

CARAC TERES

Estudios culturales y críticos de la esfera digital

En este número participan ■ Elvira Blanco Santini, Sébastien Doubinsky, Daniel Escandell Montiel, Rosana Fuentes Fernández, Beatriz Garrido Ramos, Jan Gregor, Jindřiška Kračková, Darío Lanza Vidal, Alejandro Lozano, Miguel Ángel Motis Dolader, Daniel Raušer, Petr Sádlo, Karim Sidibe, Věra Sládková, Libuše Turinská.

Dossier: Current Research Approaches in Humanities through the Eyes of Czech Linguists (1)

Caracteres. Estudios culturales y críticos de la esfera digital

Caracteres es una revista académica interdisciplinar y plurilingüe orientada al análisis crítico de la cultura, el pensamiento y la sociedad de la esfera digital. Esta publicación prestará especial atención a las colaboraciones que aporten nuevas perspectivas sobre los ámbitos de estudio que cubre, dentro del espacio de las Humanidades Digitales. Puede consultar las normas de publicación en la web (<http://revistacaracteres.net/normativa/>).

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DOSSIER: CURRENT RESEARCH APPROACHES IN
HUMANITIES THROUGH THE EYES OF CZECH LINGUISTS
(1)

Coord. Jan Gregor & Libuše Turinská

**GENDER ALTERNATIVES IN THE FRENCH
TRANSLATION OF MMORPG *WORLD OF WARCRAFT* IN
RELATION TO THE ENGLISH ORIGINAL**

ALTERNATIVAS DE GÉNERO EN LA TRADUCCIÓN
FRANCESA DEL MMORPG *WORLD OF WARCRAFT* EN
RELACIÓN CON EN LA VERSIÓN ORIGINAL EN INGLÉS

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RESUMEN:

Hablantes nativos de las lenguas más habladas en el mundo, que juegan con MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Game) desean la traducción de *World of Warcraft* a su lengua materna. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar las traducciones de inglés a francés con respecto a sus géneros lingüísticos. La parte teórica analiza las tendencias nuevas crecientes en traducciones. Posteriormente analiza el tema de la traducción con respecto a los específicos de traducciones de los juegos de ordenador, e informa sobre los principios básicos del juego. La parte práctica examina los nombres más frecuentes en el juego. Los nombres son analizados con respecto a sus específicos géneros en relación con la lengua original y la lengua meta.

ABSTRACT:

Native speakers of most widely spoken languages of the world who engage themselves in playing MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Game) often express a wish to have the game translated to their mother tongue. The intent of this article is to explore the way the original English names occurring in MMORPG *World of Warcraft* are translated into French in terms of their gender specifics. The theoretical part suggests growing trends in

translations in general. Subsequently, it also explores contentious issues of translating from one language to another in relation to the translation specifics of computer games. In addition, the basic principle of the game is explained. The empirical part deals with most common names occurring throughout the whole game; thereafter, the names are interpreted regarding their gender specifics in relation to the original and target language.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Traducción, morfología, semántica, género, desviación semántica

KEYWORDS:

Translation, morphology, semantics, gender, semantic deviation

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The scientific study was created during the project No. 201609 of the Internal Grant Competition at the Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice.

1. Introduction

Written works of a worldwide acclaim often require an accurate translation to many world languages so that people all around the world may enjoy the author's extraordinary achievement. Until recently, a translator was mostly immersed in deciphering the most recent novels or providing subtitles to forthcoming motion pictures. However, the limited scope of translator's work has recently expanded due to the rapid development of modern communication technologies, which have explored new ways of author-recipient communication. To put in in a nutshell, in a rapidly shrinking world, international communication and translation is a sheer necessity (Lindahl, 1999: 6). Presently, the special need for a correct translation concerns not only excellent books, writings or movies, but also stories presented in a different way from the traditional pattern. Indeed, apart from books and movies, MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games) have turned out to be one of the most recent, and also one of the most popular, story-telling fictions that has been hugely enjoyed by people all over the world in the last decade.

2. Communication in Virtual Communities

In the first place, such virtual worlds concentrate ardent gamers, who form close-knit communities fiercely defending their beliefs and positions within the fictional world. In the communities, the gamers spend long hours playing in environments where shared experience and an open communication in a particular language are fairly common (Safko & Brake, 2009) so that the people involved

are required to show comprehensive knowledge of the discussed topic. However, the special terminology is important for the players to know not only for an effective interpersonal communication, but also for the full awareness of the epic story of the game (Sádlo, 2016: 19). In fact, players meet a lot of NPCs (non-player characters) throughout the game, who often eloquently speak to them, and directly confront them with various tasks and quests, most of which also require a sound grasp of the language. All the same, not all the avid gamers have mastered the language to the extent of being able to go through the entire game without serious difficulties and understanding struggles. In addition, some native speakers expressed the need to practice a foreign language via online gaming. Consequently, some of the games have been translated from their English original to several widely spoken world languages e.g. French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese etc.

3. Translation Difficulties of Virtual Worlds

As a matter of fact, when translating from one language to another, a question to which extent is the particular translation relevant arises. To put it more precisely, according to several studies, the principle of translation is based on the idea of the original text so that translation is commonly understood as a process of transferring meaning from one signifying system to another (Lindahl, 1999: 269). On the other hand, the target language must also bear a significant relation to the original one, from which it derives its stability and objectivity (269). For example, as for English-to-French translation, one cannot literally translate the word “angina” bearing the same meaning, as it carries different connotations in both languages. Indeed, French connotations commonly refer to a bacterial throat infection

(LaRousse, 2016), whereas the English meaning mostly demonstrates an association with a chronic heart disease (Thesaurus, 2016). This central issue concerns not only well-established works such as books or movies, but also other means of story-telling, in this case an imaginary virtual world; and it was *World of Warcraft* that was one of the first MMORPG to be translated. And it is the French translation of *World of Warcraft* that is going to be dealt with in this article.

This challenging task required not only vast knowledge of the particular languages, but also cardinal metalinguistic principles had to be dealt with. These fundamental assumptions of translating such games comprise a true interpretation of the game story and an intimate familiarity with life and speech of the gamers' community (Sádlo, 2016: 19). In fact, such a tight-knit community does not settle for a general dictionary translation of a particular word; it requires a precise term, which might more aptly depict the meaning of the particular entity in their mother tongue. This crucial issue concerns mainly semantic and grammatical aspects of the language.

4. Looking for a Gender Identity

In terms of those key issues, grammatical gender discrimination is one of the most attractive aspects that a linguistic analysis indicates; and it is particularly the gender discrimination in the English-French translation of the game that this article explores in detail.

As a matter of fact, French is much more inclined to discriminate grammatical gender than its English counterpart. On the one hand, some cases arose because French discriminates only two grammatical genders, so that one thing with the attributed

gender is more contrasted with its gender counterpart e.g. *la pierre*, *f.* – *stone*, *n.*, *le roche*, *m.* – *rock*, *n.* Indeed, the French synonymous expressions differ in gender (feminine vs. masculine), whereas their English alternatives regularly use only neuters. On the other hand, some cases occurred because people saw a symbolic link between natural gender and grammatical gender in past, and such a link has prevailed until nowadays even in English e.g. *la terre*, *f.* – *mother earth*, *f.* (Maurin, 2016). Furthermore, the Prague School emphasized the importance of the linguistic gender discrimination even more upon developing the theory of markedness, which, apart from other linguistic entities, points out the importance of distinguishing gender. For that reason, masculine nouns are considered unmarked, as they may refer to both genders in the flow of speech, and, on the other hand, their feminine alternatives are regarded as marked (Lyons, Hampl & Ivić, 2012: 10).

5. *World of Warcraft* – A Pioneering Virtual World

Above all, *World of Warcraft* was one of the first MMORPG coming onto the market. This MMORPG came out in 2004 in tribute to its predecessor, a pioneering RTS (Real Time Strategy) *Warcraft*. Despite the game being over a decade old, it is still the most popular MMORPG in the world (PCGamesN, 2016).

As for the story, the essential principle of the game is a fierce fight between two feuding factions - Horde and Alliance - for the power over the virtual world (Schönbauerová, 2014). At the beginning of the game, each player must choose the faction he would like to play for. Once the faction has been chosen, the big adventure begins. From the beginning, the player meets a lot of NPCs who assign to them delicate tasks, which are directly

communicated in a particular language. Thus, the player has to be absolutely sure that he fully understood the particular task. For that reason, an accurate translation fully recognizing all translational issues is needed.

6. Research Part

In the following examples, the article explores French gender specifics in relation to its English original. In the research part, racial gender differences and class (profession) gender differences are examined respectively. The races and classes occurring in *World of Warcraft* are listed below. Subsequently, French feminine variants are specified regarding their masculine counterparts.

Races:

Alliance – *Draeneï* (*Draenei*), *Nain* (*Dwarf*), *Gnome* (*Gnome*), *Humain* (*Human*), *Elfe de la nuit* (*Night Elf*), *Worgen* (*Worgen*)

Horde – *Elfe de sang* (*Blood Elf*), *Gobelin* (*Goblin*), *Orc* (*Orc*), *Tauren* (*Tauren*), *Troll* (*Troll*), *Mort-vivant* (*Undead*)

Classes: *Chevalier de la mort* (*Death Knight*), *Druide* (*Druid*), *Chasseur de démons* (*Demon Hunter*), *Chasseur* (*Hunter*), *Mage* (*Mage*), *Moine* (*Monk*), *Paladin* (*Paladin*), *Prêtre* (*Priest*), *Voleur* (*Rogue*), *Chaman* (*Shaman*), *Démoniste* (*Warlock*), *Guerrier* (*Warrior*).

Races:

Draeneï – is an unmarked noun ending on a vowel; the noun may refer to a masculine or feminine gender.

Nain – is an unmarked masculine noun ending on a consonant.

Naine – is a marked feminine noun having admitted a feminine suffix –e.

Gnome – is an unmarked noun ending on a vowel; the noun may refer to a masculine or feminine gender.

Humain – is an unmarked masculine noun ending on a consonant.

Humaine – is a marked feminine noun having admitted a feminine suffix –e.

Elfe de la nuit – is an unmarked compound of which the head noun ends on a vowel; the noun may refer to a masculine or feminine gender.

Worgen – is an unmarked noun ending on a consonant. This name referring to lupine humanoids came into existence along with the origin of *World of Warcraft*. Concerning its origin, the name invokes the old Anglo-Saxon lore and may refer to a masculine or feminine gender.

Elfe de sang – is an unmarked compound of which the head noun ends on a vowel; the noun may refer to a masculine or feminine noun.

Gobelin – is an unmarked masculine noun ending on a consonant.

Gobeline – is a marked feminine noun having admitted a feminine suffix –e.

Orc – is an unmarked masculine noun ending on a consonant.

Orque – is a marked feminine noun having admitted suffix –que.

Tauren – is an unmarked masculine noun ending on a consonant.

Tauréne – is a marked feminine noun having admitted a feminine suffix –e.

Troll – is an unmarked masculine noun ending on a consonant.

Trollesse – is a marked feminine noun having admitted a feminine suffix –esse.

Mort-vivant – is an unmarked masculine compound of which both parts end on consonants.

Morte-vivante – is a marked feminine compound of which both parts admitted a feminine suffix –e.

Classes:

Chevalier de la mort – is a marked compound of which the second part explicitly defines the head noun. The noun admitted French nominal masculine suffix –ier, and may refer to a masculine or feminine gender. As a matter of fact, the head noun might not have admitted its feminine alternative *chevalière* so as not to be confused with its French homonymous variant meaning *a ring*.

Druide – is an unmarked masculine noun.

Druidesse – is a marked feminine noun having admitted French nominal feminine suffix –esse; the noun was derived from its masculine counterpart *druide*.

Chasseur – is an unmarked masculine noun having admitted French nominal masculine suffix –eur; the noun was derived from the verb *chasser*.

Chasseresse – is a marked feminine noun. The noun admitted French nominal feminine suffix –esse, and it is a derivative from its masculine counterpart *chasseur*. In addition, in the French

translation of *World of Warcraft*, the noun refers to a female *chasseur* in general; it means not hunting a particular object.

Chasseur de démons – is a marked masculine compound of which the second part explicitly defines the head noun in terms of the particular *chasseur*.

Chasseuse de démons – is a marked feminine compound specifically defining the head noun in terms of the particular kind of *chasseresse*; In regard to the French translation of *World of Warcraft*, the head noun refers to a female *chasseur* hunting a particular object e.g. demons; consequently, the head noun admitted a feminine nominal suffix –euse.

Mage – is an unmarked noun originated from the Latin word *Magus*, and might be interpreted in relation to three wise men sent by the king Herod to pay homage to the infant Jesus. As a matter of fact, women did not enjoy such exclusive privileges in biblical times so that the noun *mage* carries mainly “masculine” connotations; for that reason, even in *World of Warcraft*, the name did not admit any suffix which would determine the feminine gender. Nevertheless, so as to preserve game’s diversity and balance, the noun may refer to a masculine or feminine gender.

Moine – is an unmarked masculine noun.

Moniale – is a marked feminine noun having undergone a change in the radix. The noun was derived from its masculine counterpart *moine*.

Paladin – is an unmarked noun originated in the middle age. As a matter of fact, the name originally indicated only men appointed by a king or emperor as palace authorities; likewise, in *World of Warcraft*, the name invokes distinctive masculine qualities, such as strength, righteousness or chivalry; for that

reason, a feminine derivative in *World of Warcraft* does not exist. All the same, in order to encourage game diversity and maintain its balance, the noun may also refer to a feminine gender.

Prêtre – is an unmarked masculine noun, which was derived from the verb *prier*.

Prêtresse – is a marked feminine noun having admitted a French feminine suffix *-esse*; the noun was derived from its masculine counterpart *prêtre*.

Voleur – is an unmarked masculine noun, which was derived from the verb *voler*.

Voleuse – is a marked feminine noun having admitted a French feminine suffix *-euse*; the noun was derived from its masculine counterpart *voleur*.

Chaman – is an unmarked masculine noun.

Chamane – is a marked feminine noun having admitted a French suffix *-e*; the noun was derived from its masculine alternative *chaman*.

Démoniste – is an unmarked noun that refers to dark wizards who are believed to wield evil powers. The name is commonly associated only with MMORPGs, and thus might be encountered mainly within the fantasy world. The noun also admitted the suffix *-iste* (var. *-aste*), which commonly describes a profession in French (tractoriste, gymnaste, etc.), irrespective of referring to male or female. Therefore, the noun may indicate to a masculine or feminine gender.

Guerrier – is an unmarked masculine noun having admitted a French masculine suffix *-ier*. The name was derived from the noun *guerre*.

Guerrière – is a marked feminine noun having admitted a French suffix –*ière*; the noun was derived from its masculine alternative *guerrier*.

The observational research suggested that French translation is far more gender oriented than its English counterpart. Racial feminine alternatives assume a consonantal ending at their masculine counterparts, whereas a vocalic ending indicates only one morphological variant for both genders. The only exception is represented by the noun *Worgen*, the name of which does not have a long-established tradition in French language.

With respect to the gender differences within the particular class, the research demonstrated that nouns with their tight formation in French language tend to morphologically discriminate feminine gender in relation to their masculine alternative. On the other hand, the nouns of a foreign origin or with neutral derivational suffix employ only one morphological alternative. In one case, two lexical feminine alternatives occurred in French translation in order to name originally one English lexical unit. This essential aspect may also suggest that French *World of Warcraft* communities are more inclined to point out feminine aspects of the game regardless of the sex discrimination among the gamers.

However, there arises a question, whether the French translation has a significant semantic relation to its English original when all the expressible alternatives of gender discrimination in both languages are taken into account.

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Estudios culturales y críticos de la esfera digital

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Ingeniero Superior especializado en tecnologías digitales de la imagen. Profesor del Grado Oficial de Bellas Artes y del de Fotografía y director del Máster en Creación de Animación en el Transforming Arts Institute, adscrito a la Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. Una de sus principales líneas de investigación discurre en torno a la exploración del *matte painting* como mecanismo de creación de material cinematográfico por medios pictóricos. Interesado en la innovación en tecnologías digitales para la producción artística, sus obras han sido expuestas en galerías de arte de Nueva York, Los Ángeles, Londres, Hong Kong, Cardiff, Atenas y Madrid

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Investigador predoctoral de la Universidad de Salamanca en la facultad de Filosofía. Su principal línea de investigación y el motivo de su tesis doctoral es la estética de las nuevas tecnologías, tema que al que se acerca a partir de las metamorfosis recientes en el imaginario social. Su segundo ámbito de trabajo, conectado estrechamente con el anterior, es la estética videolúdica y la exploración del juego como un componente clave en la constelación mediática actual.

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Maestría en Educación Religiosa y Estudios Ingleses. Desde 2011 trabaja en el Instituto de Tecnología y Negocios de České Budějovice. Su trabajo se ha centrado en la educación religiosa en Inglaterra, que es el tema que está desarrollando como parte de su investigación doctoral en Teología en la Universidad de Bohemia del Sur. Ha publicado una veintena de artículos relacionados con su investigación.

Věra Sládková

Maestría en Enseñanza de Inglés y Checo. Desde 2015 trabaja en el Instituto de Tecnología y Negocios de České Budějovice. Se especializa en la investigación con *corpus* de estudiantes, como en el papel de la combinación léxica en la creación, interpretación y aproximación metafórica al lenguaje y en la enseñanza de lenguas. Su último trabajo es un artículo en coautoría titulado “Loop input – a unique language teacher training method”, publicado en 2016.

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