most sports such as football, Formula 1 racing, tennis, boxing, golf, bowling, or snooker, to name but a few. These games capture

all the excitement of viewing a favourite sports broadcast, with the added difference that the crowd, the commentators and the opponents respond to the players, and to their skills in managing a team, their individual level of technique and the skill with which their characteristic movements are performed. Most sportspeople and organisations lend their names, image, and voices to game franchises, such as Tiger Woods, Colin McRae, Rafael Nadal, Wayne Rooney and even organisations such as FIFA, a move that they see as a way of extending their brand and popularity.

Some of these games are now designed for the motion-sensing controls of the Nintendo Wii, PlayStation Move and Microsoft Kinect, which make them ideal for the physical simulation of the movements involved in performing these sports activities. Together with other game peripherals such as the dancing mat, the Wii fit balance board and the EyeToy, these games require body movements on the part of the players. The perception of these games has changed in such a way that the UK government has had to retract some of the negative comments made concerning the portrayal of interactive media on its *Change4Life* campaign.<sup>8</sup> The people responsible for this campaign had to acknowledge that some games do actually promote exercise in a proactive manner, as opposed to the stereotypical image portrayed initially, in which video game playing was linked with the obesity epidemic in the UK (Ingham 2009: online).

The music industry, glamorised even further by talent shows on television, and the constant presence in our daily lives of visually exotic and fast-paced video clips, represents another ideal source of inspiration for the game industry. Almost from the very beginning of entertainment software, audio design and music have played a key part in its appeal. Even when computing power was relatively low and games could only display eight colours, simple, catchy tunes would accompany fans while they played. Many musicians and singers have contributed music, and a few have tried to increase their popularity by offering their image for use by the game industry. Not only can music fans listen to music by their favourite artists during play, but they can also control an avatar that looks and behaves just like their idols, in temporary imitation of their individual qualities and stature. Examples of this partnership between games and music artists are *50 Cent: Blood on the Sand*, *Britney's Dance Beat*, *Def Jam: Icon*, or *Guitar Hero II: Aerosmith*.

These latest ventures are particularly important for the music industry, which has been losing the battle against illegal copies and downloads encouraged through file-sharing sites. On the one hand, this collaboration has the benefit of allowing for the controlled distribution of songs, as well as providing artists with increased publicity, and, on the other hand, it is helping to change the image of the game industry so that it is apparently more multifaceted.

Today's television broadcasting is a very versatile industry. There are many types of programmes favoured by audiences, with a corresponding

official entertainment software product for almost every one. This is reminiscent of the development of the most celebrated television quiz shows by the toy industry. All types of television programme can be turned into video games because the feel and dynamics of the game have already been tested and established successfully. The intention of game designers and industry bosses is clear: if millions of people enjoy watching these game shows on television, even participating through their telephone or digital television subscription, it is safe to assume that many of them will also buy the video game, especially if it retains the key features and characters originally responsible for making the television shows popular. Good examples of this cross-fertilisation include: *The X Factor*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, and *The Weakest Link*.

Some television series, soap operas, dramas and even sketch shows include a license for a video game rendition. Once again, these games exploit the popularity of a particular branded television show, at the same time as incorporating in them the mechanics and playability developed for existing games which are considered to belong to the same genre. For example, the TV series *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* is an action-adventure programme with similar dynamics to fighting games; *Little Britain: The Computer Game* uses a variety of arcade game mechanics to make interactive the most popular sketches by the comic duo; *Desperate Housewives: The Game* uses part of the people simulator concept developed for the very popular franchise *The Sims*, whereby players create virtual people and help them realise their particular ambitions; and *24: The Game* is a classic shooter where players control the series protagonist, Jack Bauer from the LA Counter Terrorist Unit, and help to unravel the twisted storylines that made the television series such a success.

It seems clear that mainstream entertainment has embraced interactive media and that this partnership is likely to continue and grow in the future, refining the formula and improving the products. There is, however, another area, experiencing considerable growth, which is making use of the multimedia interactivity features developed for recreational purposes in a very different manner. These games are described in the following section.

## 2.2.2 Serious Games

On a very different note, entertainment software mechanics are also being used for serious professional training purposes. For instance, a simulated operating suite which replicates a real operating theatre in a hospital opened in July 2008 at Imperial College, London. It is used to train and assess staff in various medical professions, including surgeons, nurses, paediatricians, anaesthetists and operating department assistants.

Game technology is not only used in colleges of higher education. The US government has been funding a computer game concerned with realistic

role-play and deadly combat in war-zone areas. While this may be seen as odd, since so many American politicians are opposed to violent games, it nonetheless raises interesting ethical and political issues. The video game, which is called *America's Army*, seems to have been successful in attracting young recruits into the US forces despite condemnation by critics concerning the glamorisation of war and violence for marketing purposes (Hurdle 2009: online). Whatever the individual point of view concerning the ethics of government sponsorship of military games, there is no denying the advantages of simulating combat scenarios in a safe environment, where soldiers cannot get hurt and the logistics of the operation are cheap and easily arranged, while the logic behind the military strategies can be explained and learnt.

Other private and rather secretive companies, Imedia.it for instance, have been working with the US army for many years, producing game-like multimedia applications, such as *Tactical Questioning*, where soldiers can be trained in non-combat skills such as intelligence gathering, and conversation techniques based on an enhanced awareness of cultural differences and language barriers.

Some companies and public organisations also use realistic and technically accurate video games, known as simulators, during the first stages of their staff training. A classic example is the *Flight Simulator* series, a game popular with amateur trainee pilots and commonly employed by national air forces and aviation academies to initiate trainees in a controlled environment, without worrying about possible hazardous situations. These software applications make use of video game mechanics to add an element of fun to the task of training, while imitating the physical realities and events related to a particular profession or training programme. By playing these highly realistic and complex games, trainees are able to improve their handling of specific problems, and trainers can tailor their programmes to suit the target trainees' weak points without any risks and at a fraction of the cost.

Computer tutorials to prepare learners for their driving tests by presenting them with interactive animations and video fragments is another example of the penetration of this type of product in our daily lives. These computer programs combine the pedagogical training methods often seen in printed books and manuals with the possibilities of interaction and immediate feedback developed for ludic applications.

Even some UK government initiatives aiming to fight youth-crime are resorting to video games. A good example was Crime Stoppers' *Gameover4knives* (<https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>). This is a free, web-based game with very simple mechanics, which aims to educate young people concerning the dangers of carrying knives, as well as encouraging them to report possible dangerous situations by reaching out to them individually and on their own terms. *FoodForce* is another interesting game developed for the World Food Programme and funded by the United Nations, with the

main aim of raising social awareness concerning the many problems created by famine around the world. Players learn that in some parts of the world, entire communities are suffering from the devastating effects of malnutrition; they offer help to these affected communities using the infrastructure provided by the UN's World Food Programme ([www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)). Many companies and organisations are funding other similar games; examples include organisations such as the Reebok Human Rights Foundation ([www.reebok.com](http://www.reebok.com)). In addition, educational games may be funded as a result of the emotional and intellectual reactions of individuals, who feel they can start or contribute to this type of social debate. An example of the latter is Frasca's *September 12th, a Toy World*, which is free ([www.newsgaming.com](http://www.newsgaming.com)) and strives to illustrate the impossible situation in terms of the current military tactics of the so-called 'war on terror'. One of the many hubs of these activities is the website Values at Play, which operates under the motto 'designing social values in computer games'.<sup>9</sup>

*Re-Mission* is an example created by the private company HopeLab ([www.re-mission.net](http://www.re-mission.net)), which has been interested in promoting the development of a video game with possible healing and therapeutic effects. The aim is to help adolescent cancer sufferers understand the disease and how the different treatments they have to undergo help them to strengthen their immune systems by destroying carcinogenic cells. All these complex issues are presented in a game-like environment and players must digest all the relevant information in order to win. The results of their study and clinical trials can be found in the medical journal *Pediatrics* (VV. AA. 2008: 305 and [www.hopelab.org](http://www.hopelab.org)). Games have been proved to be successful tools when used to teach and raise awareness concerning very serious matters in a way that minimises trauma and is easy to follow; players are able to learn at their own pace and genuinely improve their knowledge and health as a result.

Education is without a doubt an area where multimedia interactive applications have been making a slow but steady progress with regard to products designed for all age groups.<sup>10</sup> Nowadays, parents and teachers are able to purchase educational games related to all essential subject areas which are suitable for children from the time when they are learning spelling and counting, all the way through to the core subjects taught at GCSE and A-Level. Some publicly funded television channels, such as the BBC in the UK, offer free game-type applications ([www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize)) available through their websites as a service to the community. They usually aim to help students with their work, by making school revision more interactive and entertaining than classic printed exercise books. Apart from offering engaging environments with pictures, music and sound, these educational tools make use of three dimensional animations to explain the principles of spelling, physics or cellular biology, as well as illustrative, full-length videos ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)).

The possibility of programming direct feedback turns them into very useful independent revision tools. BBC Bitesize is a very popular free resource

favoured by teachers and parents in the UK, alike, owing to the fact that it provides guidance and exercises for all key stages within the national education system ([www.bbc.co.uk/schools/revision](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/revision)). Similarly, school teachers and university lecturers are being encouraged by their institutions to use computers, with all their multimedia interactive capabilities, as part of the teaching methods with a view to promoting independent learning by using existing resources or developing their own through software tools such as *Course Genie*.<sup>11</sup> This type of application has proved rather successful for students preparing for their GCSE and A-Level exams because of the immediacy of the feedback, and the progress tracking tools. In other words, every time the programme is used, it takes on a different profile, offering targeted advice based on performance, whereas books tend to become damaged through use and occasionally contain wrong answers and even graffiti from previous pupils.

The effect of video games on our daily lives is increasing, thanks to advancements in nanotechnology and the miniaturisation of digital technology, the improvements in Internet and telephone networks, and the advent of the smartphone era.

### 2.2.3 Casual Games

This term refers to games that are designed especially for people who do not really have time to play, but would be interested if a result is achievable within the short timeframe that they have available: while commuting by train or bus, for instance, relaxing in their lunch break, or in similar situations. Prime examples of this type of game are classics such as *Solitaire*, *Minesweeper*, *Bejewelled* or *Angry Birds*, some of which are preinstalled on the computer or the telephone operating systems. To complete a single game can take less than a minute in many cases, so that playing this type of game could be regarded as constituting a simple, but rewarding way in which to combat moments of tedium.

These games started to be used relatively early on as part of marketing campaigns in which free trials were offered in order to attract players onto a particular site and then present them with a variety of products and services, such as films, cable television subscriptions, takeaway meals and, of course, video games. Casual games, which always retained the simplicity which made them popular, quickly developed into a real business opportunity for many developers, who improved the various aspects of the game, enhancing their intuitiveness and appeal.

Mobile phones have also helped a great deal in the promotion and growth of this market. Nowadays, telephone handsets come with at least two or three games preinstalled, and more are easily available from service providers and on the Internet. Despite technical advances and the popularity of Blackberrys and iPhones (all mobile phone manufacturers currently have several models which fall into the category of 'smartphone'), it cannot be

denied that these devices have rather limited display possibilities, computing power and battery life, making casual gaming particularly suitable for this type of platform largely because these games tend to occupy little memory space, are entertaining, easy to pick up, to complete and ultimately to put down. This text has to be displayed on a small screen with varying sizes, from 240 × 320 (classic Nokia), to 640 × 480 (Qwerty keyboard BlackBerry), to 1136 × 640 (iPhone 5), 1280 × 768 (Nexus 4), or 1920 × 1080 (HTC One). Although high screen resolution can project a very crisp image the texts displayed in video games have to be sized specifically for each handset in order to enhance legibility and readability.

The previous pages constitute a detailed account of the variety of multimedia interactive software applications currently on offer and their relationship with the video game industry. Many of these products are released locally using an intranet (examples might include those which are available through on-board entertainment systems on transatlantic flights), nationally (such as the pre-packaged games, or those accessible through cable and digital television), or internationally (such as pre-packaged mainstream games or those available on the Internet).

The translation and localisation of these products into languages other than that in which they are released is arguably not as straightforward as text-only translation, neither is it as inconsequential as some game developers and publishers seem to assume, judging by the insufficient provision both of time and data to enable proficient game translation and localisation to take place. The transition of video games is analysed in detail in Chapter 4, after studying the nature of multichannel texts and their translation in Chapter 3, so that this professional practice may be positioned firmly within the framework of audiovisual translation. It is clear that each game is bound to require a translation strategy specifically tailored to the product, the theme, and the platform. The correct strategy must, therefore, take into account the target audience and the distinct purpose of each game individually in order to guarantee its successful distribution and enjoyment by the target cultures.

Some of the fundamental characteristics that must be borne in mind when studying video game localisation within the context of translation are the linguistic impact of interactivity, the concept of playability and the audiovisual nature of the product. The first two dimensions are discussed in the next sections, while the third aspect is explained in detail in Chapter 3.

### 2.3 GAME INTERACTIVITY AND TRANSLATION

The fact that Translation Studies have traditionally focused on words, sentences, paragraphs and texts can be seen as being rather more accidental than rigorously paradigmatic. Translation in its broader sense is the result

of the evolution of writing, technology and distribution channels, the establishing of linguistics as an academic discipline in the early twentieth century, the influence of comparative and world literature studies in the first half of the same century. It seems fair to state that words, sentences, paragraphs and texts merely constitute the framework of translation, since its real focus lies essentially in the intercultural communication arising from every situation in which people from different countries attempt to communicate with each other. Several communicative strategies are employed simultaneously, examples of which include body language, facial expressions, intonation changes, articulatory emphasis, etc. When all the elements of communication are channelled into written language, only a few of these characteristics are selected and rationalised. It is, in fact, a tribute to the efficiency of written language that its verbal and syntactical composition seems self-sufficient, although, in fact, the reality it portrays is always far wealthier in nuances and information. Audiovisual and multimedia products, now widely available thanks to advancements made with respect to digital technology, reveal the full extent of the wealth of expression communicative acts embody. For example, the written transcript of a political debate is always less revealing than the video recording of the actual debate. It is therefore appropriate and perhaps long overdue, that Translation Studies should concern themselves with multimedia interactive entertainment products because, although all written language is communication, not all communication is written.

Similarly, the task of translators has evolved and adapted to the incredibly varied array of products and services that require a linguistic mediator for their success. Translation in the language services industry linked to software is understood as part of GILT, which stands for Globalisation, Internationalisation, Localisation and Translation ([www.gala-global.org](http://www.gala-global.org)). The three main concepts in the localisation industry business are often abbreviated as G11n (globalisation), I18n (internationalisation) and L10n (localisation), the figures referring to the number of letters in between the first and the last one. Research on the localisation of video games must be understood in its business framework where the terminology originated, so it is worth describing these concepts briefly before going any further. ‘Globalisation’ refers to the range of processes necessary to prepare and launch products worldwide based on the strength of a world-aware product design.

‘Internationalisation’ is the process of designing a product so that it can be easily localised in order achieve worldwide distribution and success. Localisation is the process of adapting a product to each of the importing locales in terms of their linguistic, technical, cultural and legal requirements. Finally, a locale is the language and culture variety natural of a particular geographic region (for example, Portuguese from Brazil is a locale different from Portuguese from Portugal). The main difference from previous business practices and translation approaches is the designing for country-specific

international distribution from the early stages of product development, in a way, the true sign of a globalised industry.

As has been previously discussed by Bernal-Merino (2006: 27), video games combine in one product characteristics of other arts and disciplines such as film, literature, 3-D design and computer programming (see Chapter 4). It could be argued that video games are the epitome of twenty-first century pop culture entertainment in that consumers are able to choose a particular theme, adjust it to suit their individual skills, save their progress and complete the game at their own pace, thanks to the customisation and interactivity offered by these software products. We could debate endlessly about the pernicious influence of violent games,<sup>12</sup> or how useful game-like applications can be for education and professional training (see Section 3.2.2). The fact is that there is a variety of creative possibilities in the development of new games. The fact that there are many international game conferences taking place annually testifies to this. Examples of the most prominent international fora committed to game development include the London Games Summit and Develop in England, GamesCom in Cologne, Game Developers in San Francisco and the Tokyo Game Show. The British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) has had a section dedicated to video games since 2003, with fifteen categories, recognising ‘multiplayer’, ‘artistic achievement’, ‘technical innovation’ and ‘story’ among other qualities.<sup>13</sup>

Although ‘interactivity’ may sound like a very new term linked primarily to computer technology, the concept is by no means new or exclusive to digital media. Indeed, it has been used before (Sainsbury 1998) to indicate that receivers have the power to influence their experience of a particular product or service and its outcome. The following paragraphs bring to the fore the use of interactivity in other arts in order to contextualise and highlight how video games relate to, but also differ from, them.

All modes of entertainment can arguably be said to be interactive by definition. In other words, they depend on a certain degree of contact between the recipient and the creator. The very concept of entertainment is connected with the energy of the creative process and the reaction to it. This process applies to all forms of entertainment, although one of the main differences seems to reside in the level of authorship granted to the recipient, the reader, the spectator, or, in our case, the video game player (Wardrip-Fruin and Harrigan 2004: 8).

There are high levels of interactivity in drama, for instance, an example of which is illustrated by the shows performed by Catalan theatrical company *La fura dels baus*, where the representation takes place among the public and changes slightly depending on people’s reactions.<sup>14</sup> Other examples include Reality Television, programmes such as *X Factor*, *Big Brother* or *Strictly Come Dancing*, where viewers can influence the contestants’ chances of winning by voting for a particular favourite. This type of interactivity is linked to human performance and improvisation, and does not

require computer programming and automation in the manner that video games do.

Literature offers a different kind of interactivity. Wolfgang Iser, for example, uses the term extensively in his books on literature and literary criticism—*The Implied Reader* (Iser 1974) and *The Act of Reading* (Iser 1978)—to explain the interaction between the written text and the reader. He analyses the way in which reading itself is interactive, and notes that neither the study of the actual text, nor the experience of the reader in isolation is likely to yield an adequate account of literary works.

A propos of modern practices in book publishing, Sainsbury (1998: 168) writes extensively about the communicative quality of literature, arguing that children’s texts have always challenged “the boundaries defying literature itself, a challenge which appears to contain a typically postmodern contradiction, whereby outwardly disparate objects, such as toys, books or games, coalesce to form the body of children’s literature”. We must, however, highlight the fact that, as revolutionary as they may seem, these practices are not completely new nor are they only for children. Sendak (1989: 51) describes a collection of “rare and fragile transformation books and mechanical toy books that went back to the seventeenth century, notably the flap books called harlequinades”. These books were initially intended for adults but they were had been relegated to the nursery by the mid-nineteenth century. Examples include the popular mechanical books of the German artist and writer, Lothar Meggendorfer (1847–1925). Reid-Walsh (2006) is also a good source of information on these early transformation books.

While this is true of literature in general, there are some authors who have tried to push those boundaries even further. The novel *Rayuela*, (*Hopscotch* in English), written in 1963 by the Argentine author Julio Cortázar, is probably one of the best examples of how a text is not something as simple and linear as appearances would lead us to believe. Written in an episodic manner, the novel has 155 chapters, the last ninety-nine being designated as ‘expendable’ by the author himself. The book can be read either in direct sequence (from Chapters 1 to 56) or by hopscotching through the entire set of 155 chapters (except Chapter 55) according to instructions provided by the author. There are several other ways in which to read the novel, such as reading only the odd or the even pages. This literary opus certainly differed from previous works and may have opened new possibilities in the minds of modern writers.

In a similar vein, the *Fighting Fantasy* game-book series,<sup>15</sup> started by Livingston and Jackson in 1980, seems to have benefited from the existence of a novel such as *Rayuela*. Game-books offer a further degree of interaction where, besides the traditional relationship between readers and text, readers are asked to choose the actions for the protagonist of the story. This innovation enabled readers to jump from section to section, to fight monsters by throwing dice, etc., making them responsible for the ensuing

consequences and turning them into the actual heroes. A brief excerpt from one of these very popular books, *Caverns of the Snow Witch* by Livingstone (1984: 8), in which the involvement of readers in the creation of the adventure established a new way of interacting with printed literature, is provided below:

The iron ball flies through the air and hits the Frost Giant on the Temple. His huge frame crumples to the floor like a house of cards. The wooden chest he was lifting breaks open, spilling its contents. You find three ornate rings and a cracked bottle which emits a sweet, scented odour. If you wish to try on any of the rings, turn to 65. If you would rather walk through the next tunnel, turn to 338.

As some researchers like Sainsbury (1998: 214) have noted, due to the use of dice for particular encounters, as well as the extremely disciplined structure lying underneath, the ‘notion of textual ownership, or authorship, contradicts the central place of chance in the narrative construction of any reading’. It is undeniably true that pathways, although varied, are predetermined in game-books, and they are not spontaneously generated *ab nihil*, following the reader’s action. There is no denying, however, that this sort of book is responsible for blurring the boundaries between the traditional idea of literature and the nature of games and toys.

Video games have become very popular in what, historically speaking, is a rather short space of time, and the degree to which they use interactivity cannot be overstated. It empowers users and encourages them to become active agents in direct control of an adventure to an extreme never seen before in any medium. In an interview with Murdey (2006: online), game designer, Chris Crawford, talks about interactive storytelling or, to use his preferred term, ‘storytronics’:

Interactive storytelling has a more meandering feel to it. You don’t charge down a plot line towards the end, you meander through a social environment. The key thing is that it’s about people, not things. Social interaction, not mechanical interaction. The primary thing you do in interactive storytelling is talk to other people.

People who are not acquainted with the world of gaming may find it difficult to empathise with video game avatars, especially if they compare them to their experience of a masterful performance in the theatre, or the intimate and rich literary nuances perceived when reading a book. From that viewpoint, empathy in gaming is rather unlikely, simply because games have a different goal. Although some companies and advertising campaigns may want to add value to their games by capitalising on the ‘cinematic’ experience (the awesome graphics features and the high-quality voice acting

comparable to Hollywood blockbusters), play is always about action and reaction.

Action takes place in the first person and, most often, through a computer-generated avatar. Players assume the persona of the characters they play, and inhabit that virtual body and world for as long as they want. In fact, when players talk about the game or the story in the game, they normally tend to use the first person pronoun ‘I’ to talk about their characters and what they did in the game, as opposed to the third person used when talking about the protagonist of a book or a film. The game must adapt to the players’ responses, achieving this in two ways: programmatically, through well-designed gameplay, and linguistically, through the correct flow of relevant information in meaningful text format exchanges. As with the game books mentioned in previous paragraphs, pathways are not limited, with video games offering more possibilities. On the one hand, access to secondary storylines can be delayed or ignored, and, on the other, role-playing and open world games<sup>16</sup> offer a wide array of potential endings, all of which are considered equally valid, encouraging players to act variously and within various time frames.

Game interactivity is particularly relevant when seen from the perspective of translation because a significant proportion of the communication taking part between players and games is provided by language, whether in text, audio, or video format. There must therefore be a considerable amount of linguistic flexibility on the part of the game engine, enabling improvisation. This is analogous to what was said earlier concerning the performing arts, in the sense that the game needs to adapt to the individual choices made by players. Video game programming must take into account syntactical and morphological rules in order to phrase exchanges with players correctly. In some games, players can choose their character’s gender, race or profession, and this information ties seamlessly into the virtual world in meaningful ways. For instance, Non-Playing Characters (NPCs) may change the way they address players or the information they provide, depending on their gender, race, or profession. In other words, NPCs need to be able to phrase sentences correctly, such as: ‘Come this way, Sir [or] Madam’, ‘We don’t allow Elves [or] Orcs [or] Humans on our premises!’ or ‘Guards are welcome at the inn, but wizards should not push their luck’. Errors in the rendering of these sentences in other languages—because of gender and number agreement, mode of address, etc.—risk disrupting the suspension of disbelief, defeating the game’s main object, which is to provide an immersive experience in a virtual universe into which players can enter. These syntactical and morphological issues can affect the successful translation of video games in a significant way; these are described and illustrated more fully in Chapter 4.

It is clear that video game interactivity has a linguistic dimension that must be replicated in each of the localised versions of the product if this is to

prove successful. Without the appropriate transfer of these reality-building linguistic exchanges, the experience of the players becomes more negative, because the notion of playability has been compromised. The following section explores the meaning and application of playability with respect to the translation and localisation of video games.

## 2.4 THE LINK BETWEEN PLAYABILITY AND TRANSLATION

Although the main mechanical functionality of the translated game application may be exactly the same as in the original version, playability may suffer because of bad translation, confusing instructions, unclear menus, poor voice acting and a long list of localisation ‘bugs’ discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5. Playability is therefore a crucial concept for the translation and localisation of video games because it affects not only the final feel of the product, but more importantly the players’ actual enjoyment of the game experience. In the same way as the translation of plays (for the stage) and scripts (for television or cinema) must conform to ‘performability’ implying “a distinction between the idea of the written text and the physical aspect of the performance, and [...] that the theatre text contains within its structure some features that make it performable” (Nikolarea, 2002: online), the translation of video games requires ‘playability’, so that game immersion can be achieved and maintained successfully by taking the suspension of disbelief a step further and creating a convincingly personal experience for players each time they enter the game world.

At the most basic level, localisation must serve a purpose as close to the original as possible in the target language that it is substituting. However, due to the tight schedules in game development, the immovable international release dates, and perhaps the poor understanding of what game translation and localisation entails, the reality is that often the translation of video games lacks the quality given to other products, literary and scientific books, for example. The result is that many players from different countries continually complain on official game forums and blogs about the distraction and annoyance caused to them by localisation bugs and translation mistakes. That the quality of localisation is relevant to gamers is borne out by the fact that they often form amateur translation groups in order to extract, and improve on, all the localisable strings in the game (Díaz-Montón 2011). Some of these projects may take them several months of hard work, but fans are happy to spend time developing their skills for the sake of better quality localisation for the benefit of the wider gaming community. One of the most popular and productive game translation and localisation communities in Spain is ClanDlan ([www.clandlan.net](http://www.clandlan.net)). Its netizens<sup>17</sup> are responsible for more than forty patches to improve on the official versions of certain games. They even create completely new ones for badly translated games and even for titles that have never been translated into Spanish.<sup>18</sup>

Playability has to be taken into account when considering localisation, simply because the players’ interaction with the game application can be either greatly enhanced or considerably diminished, depending on the quality of the localisation. Talking about *Smarty Pants*, a quiz game for children released by EA in 2007, Aaron Loeb (in Kumar, 2008: online) states the following:

You can’t localize trivia—especially trivia targeted to children, as they know totally different things in different countries. So, together we had to manage 120,000 questions (20,000 per territory) and all the potential headaches of that much data. [...] The *Smarty Pants* [focus] tests were fantastic: people jumping up and down, laughing, screaming. We knew we had a really fun game early on. From there, the goal was making it as fun and accessible as possible.

In the case of a game like *Smarty Pants*, simply translating the original questions from US English to Spanish, for example, would not cater for children in most Spanish speaking countries because familiarity with trivia is dependent on culture, education, personal experience, and everyday life in the community where one lives. These facts are even more inescapable in the case of children and young adults and, to be successful, games have to be developed in such a way that the core programming code can accommodate the requirements of each country with its language, culture, assumptions, system of decorum and expectations. This process is called ‘internationalisation’, and it is normally promoted by marketing departments aiming to expand their network to include an overseas clientele. It is often still an assumption—and this is especially counterproductive when it comes from game developers and publishers—that the visual is sufficient for communication and, thus, that there is little reason to be attentive to translation accuracy. There may even be an additional assumption that what is enjoyable in one country will be equally agreeable in another, but this is not necessarily the case, since the concept of what constitutes fun is deeply rooted in culture, tradition and history.

There are many external and internal parameters to take into account when translating and re-designing a game for a particular territory. Seen from the external perspective, the development of any video game will be mainly constrained by the allocated budget, sponsorships and market expectations, apart from other considerations like platform specifications (Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Nintendo Wii), branding, time frame, etc. From the internal perspective, other parameters closely linked with the nature of the video game must be re-evaluated when considering its possible translation and release in different countries. Classic examples of the aspects that need to be tackled with due care include the soundtrack accompanying the game (*Project Gotham Racing 1* featured radio stations with the local DJs of the receiving territory); the characters (*Formula 1* highlights

Fernando Alonso for the Spanish market, whereas it puts forward Lewis Hamilton for the British one); and the commentators (sports games often use popular sports commentators from radio and television that may have to be substituted to suit the country in which the game will be released).

Developers will also have to change part of the content of the video game to adjust it to the age ratings of the various territories (McCarthy 2005). Some games may be allowed to display blood, abusive language and sexual storylines in the USA, while other countries may ask for specific modifications or sanctions and bans may even be put in place when the authorities consider the material to be inappropriate. A good illustration of this is the fact that, in Germany, the depiction of red blood and Nazi paraphernalia have been forbidden, as is noted on the USK rating board web page ([www.usk.de](http://www.usk.de)).<sup>19</sup> A prime example where crucial changes took place was the title *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* which had to eliminate all references to Nazi Germany (Kay 2002: online). Similarly, *Tomb Raider* "had to undergo a major overhaul to make it acceptable to Japanese sensibilities, so the grisly sudden-death sequences" featured in the Western version disappeared (Maxwell-Chandler 2005a: 137).

Starr Long (producer of NCsoft and one of the figures behind *Ultima Online*, an immensely popular massively multiplayer online game) expresses his concern in an interview, where he talks about the many changes required in game translation and localisation and laments that, very often, the development team "believes that just because something works in their territory it can work just as successfully in another territory" (in Maxwell-Chandler 2005: 236). In this sense, I would like to argue that it is only by applying the concept of playability that the creativity required for the translation and localisation of video games can be fully understood (Bernal-Merino 2012b). The concept of ludic creativity and its implications for translators are fully analysed in Section 4.3.

The impact of MIES applications in modern society has been discussed in this chapter and the need for quality localisation for such products, if they are to be equally successful in other territories, has also been emphasised. The following chapter places video game translation and localisation within the discipline relating to the translation of multichannel texts, often referred to in Translation Studies as audiovisual texts. It is important to recognise and draw parallels with, the translation of other audiovisual texts in order to identify the unique features of game translation and localisation and to understand its professional practice.

## RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. Think about the terms described in Section 2.1, find images and videos from each of them and describe what would be their translation challenges?

2. Following the mainstream, serious and casual games classification in Section 2.2, match these games to some of your family and friends. What would be their translation needs and expectations? Why?
3. How would each of the people you thought of in the previous question react to a game in a foreign language? How would this affect the sales of such game?
4. A player has to actively navigate and react inside the virtual world of the video game; why is translation relevant at all for interactivity? Compare this interactivity with that of other gadgets and devices used in other industries.
5. How does lack of translation affect playability? Support your answer with articles in game press and comments in video game forums, and consider what turns interactivity into playability.
6. Read the latest report by ISFE on the European game markets and align its information to the top ten games in a non-English speaking country. What if any is the correlation between popularity and translation?

## NOTES

1. The Trocadero has all kinds of amusement machines, such as pinball, darts, racing simulators, etc. spread over several floors, and it has been open for more than twenty years. The official website address is [www.londontrocadero.com](http://www.londontrocadero.com).
2. Egg-shaped handheld computers with a digital pet simulator program created and distributed by Bandai in 1996 in Japan that quickly became a world sensation ([www.tamagotchieurope.com/EN/index.html](http://www.tamagotchieurope.com/EN/index.html)).
3. LeapFrog designs, develops and markets technology-based learning products for children from early stages to the end of secondary education. See for example [http://microsite.leapfrog.com/leappad2\\_uk/index.html](http://microsite.leapfrog.com/leappad2_uk/index.html).
4. This phrase refers to the unwritten but widely accepted game developing philosophy that places an instantaneous immersion and pain-free game playing learning curve as its most important prerequisite.
5. A full QWERTY keyboard has more than 100 keys and various modifier and function keys that multiply the instruction possibilities, whether imputing a character or initialising a command.
6. A game pad can have up to up to seventeen buttons with only four modifiers so gaming instructions are considerably different from those for computers. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Control\\_pad#PlayStation\\_3](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Control_pad#PlayStation_3).
7. CGI stands for Computer-Generated Images, and it refers to the application of 3-D computer graphics to the creation of special effects in films, documentaries, commercials and almost any type of media production.
8. *Change4Life* is a campaign initiated by the National Health Service of the UK to fight the growing obesity problem in the United Kingdom. See [www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx).
9. The Values at Play (VAP) project was conceived with the intention of investigating how video game designers consciously and unconsciously embed social values into video games through narratives and game mechanics. Their URL is: [www.valuesatplay.org](http://www.valuesatplay.org).

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10. Becta, the UK Government's lead Agency for Information and Communications Technology in Education, has an active interest in the computer and the video game sectors, which may be both of use and provide inspiration for new ideas in education. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/1879019.stm#story>.
11. This is an application developed by Wimba to help teachers create interactive exercises ([www.wimba.com](http://www.wimba.com)).
12. In 2007, the UK Government asked Dr Tanya Byron to conduct an independent review to examine the risks to children from exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate material on the Internet and in video games. The full report can be found on [www.education.gov.uk/ukccis/about/a0076277/the-byron-reviews](http://www.education.gov.uk/ukccis/about/a0076277/the-byron-reviews).
13. The UK government sent two representatives to the London Games Summit which took place in 2006 to celebrate the success of this industry in the UK. BAFTA has also recognised the success of this industry since 2003, with the celebration of a special video game awards ceremony every October, celebrating excellence in video games: [www.bafta.org/games/awards](http://www.bafta.org/games/awards).
14. Shows like *F@ust 3.0* and *Ombrá* blur the boundaries separating the public and the actors, with the result that patrons have no option but to engage actively with the performance or leave the show.
15. First Published in 1980 by Puffin, they are now reprinted by Wizard Books, but still controlled by the authors who have their own dedicated website: [www.fightingfantasygamebooks.com](http://www.fightingfantasygamebooks.com).
16. An open world game is a type of video game level design where players can roam freely through the virtual world and they are given considerable freedom in choosing how or when to approach objectives.
17. Refers to individuals involved in online communities. They are also referred to as *cybercitizens*.
18. Muñoz-Sánchez (2008) writes about fan localisation and 'romhacking' for classic games that are only available through used-games shops.
19. USK is the German video game rating board, similar to the BBFC in Great Britain, PEGI in Europe, and ESRB in the US. The initials stand for *Unterhaltungsssoftware Selbstkontrolle* [Self-Monitoring of Entertainment Software].