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**The Translation of Realia and Irrealia in Game Localization:
Culture-Specificity between Realism and Fictionality**

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The Translation of Realia and Irrealia in Game Localization: Culture-Specificity between Realism and Fictionality

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Thesis conventions

American English is used throughout this dissertation. For consistency purposes, any occurrences of British spelling in quotations have been changed to American spelling.

Unless otherwise specified, all translations from Italian and Spanish into English are my own.

Examples containing dialogue strings taken from the corpus of this research are in numerical order per chapter, using the format “NC.(NE)” where the first number indicates the chapter to which the example belongs and the second number indicates the example itself. For instance, the first example of the first chapter is listed as 1.(1) but referred to as (1).

Candidate's statement of originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes. I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Silvia Pettini

January 8th, 2017

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Abstract

Nowadays video games are a global phenomenon, gaming is a widespread pastime in society and the digital interactive entertainment industry forms one of the major and most profitable creative sectors in the world. Interestingly, translation is pivotal because it allows products to cross cultural and linguistic borders in order to reach players in different locales.

Given the wide variety of games in terms of genre, volume of text and playtime, a systematic approach is not workable in order to explore their complex nature. From a Translation Studies (TS) perspective, this is even more complex because games are multi-textual and may require very different skills ranging from literary to technical translation.

This research aims at investigating the influence the degree of realism or fictionality of game contents exerts on language transfer strategies while focusing on the diversity of specializations required by this new medium. Special attention will be paid to the translation of *realia* and *irrealia*, since they represent the main points of contact between the real world and the game world, and seem to pose very different translation challenges. The main objective is to study this realm in order to provide a theoretical framework of basic tools for translators in game localization with a particular emphasis on the English-Italian/Spanish pairs.

An interdisciplinary approach will be used to understand the multifaceted nature of games as technological artefacts and cultural media whereas a TS descriptive approach will be adopted to study the in-game dialogues of the titles included in the corpus, and the translational challenges they present.

Keywords

Game translation, linguistic and cultural game localization, *realia*, *irrealia*, video game.

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List of acronyms

AESVI	Associazione Editori Sviluppatori Videogiochi Italiani (Association of Italian game publishers and developers)
AVT	Audiovisual Translation
AVTS	Audiovisual Translation Studies
BF4	Battlefield 4
CESA	Computer Entertainment Suppliers Association
DTS	Descriptive Translation Studies
EA	Electronic Arts
ESA	Entertainment Software Association
ESRB	Entertainment Software Rating Board
FIGS	French Italian German Spanish
FPS	First Person Shooter
GL	Game Localization
LISA	Localization Industry Standards Association
ME3	Mass Effect 3
MMOG	Massive Multiplayer Online Game
MMORPG	Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game
MOHW	Medal of Honor Warfighter
NPC	Non-Playable Character
PEGI	Pan-European Game Information
QA	Quality Assurance
ROI	Return On Investment
RPG	Role-Playing Game

SA	Source Audience
SC	Source Culture
SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text
TA	Target Audience
TC	Target Culture
TL	Target Language
TMIES	Translation of Multimedia Interactive Entertainment Software
TS	Translation Studies
TT	Target Text
UI	User Interface
VO	Voice-over

Introduction

Translation and Globalization: The Case of Video Games

The multimedia interactive entertainment software, which is most commonly referred to as video game, first became popular in the USA and Japan in 1970s and rapidly evolved into a global mass consumption product. Video games' history is therefore rather short when compared with other leisure activities, such as plays, poetry, novels, etc. Nevertheless, their non-stop progression has made video games into the most lucrative entertainment industry ahead of books, music and films (Bernal Merino 2011). According to NewZoo (2016a: online), the games market will reach over \$90 billion this year with a total of 2.1 billion gamers around the globe.

Video games' "success story was fully dependent, and is inextricably linked to the success story of the game localization profession that had to be created from scratch in order to cover the unprecedented demands of multimedia interactive products" (Bernal Merino 2011: 11). The field of game localization arose from the industry's own unique needs: allowing video games to go beyond cultural and linguistic borders in order to reach players in different territories, each representing a "locale", "a specific combination of region, language and character encoding" (Esselink 2000: 1).

The most significant areas are North America and Japan as both producers and consumers. English and Japanese are indeed the main source languages (SLs). However, game culture is spreading towards emerging markets such as Eastern, Asian and South-American countries. In order to grasp the worldwide spread of video gaming, the US Entertainment Software Association (ESA) yearly statistics and the Japanese Computer Entertainment Suppliers Association (CESA) publications give an insight as to how it has evolved since the early beginning and has become pervasive in today's society.

For the purposes of this study, since US English is the SL of the video games in the corpus used for this research, it seems interesting to briefly outline the impact of video games on US society.

According to the ESA's "2016 Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry" (ESA 2016: 2-3), 63 percent of US households are home to at least one person who plays video games regularly (3 hours or more per week), the average gamer age is 35 years old, and 73 percent are aged 18 or older. Nearly half (41 percent) of gamers are female and women

over the age of 18 represent a significantly greater portion of the game-playing population (31 percent) than boys aged 18 or younger (17 percent). Moreover, as the above-mentioned report suggests, video games are a strong engine for economic growth: in 2015, the industry generated more than \$23,5 billion in revenue (ESA 2016: 13).

As regards Europe, the continent has alone over 40 different countries and languages but the biggest game markets are Germany, the UK and France (Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2012: 45). According to NewZoo's Global Game Market Report (NewZoo 2016b: online), which displays the top 100 countries by game revenues, these three European nations come in at number four, six and seven respectively on the rankings, behind China, the USA, and Japan on a global scale. The list then comprises Canada at number eight and, finally, Spain and Italy coming in at number nine and ten respectively.

Accordingly, it comes as no surprise to learn that the standard set of target European languages (TLs) for video games is commonly referred to as "FIGS" (French, Italian, German and Spanish), an acronym which was coined in 1980s and still represents "the minimum default group of languages that most games are translated to" (Bernal Merino 2011: 14-15). However, the number of TLs for major games now routinely exceeds ten, including both European and Asian languages (Hasegawa cit. in O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 60).

Although considered a "secondary market" (Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2012: 10) at global level, Italy is a rapidly growing game consumption area where full localizations are becoming more and more common. Publishers usually opt for either partial or full localization on the basis of the target locale significance and the possible return on investment (ROI). The inclusion of Italian into the FIGS group from the beginning of the industry's consolidation, and recent favorable trends, testify to the importance of the Italian target locale development, as the data provided by the Association of Italian game publishers and developers (AESVI 2016) show:

- over 25 million Italians play video games, 49.7 percent of the population, and half of gamers are female;
- as regards age groups, 24.3 percent is 35-44 years old, 20.1 percent 45-54 years old, 18.1 percent is 25-34 years old, 12.1 percent is 18-24 years old, 10.3 percent is 55-64 years old, 8 percent is over 65 years old and finally only 7.1 percent is 14-17 years old;
- in 2015, the game industry recorded 952.1 million euros in revenue, of which 59.8 percent were generated by purchases of software;

- as regards software revenue in particular, 61.5 percent is console and PC games, 38.5 percent is digital content, including online subscriptions, downloadable content, mobile applications, and social networking game downloadable content;
- as to genres, the most bestselling video games belong to “action and adventure” (31.7 percent), “sports” (22.8), “shooter” (14), role-playing (9.5), “racing” (6.3), “music” (2.9), “simulation” (2.7), “children” (2.7) and other genres (7.4).

Moreover, as Cella (2014) explains, in Italy there are also about a hundred of software houses, whose total turnover is about twenty million euros. These data confirm that Italy is historically more a consumer country than a producing one although it seems that the video games’ landscape in Italy is evolving day by day. In the future, this could also affect localization practice and research as far as Italian could be both source and target language.

Aims and Structure of the Work

The main objective of this thesis is to contribute to the ongoing debate on the topic by outlining translational theoretical guidelines in linguistic and cultural game localization. The main goal is therefore that of conceptualizing this new domain from a Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) perspective and, in doing so, hopefully broadening new horizons for this interdisciplinary area, while assessing the impact game technology has on language transfer.

As O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 26) point out “game localization introduces dimensions that challenge some of the current assumptions about translation, thus raising epistemic issues for the discipline”; it also “involves dealing with a new medium whose characteristics may not be fully accounted for in the current theoretical framework available in Translation Studies” (2013: 40). The professional practice of game localization, from a linguistic and cultural point of view, “could conceivably result in a change in the perception of translation in the 21st century with regards to traditional views on equivalence, creativity, authorship” (Bernal Merino 2015: 2-3) and “in certain aspects, may challenge to traditional theoretical models in translation because of the implications of their [video games’] interactivity and the international simultaneous shipment model the game industry employs” (2015: 11).

The main aim of this study is to describe the strategies adopted by translators in the linguistic and cultural localization of video games, from English into Italian, and to a lesser extent, into Spanish. More specifically, I intend to detect the tendencies or regularities, if any,

in game translators' decision-making process from a DTS perspective, which I have adopted as a working methodology. The term "tendency" is meant as an intermediate step between a "strategy" (Hurtado 2001) and a "norm" (Toury 1995), and is used as a tool to research translation regularities of behavior in recurring situations. As Martínez Sierra (2015) suggests, "regularity" is understood as frequency, which also denotes a quantitative approach. While Toury's notion of "norm" does not need any introduction, "strategy" is meant as the procedure "conscious and unconscious, verbal and non-verbal, internal (cognitive) and external, used by the translator to resolve problems" (Hurtado 2001: 637), i.e. the mechanism used by the translator during the translation process to find a solution to a given problem. Strategies are process or behavior patterns; their nature is procedural.

Thus, the objective is to describe and explain the facts and formulate theoretical general patterns of translational behavior starting from empirical observation and its findings. The concept of "tendencies" here seems to be more appropriate than that of "norms", although the terms might seem synonymous, due to the size of the corpus and to the nature of its translated texts. In order to identify norms, more extensive and thorough investigations on a larger corpus of translations made by a higher number of translators seem to be necessary for further research projects.

Consequently, my objective to sustain a descriptive work theoretically should not be interpreted as the intent to explain everything that occurs in game translation. This study value, then, should be considered in its own measure and with precautions; within Toury's norm-based translation theory, the tendencies this study aims to detect might be defined as only *potential* "norms" or, more specifically *potential* "operational norms" (Toury 1995: 58), *potential* "textual-linguistic norms", which "govern the selection of material to formulate the target text in, or replace the original textual and linguistic material with" (1995: 59).

A more detailed overview of the terminological debate surrounding this issue in TS, especially concerning "norms" from 1990s to date¹ would be peripheral for the purposes of this research. It seems more beneficial to describe the ideas and premises which have influenced it, and which show how this emergent field can be interpreted in the light of TS theoretical ground.

¹ Beside Toury's works, see Chesterman (1993, 1997), Hermans (1991, 1993, 1996) and Nord (1991, 1997).

Nevertheless, a brief explanation seems worthy in order to clarify the reach of this study analysis: I speculate that a series of individual decisions (idiosyncrasies) and translation strategies used to deal with similar cases, under the same sociocultural circumstances, may imply a translator's approach, i.e. an "initial norm" in Toury's (1995: 56) words, oriented to either the source or target language and culture, which determines the target text (TT) foreignization or domestication. These strategies may also imply a translator's operational tendency which, if recurrent, may configure a *potential* translation norm. In this light, a tendency is "a hypothesis, a suspicion that a norm exists" (Martínez Sierra 2015: 50), which allows the researcher to expect that, "probably, the sighted recurrent behavior will be a norm (weak or possibly strong), recognizing at the same time (and hence adjusting to the necessary research rigor) that in order to verify the suspicion further research is necessary (with a larger corpus and over a longer expense of time)" (Martínez Sierra 2015: 51). The quantitative issue in corpus-based DTS, i.e. what can be considered *quantitatively sufficient* to research translation norms, also affects the level of tendencies. Even the question of what is to be understood by *sufficient* to hypothesize a tendency has no clear-cut answer. However, for the purposes of this study which is based on a *purposefully* selected corpus, the label "tendency" is chosen as the right candidate to map and catalogue the results of the analysis.

By borrowing from Toury's (1995) standpoint within norm-based translation theory or descriptive paradigm, to account for translational behavior, I intend to identify tendencies or *potential* norms by using textual and, if any, extratextual sources. The former are TTs themselves, namely "localizations" in the case of video games, while extratextual sources are statements about texts made by all professionals involved in the process who, in video games, include developers, publishers, localization service vendors, especially translators, and gamers.

In order to draw substantial conclusions, my analysis has been conducted on a selected corpus of three video games, namely *Medal of Honor Warfighter* (Electronic Arts 2012), *Battlefield 4* (Electronic Arts 2013) and *Mass Effect 3* (Electronic Arts 2012). The corpus is sufficiently large and also homogeneous in terms of genre, main theme, target audience and audience reception. This has allowed me to isolate the degree of realism or fictionality of the game worlds, i.e. the relationship between the virtual game world and the real world, as the potential single most important variable which may influence translators' approach to the linguistic and cultural localization of game texts, which is my major research hypothesis. While the notion of real world as the world we all know, the actual world, the way things are, without

going into philosophical details, is quite self-evident, it seems worth briefly pointing out that here “game world” is “an imaginary world”, “an artificial universe, an imaginary place where the events of the game occur. When the player enters the magic circle [Huizinga 1938] and pretends to be somewhere else, the game world is the place where” s/he pretends to be (Adams 2014: 137).

The focus of my analysis is the translation of *realia* and *irrealia*, as discussed in Section 2.4, because they represent the main borders between the two worlds, and they pose interesting culture-related translational issues from an academic perspective. To my knowledge, this subject is still unexplored in Game Localization (GL) although, with reference to slightly different concepts with different terminology, due to its cultural specificity, it has widely been recognized by TS scholars as one of the most challenging translation issues, not only in the field of Audiovisual Translation (AVT) (Pedersen 2005, 2007, 2011; Ranzato 2010, 2015, among others) but also, for example, in literary translation in general (Leppihalme 1994, 1997, 2001, 2011). The transfer of *realia* and *irrelia* into other languages and cultures seems to be particularly interesting in the case of video games as this kind of software and audiovisual products usually contain a great number of culture-related elements, be they non-fictional or fictional. Their role in the text can be varied and the specific function they fulfil in the games included in the corpus is analyzed in the following chapters. Generally speaking, such elements are used by game developers and writers to give substance to the scripts of the imaginary worlds they create, to provide the text with features which are often intimately embedded in the culture(s) represented, be they real or fictional, and to which the audience, or parts of the audience, can relate. *Realia* and *irrealia* in video games stimulate mnemonic associations and at the same time appeal directly to people’s knowledge and emotions as they can evoke images and feelings that are familiar to the source audience (SA). As O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 103) point out, in video games “cultural issues both at micro and macro levels loom large, especially for major titles, as the industry seeks finely tuned cultural adaptation to appeal to target users”. This delicate negotiation can in turn call for translators’ creativity and their agency is so highlighted and celebrated that they are often allowed a freedom almost unseen with other types of translation (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 103).

Interactivity is arguably the most accurate defining characteristic of video games. The “reader” of the videoludic text, namely the player, is not a passive user but rather a co-author. “Players co-author games by playing them, since if the player doesn’t interact with the game

and make choices about what will happen, nothing will happen” (Gee 2007: 8). In this light, it is easy to understand how detrimental can be a translation that misdirects the player and interferes with his/her gameplay. For example, a rendition which is unclear or which does not replicate the function of the ST can have severe consequences in video games and these consequences, i.e. denied access to further content, or abrupt and frustrating end of players’ engagement, seem bigger than in other media.

Cultural specificity between realism and fictionality may be especially challenging in game translation, and inappropriate renditions may be disruptive in players’ immersion into the game experience. After all, “modern video games are technically complex cultural artefacts designed to engross the end user, where the nature of engagement is more than merely functional and encroaches into the affective dimensions” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 103).

As already mentioned, my main hypothesis is that the relationship between the fictional game world and the real world, i.e. the degree of realism or fictionality of game contents, may influence translators’ approach to the linguistic and cultural localization of video games. Accordingly, I intend to map out the strategies activated by translators in response to cultural constraints within a realism-fictionalism² spectrum of video games (Dietz 2006), and to detect the tendencies and the patterns, if any, that are prevalent in the case of game translation from English into Italian and Spanish.

The specific lens through which I have decided to carry out my translational analysis is that of *realia* and *irrealia*: the former refers to real entities existing in real world in contrast to “irrealia” (Loponen 2009: 167) which are “non-existing *realia* tied to a fictional setting, whose effect is to define and determine the fictional cultural, geographical and historical settings” (original emphasis). Therefore, since *realia* is a problematic term when applied to fictional texts which describe fictional worlds (Leppihalme 2011: 126), in this study it is reinterpreted in opposition to *irrealia* and it represents all references to the actual world.

² Fictionalism is meant only as a high degree of fictionality and represents a working term which relates to realism, the other end of a continuum, with no reference to philosophical notions of the same name, and together with realism it is meant as one of the two sides of the same coin, namely the game world, as will be discussed in Section 2.4.

As already mentioned, in TS *realia* (Leppihalme 2001, 2011) represent items which have been referred to with a vast array of terms by scholars³ but all of them agree upon their cultural specificity. As Palumbo (2009: 33) suggests, they are “expressions referring to elements or concepts that are closely associated with a certain language and culture” and, one might add, with a certain *reality* or *irreality*. In this light, in this study, *realia* represent references to real cultures while *irrealia* represent references to fictional cultures, although the very concept of culture related to video games is extremely complex, as will be discussed in Sections 1.2.3 and 2.4, from the perspectives of game localization and of game translation research respectively. Potentially sensitive features such as bad language (swearwords, taboo words, etc.) and contents related to political and sexual themes have been deliberately excluded in the analysis, as they open up too broad, yet compelling, areas of research which are beyond the scope of this study.

The theoretical foundation of my research is primarily Game Localization (GL) (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013) or TMIES, i.e. Translation of Multimedia Interactive Entertainment Software (Bernal Merino 2015), which has been referred to as “the periphery” (Bogucki 2013: 30) of “the emergent field of what can loosely be termed Audiovisual Translation Studies” (AVTS) (Bassnett 2014: 142), while subscribing to the broader framework provided by DTS. The primacy I give GL as theoretical framework is based on the belief that, by adapting Romero Fresco’s (2012: 183) claim concerning AVT, “the most fruitful studies on” GL should “include or assume to some extent two basic notions: the independence of” GL “as an autonomous discipline and its dependence on other related disciplines”. “Although apparently contradictory, these notions are perfectly compatible. The first one may be regarded as a starting point. As an autonomous discipline within Translation Studies”, GL “is an entity in its own right, rather than a subgroup or a lesser manifestation of” AVT and software localization (Romero Fresco 2012: 183). In my opinion, scholars should not only “resort to extended versions of” TS models, but create, if and whenever possible, GL “own models focusing on the specificity of this area. And here is where the second notion comes in, given that an important part of this specificity lies in its interdisciplinary nature. In this sense, if the autonomy of” GL “is the starting point for research, its interdisciplinarity is the way forward [...] as it is drawing on other disciplines that” GL “finds new and fruitful avenues of research” (Romero Fresco 2012: 183).

The first two chapters of this thesis provide the theoretical and methodological framework for the research, while the other four chapters are devoted to linguistic and translational

³ See, for example, Ranzato’s literature review (2015: 53-59).

analyses. The three games representing the realism-fictionalism spectrum of video games that the corpus of this study aims to simulate, are examined in three chapters on the basis of the degree of realism and fictionality of their game worlds, which has been assessed according to the set of criteria described in Section 2.4. Together with the analysis of the translation of *realia* and *irrealia* found in game dialogues – the latter is the text type this research focuses on –, the reader is provided with an introduction to the game’s most relevant features as representational medium from a cultural perspective, and with a brief synopsis of the main events of the game’s narrative. The sixth chapter focuses on a special phenomenon within *realia*, namely military language, whose nature requires a separate examination.

Given these preliminary clarifications, my work will be structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework. This chapter illustrates the theories on which my research is based, with special reference to Game Localization (Bernal Merino 2015; Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012; O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013), Constrained Translation (Mayoral *et al.* 1988; Rabadán Álvarez 1991; Titford 1982), Functionalism and Skopos Theory (Nord 1991, 1997; Reiss and Vermeer 2014; Vermeer 1989/2000). Moreover, this investigation draws on relevant research within AVTS, whose works, having a direct connection to the issues tackled in this analysis, are too many to be mentioned here. Therefore, pertinent references will be given throughout the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Methodological Framework. This chapter deals with the methodological stand, the classifications, and the strategies used to analyze the translation of *realia* and *irrealia* in the following chapters. In more details, it outlines the theoretical model of the realism-fictionalism spectrum which serves as the background to this research main hypothesis, it describes the corpus which has been purposefully created, the analytical procedure followed, the objects of analysis, together with the working taxonomies related to them. Most of the studies in the field of AVT concerning related issues focus on subtitling (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014; Pedersen 2005, 2007, 2011) and dubbing (Ranzato 2010, 2015) but, for the purposes of this research, it was necessary to develop a working model which, while drawing from those authors’ theoretical and methodological approach, could take into account the specificities of this domain.

Chapter 3: Medal of Honor Warfighter. This chapter contains the analysis of the translation of *realia* and *irrealia* of *Medal of Honor Warfighter* (MOHW hereafter) game world.

Chapter 4: Battlefield 4. This chapter contains the analysis of the translation of *realia* and *irrealia* of *Battlefield 4* (BF4 hereafter) game world.

Chapter 5: Mass Effect 3. This chapter contains the analysis of the translation of *realia* and *irrealia* in *Mass Effect 3* (ME3 hereafter) game world.

Chapter 6: Military Language between Realism and Fictionality. This chapter contains the analysis of all *realia* belonging to military language and terminology in the three games included in the corpus used for this research.

Conclusions and Further Research. Lastly, general conclusions are drawn with reference to the theories illustrated in the theoretical and methodological framework and to the findings of the analysis. They will encompass the data gathered from the whole corpus and they will try to provide a comprehensive assessment on tendencies in the linguistic and cultural localization of video games from English into Italian and, to a lesser extent, into Spanish. Moreover, possible avenues for further research will be outlined.

Chapter One

Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction

Games are the 21st century's most serious business (Chatfield 2010); they are also the world's largest cult phenomenon (Grossman 2004) in which translation plays a key role because of the global nature of the industry. As Bernal Merino (2015: 1) suggests, when compared with the one of the ancestors of modern games, today "the game experience is not only concerned with mere button mashing but rather with the immersion of the player in the game world however briefly, and this requires the skill and art of translation".

The study of video games has recently seen a surge of interdisciplinary academic interest in areas such as *Game Studies* (Aarseth 1997, 2001; Egenfeldt Nielsen *et al.* 2013; Juul 2005; Kerr 2006; Newman 2008, 2013; Newman and Oram 2006; Rutter and Bryce 2006; Wolf 2001, 2008, 2012; Wolf and Perron 2009); *Media e Communication Studies* (Consalvo *et al.* 2013; Jenkins 2006a, 2006b); *Education and Language Learning* in particular (Gee 2003, 2004, 2007; Gee and Hayes 2011; Lombardi 2013; Peterson 2013; Prensky 2001, 2006; Reinders 2012; Thomas 2011), and *Linguistics* (Ensslin 2012, 2014), amongst others.

As regards Translation Studies specifically, the game localization practice went mainly unobserved until the first years of the new millennium and most of the first authors in this field were or still are professionals, closely followed by translation scholars; among others Bartelt Krantz (2011), Bernal Merino (2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2009, 2011, 2016a, 2016b), Chandler (2008a, 2008b), Crosignani *et al.* (2008), Crosignani and Ravetto (2011), Dietz (1999, 2006, 2007, 2008), Fernández Costales (2011, 2012, 2014, 2016), Granell (2010, 2011), Lepre (2014), Mangiron (2007, 2010, 2013), Mangiron and O'Hagan (2004, 2006), Mangiron, Orero and O'Hagan (2014), O'Hagan (2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2012a, 2012b, 2015), O'Hagan and Chandler (2016), Scholand (2002), Serón Ordóñez (2011), Tarquini (2014), Zhang (2012, 2014).

Special attention must be paid to three comprehensive and ground-breaking books which have paved and are paving the way to systematic and methodical research: Chandler and O'Malley Deming's *The Game Localization Handbook* (2012), which adopts an industry-oriented perspective; O'Hagan and Mangiron's *Game Localization: Translating for the global*

digital entertainment industry (2013) and Bernal Merino's *Translation and Localization in Video Games. Making Entertainment Software Global* (2015), which conceptualize the subject as a translational phenomenon.

Most up-to-date information sources can be found online because game localization is a young and dynamic field that is driven by technology, led by market forces and influenced by popular discourses on video games.

O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 27-30), for example, provide an illustration of the locus of game localization research activities with a list of academic journals, monographs, chapters, sections in edited volumes, translation-related trade magazines, PhD theses, conferences where related papers were presented and professional association newsletters which published material on the topic from 1999 to 2012, and finally conclude that "since 2005 this sub-domain has seen a surge of interest from translation scholars who have begun to conceptualize this practice" (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 34).

Academic research has been slow in giving due attention to translational issues concerning game localization.

While there has been a lack of interest in theoretical arguments about translation in the localization industry, it is also true that Translation Studies as a whole has not been fully engaged with the localization phenomenon to the extent of integrating it wholeheartedly into the main conceptualization of the discipline.

(O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 102)

Broadly speaking, this has probably been due to the lack of respectability video games have always been suffering from, because of a number of factors such as the general perception of games as trivial entertainment or the lively debate about their presumed detrimental impact. As Newman (2013: 5) explains:

First, video games are (still) very often seen as being a children's medium. This means that they are easily and readily denigrated as trivial – something that will be 'grown out of' – and demanding no investigation. Second, video games have been considered as mere trifles – low art – carrying none of the weight, gravitas or credibility of more traditional media.

Not surprisingly, especially in emergent fields of study driven by technology and susceptible to popular discourses, terminological issues emerge when concepts need definitions, thus resulting into predictable heterogeneity. In Game Studies, there is a variety of terms and spellings referring to the object under investigation: computer games, video games, videogames, digital games and others. The same happens when dealing with game genres and sub-genres since classifications may considerably vary. Moreover, the industry shows an increasing tendency to combine elements belonging to different genres within the same title, thus creating the so-called “mixed genre games” (Scholand 2002: 2).

As regards video game translation, the very definition of this domain is being debated with reference to its belonging to Translation Studies: “game localization” or “game translation” or “linguistic and cultural game localization” (Bernal Merino 2006, 2015; Mandiberg 2009). The argument concerns the relationship between localization and translation and this goes beyond terminology, because the boundary seems debatable and so far unclear (Cronin 2003; Pym 2004, 2010). Moreover, the tension may stem from the somewhat reductionist view of translation prevalent in the localization industry, on the one hand, and the lack of full recognition of localization as a phenomenon of epistemic significance within the academic community on the other (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 103).

The ambiguity is manifest in many respects. For example, the game industry professionals Chandler and O’Malley Deming (2012: 8) define localization as “the process of *translating* the game into other languages [my emphasis]”. The software localizer Esselink (2000: 1) describes localization as “the *translation* and adaptation of a software or web product [my emphasis]”, and adds that it “involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold” (2000: 3). The professional translator Gouadec (2007: 37) considers localization as a “specialized *translation* [my emphasis]”, or more in detail, an “instrumental translation” meaning “translation that literally produces instruments” (2007: 38). It is also worth mentioning the Localization Industry Standards Association’s (LISA) definition as “the process of modifying products or services to account for differences in distinct markets” (LISA cit. in O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 88).

Facing the challenges posed by the emergence of further new areas of localization such as game localization, along with rapid developments in an increasing range of new media facing the need for globalization, the discipline of translation urgently needs to address the

current gap between industry and academia in the conceptualization of localization and translation.

(O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 102)

More importantly, the outcome of the above-mentioned terminological discussion is fundamental with a view to introducing this emergent domain into TS.

In general, at present localization refers to the whole process which covers technical, cultural and linguistic operations: it is therefore “a superordinate term which encompasses translation” (Munday 2008: 191), but translation is “the core of localization” because “localization cannot stand alone without translation” (O'Hagan 2006a: 39). Translation is a narrower component of the whole operation of localization which “actually involves more than translating text or contents” (Gouadec 2007: 38). As argued by Dunne, the superordinate term localization itself is difficult to define, there is “no consensus as to what precisely constitutes localization” (2006: 1), maybe because it “simply does not lend itself well to being perceived *globally*” (2006: 3, original emphasis).

The boundaries between translation and localization are far from being clear-cut and there is no consensus in academia on whether the latter term is suitable to describe the phenomenon, because localization is considered too broad a term involving several non-linguistic activities to be used within TS (Bernal Merino 2006). O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 104), for example, adhere to the recognized industry term “game localization” because it is well defined by industry practice and it is already a well-established field within TS. On the contrary, in order to provide a path in what he calls “a terminological maze” (2015: 91), Bernal Merino analyzes the terms used to refer to language transfer when dealing with video games, i.e. “localization”, “game localization”, “transcreation”, “rewriting”, “adaptation”, “transadaptation” and “audiovisual translation” (2015: 92-107) and finally proposes his own term for research in Translation Studies: “TMIES, the Translation of Multimedia Interactive Entertainment Software” (2015: 107).

TMIES is an accurate term with which to describe the purely linguistic and cultural issues involved in the translation of video games. [...] It incorporates all the key concepts that set this professional practice and research apart from other areas in TS, namely that video games are multichannel and multitextual creations belonging to a complex entertainment

product that places emphasis on the type of interactivity that forces players to influence the virtual world they are playing in.

(Bernal Merino 2015: 108)

Nowadays game localization in translation research is gathering momentum as testified to by the number of both industry and academic workshops, seminars, conferences devoted to it. Furthermore, “doctoral research will be in the pipeline in the next few years” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 39). In this light, this study addresses video games from a Translation Studies perspective in Italy too and intends to provide a contribution to enhance this emerging translation domain, whose academic investigation can lead to outline a theoretical framework based on empirical research and finally provide new inputs into TS progress.

1.2 Game Localization

Since the development of the very first video game called *Spacewar* in 1962 by professor Steve Russel at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology⁴, “the video games industry has evolved dramatically to become a worldwide phenomenon worth billions” (Bernal Merino 2006: 1).

Moreover, from the simple mechanics and poor graphic of early popular titles like *Space Invaders* (Taito 1978) and *Pac-Man* (Namco 1980), and yet considered to have set the subsequent course of video games as a cultural phenomenon (Egenfeldt Nielsen *et al.* 2013: 60), today’s products have turned into extraordinarily complex and impressive movie-like entertaining experiences enjoyed by a diverse audience across the globe.

Much of this growth can be attributed to game localization, which is essential for the industry nowadays. According to Chandler and O’Malley Deming (2012: xiii), roughly 30-50% of the revenue of the global market for video games depends on localization. Not surprisingly, game companies usually rely on publishing multiple language versions of their games in order to maximize profits. Major game publishers, indeed, cite the international market as a key strategic focus and distribute localized games into a variety of regions, including the United States, Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

⁴According to Nowak (2008: online), the very beginning of videogaming could even date back to 1950s when *Oxo* (Alexander S. Douglas 1952) e *Tennis for Two* (William Higinbotham 1958) came into being.

Accordingly, it comes as no surprise to learn how strong are the links between game translation and the industry. These links shape a relationship of interdependence, since translation is driven by the *skopos* of the industry and the latter is conditional upon translation. After all, game localization – referred to as a specialized translation area combining elements of AVT and software localization - arose exactly from the industry’s needs.

It seems therefore worth exploring, although briefly, some basic concepts related to game localization as a specialized and dynamic area of professional practice in order to show where translation is positioned in respect of the whole process, and to understand how its business nature affects the linguistic and cultural transfer. Given the influence and control the industry exerts in the production and in the international distribution of multimedia interactive entertainment, “academic research into games becomes more inclusive – and more valuable – when it shows an understanding of the market” as Egenfeldt Nielsen *et al.* (2013: 15) assert. In Bernal Merino’s words (2015: 155), “a study of the business environment occupied by the translation profession is *de rigueur* if we are fully to understand the motivations, errors and challenges that translators face in their daily routine” (original emphasis).

The key notions to bear in mind when approaching the translation of video games are localization (1.2.1), internationalization (1.2.2), culturalization (1.2.3), localization levels (1.2.4), localization phases, steps and staff (1.2.5), localization models (1.2.6), and localization assets (1.2.7). Moreover, this chapter provides an overview of the history of game localization (1.3) in order to show how technological progress has been affecting game design, localization and translation from 1970s to date. Finally, game translation (1.4) proper is explored, and its distinctive features and issues are scrutinized in order to paint an as full as possible theoretical picture of the topic.

1.2.1 Localization

The practice of localization emerged in response to the globalization of the computer industry, especially the US Information and Communication Technology industry, but rapidly incorporated other products such as websites. The distribution of electronic content worldwide is an essential industry process. The term dates back to 1980s when software developers needed to define “the introduction of linguistic-cultural elements considered foreign to the initial source code, content and display in US/American English” (Folaron 2006: 198).

To understand the phenomenon, the notion of “locale” (Esselink 2000: 1) is fundamental, with reference to a geographical area with distinguishing features such as language, units of currency and character encoding which, however, do not exactly correspond to single countries or single languages.

Localization forms part of a much wider complex of interrelated processes known as GILT – Globalization, Internationalization, Localization and Translation. “The acronym is used to stress how the globalization of modern technological platforms needs to be considered from the beginning with localization in mind, which in turn will be determined by companies’ overall globalization strategies” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 89).

Although video games are software, and although software localization can be considered as the precursor of the area under investigation, a comprehensive examination of its characteristics is beyond the scope of this research. Accordingly, it seems more reasonable to make pertinent reference to it only when functional to the purposes of this study.

1.2.2 Internationalization

In order to capitalize on international markets and maximize their sales abroad, game companies “need to develop a global mindset toward game development” and understand the meaning of localizing games for specific markets (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 1), i.e. publishing quality international versions of their games to be translated into several languages (2012: 3).

Internationalization is the pre-localization process and means creating a product which “can be *easily* adapted for release in other countries without having to change the design of the product”, “a project that can be *easily* localized with a minimum amount of work on the developer’s part – the same game features, functionality, and game experiences” (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 4, my emphasis). According to Esselink (2000: 2), “internationalization is the process of generalizing a product so that it can handle multiple languages and cultural conventions without the need for re-design. It takes place at the level of program design and document development”. The Localization Industry Standards Association’s definition (cit. in Jiménez Crespo 2013) is also worth mentioning, since internationalization is “the process of enabling a product at a technical level for localization”, and “primarily consists of abstracting the functionality of a product away from any particular language so that language support can be added back in simply, without worry that language-

specific features will pose a problem when the product is localized” (LISA cit. in Jiménez Crespo 2013: 25).

A game can be localization-friendly if, and only if, internationalization is planned for properly during pre-production; otherwise, retrofitting a game after development involves more time, money, and resources. If internationalized, the user interface (UI), control scheme, game content, etc. are designed to accommodate each target locale’s specificity:

- both European text, which is read from left to right, and Arabic text, which is read from right to left;
- various formats of dates, numbers, times, and currencies;
- different languages’ characters and diacritics: this means that the game code should support Unicode system which can display more than 65,000 unique characters (Asian ones included);
- international keyboard layouts;
- different ethnicities and nationalities to customize the player’s avatar;
- video standards, i.e. both NTSC and PAL, if the game is for consoles, in order to be properly displayed on monitors;
- cultural content, i.e. culture-specific references like the name of a popular movie star or TV shows should be limited, unless they are essential to the story or gameplay. “If the game remains as culturally neutral as possible, it is less noticeable to an international gamer that the game was developed primarily for a specific demographic” (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 7).

As regards the UI in particular, for example, since the TT is about 20 to 30 percent larger than the ST (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 5), it is important that it is designed to avoid text display problems such as overlapping and truncated text, which can be really misleading. This is possible by using icons with universal meaning or by designing UIs to be scaled up or down according to the size and the length of the text.

In summary, the objective of internationalization is to make users “feel that the game was made specifically for them, and that they are getting the same gaming experience as the source language users” (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 4).

For the purposes of this study, it seems worth underlining that internationalization does not affect only technical issues, but also involves socio-cultural and socio-political

considerations in preparing the source game. In particular, the “cultural content” point listed above could be read as an example of internationalization’s tendency towards generalization and cultural flattening, which provoked some translation scholars’ criticism based on the ideas of “global sameness” and “death of cultural difference” (Pym 2004: 37). This question is particularly relevant here because of three reasons. First, contrary to what one might think, video games “are cultural products often imbued with specific cultural traits, even at the level of the conceptualization of game design itself” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 91). Second, “cultural peculiarities may turn out to be the very attraction of the product even in international markets” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 91). Lastly, and more importantly, culture-specificity expressed by *realia* and *irrealia* is the focus of this research.

1.2.3 Culturalization

“*Content carries culture*; it’s a reflection of the culture in which it is created and it evokes reaction from the cultures to which it’s distributed” (Edwards 2011: 22, original emphasis). Accordingly, given the global distribution of video games, cultural issues may arise and, for the purposes of this study, they deserve special attention.

In Edwards’ words (2011: 19), culturalization is the process by which video game “content is further adapted for a broader, diverse audience” and, unlike localization which usually takes place after development, “culturalisation is a holistic *modus operandi* for global game design, development and distribution” which (theoretically) “starts at the beginning of the project” due to the need to “account for the multicultural and politically volatile markets” video games get into globally, the need to acknowledge “the reality of global exposure on the first day of release” (Edwards 2011: 21, original emphasis).

Localization and translation basically allow players to overcome linguistic barriers, while culturalization goes “a step further [...] as it takes a deeper look into a game’s fundamental assumptions and content choices, and then gauges their viability in both the broad, multicultural marketplace as well as in specific geographic locales” (Edwards 2011: 20). “Culturalization helps gamers to potentially engage with the game’s content at a much deeper, more meaningful level. Or conversely, culturalization ensures that gamers will not be disengaged from the game by a piece of content that is considered incongruent or even offensive” (Edwards 2011: 20-21).

According to Edwards, in order to perform an effective culturalization and proactively reduce the potential for issues, two main factors affecting cultural content must be taken into

account: (1) the “context” (2011: 21), namely players’ religion, ethnicity, location, social connections, economic status, educational background, political environment, etc.; (2) the “geopolitical and cultural forces at play” (2011: 22) representing the four “broad categories of cultural aspects that most often generate conflict between the game’s context and local cultures” (2011: 22-23). They are: “history, religion, intercultural conflict and geopolitical friction — these are the ‘big four’ topics that can affect game design and development and usually the places where problems may occur” (Edwards 2011: 27).

According to Edwards (2011: 22), from a geographic and sociological perspective, in video games “culture” means “the accumulated, managed content of a specific context” where “content” is “anything a player will see, hear or read” and “context” means “the circumstances or events that form a unique environment in space and time, within which information is created and managed”. Accordingly, any culture can be seen as “a combined set of ‘content assets’ that clearly define the look, feel, sound, taste and general nature of the culture” which generates “expectations for what will or will not fit within the norms of that culture” (Edwards 2011: 22). In this light, “the content assets of a game’s world might conflict with the expectations for what fits in the content assets of a specific culture” and a potential cultural issue may arise (Edwards 2011: 22). Interestingly enough, since players’ main concern is on games’ fun factor, “most cultural backlash around video game content doesn’t originate with gamers; rather it comes from the *unintended* audience surrounding those gamers” (Edwards 2011: 22, original emphasis): “people who don’t play games, who don’t understand the content-context relationship between the game world and real world, and who often have a negative predisposition towards games”, like players’ parents, the clergy, local lawmakers, and “ironically, the more backlash the unintended audience creates, the more interest gamers seem to take in the ‘controversial’ game title” (Edwards 2011: 22).

As mentioned above, there are four culture-related aspects whose representation in game content may turn into a moot point or face public criticism: history, religion, intercultural conflict and geopolitical fiction.

History is a very popular theme in video games but often, for the sake of gameplay, generalization is necessary (Edwards 2011: 24). Especially in terms of historical accuracy, this cultural aspect may turn into a sensitive issue for those local cultures which are particularly protective of their historical legacy, origins, events which shape their nationality and are integral to their identity (Edwards 2011: 24): “any alternate or re-imagined history can often

yield strong, emotional reactions”. For example, in 2007, a PC game titled *Sombras de Guerra* (Planeta DeAgostini Interactive), which allowed players to fight the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War on both sides, either as Francisco Franco’s forces and as republicans, was released in Spain and caused widespread outrage due to the Spanish struggle “to reconcile with the deep, long-lasting legacy of the conflict” (Edwards 2011: 24, see also Díez 2007: online). As Edwards suggests (2012: 23), “it’s not just more distant history that can be problematic. Recent history can be a very sensitive topic as the memory of events and outcome are very fresh in people’s mind”. For example, in 2009, the announced release of the multiplatform game *Six Days in Fallujah*, which reenacted the events of the second battle of Fallujah of late 2004 in Iraq, provoked such a backlash that the publisher Konami was forced not to release the title (see Kee 2009: online).

Religion is another culture-related aspect which deserves careful consideration. “If a specific culture has a more sacred basis for their daily activities and social administration, meaning they might follow a specific religious faith, then the rules pertaining to sensitivity and acceptability will be quite different from a culture based on a more secular outlook” (Edwards 2011: 23). Accordingly, “a piece of content that challenges the tenets of a religion or belief system is one of the most potentially volatile issues in game design” (Edwards 2011: 23). For example, in 2002, a brief audio track including a chanted portion of the Qur’an was included in the Xbox title *Kakuto Chojin* and, although it was initially distributed to the USA only to limit exposure, the issue became widely known also in the Middle East and this caused the game to be banned in Saudi Arabia and in other Muslim countries (Edwards 2012: 19).

Besides the more volatile issues of history and religion, there is a host of issues that fit under a broad category that addresses various forms of disagreement, misperception, attitude and ongoing friction between cultural groups. Chief among the intercultural issues is the perceived inequitable treatment of a specific culture, ethnicity and/or nationality. [...], a specific group feels that they are being included or excluded with a negative intent. The majority of such perceptions are typically focused on ethnicity, i.e. being singled out on the basis of race.

(Edwards 2011: 25)

One of the most controversial series in this sense is *Grand Theft Auto* (Rockstar Games 1997 - present), which is criticized for exploiting racial stereotypes, especially concerning Hispanics

who are depicted as gang members, drug dealers and involved in various other crimes (Edwards 2011: 25). Another example is, in 2009, *Resident Evil 5* which was charged with conveying racist notions and post-colonial stereotypes such as the “great white hunter”, the “dark continent of Africa” since the player’s role was that of a white Caucasian man fighting against unarmed and zombie-like sub-Saharan African villagers (Edwards 2012: 25).

The fourth group of potential cultural issues in game content is connected to geopolitics and concerns the geographic and political representation of single nations and single governments. For example, the 1982 war between the UK and Argentina has been reinterpreted in several video games from both perspectives, which accordingly represent the Islas Malvinas or the Falkland Islands, i.e. the bone of contention, depending on the designers’ perspective as either British or Argentine territories (Edwards 2011: 26), despite Argentina lost their control 30 years ago. Another example is that of *Mercenaries 2: World in Flames* (Electronic Arts 2008) which faced Venezuela president Hugo Chavez’ criticism due to his depiction as a tyrannical leader and the representation of his country as being on the verge of political and social chaos.

Cultural issues “prove to be costly for companies on many levels - not just the quantitative loss of potential revenue from a specific market but the greater qualitative effects of negative public relations, damage to the company’s image, and a strained relationship with the local government” (Edwards 2011: 20). “In the worst-case scenario, a local government may not only ban the product but take more direct action against the company’s subsidiary personnel, including detainment for questioning and even incarceration” (Edwards 2011: 20). Conversely, “well-executed culturalization within a game development cycle” means “content quality, improved government relations, and respected image amongst local consumers” which “can prove to be an invaluable return on investment” (Edwards 2011: 27).

For this reason, Edwards (2012: 28-32) outlines a culturalization method of four steps: “awareness, identification, assessment, and implementation”. First, content developers must attain sufficient awareness of potential cultural issues. Second, they must be able to identify them at all stages of content creations and for this purpose, content creators can make use of several reference tools, like Cultural Studies research findings, country-specific guides, symbol dictionaries, encyclopedias of religions, official governments’ or non-governmental organizations’ websites, and even subject-matter experts and local people knowledge (Edwards 2012: 30). However, for the purposes of identifying cultural issues, two concepts may be

particularly useful: contextual proximity and contextual independence (Edwards 2012: 29), which prove to be suitable also for the purposes of this research. The former basically means that “the closer a content element approaches the original context in person, place, time, and/or form, the greater the potential for cultural sensitivity” (Edwards 2012: 29). Consequently, content which “mimics real-world locations, buildings, people, events, religions, nationalities, ethnicities, and so on” must be evaluated in terms of “the degree to which the content resembles its real-world inspiration” (Edwards 2012: 29). The first two video games analyzed in the corpus of this research, namely *Medal of Honor Warfighter* and *Battlefield 4* will provide interesting examples in this regard, as explored in Section 3.1 and 4.1 respectively.

The other related concept which helps content developers to identify potential cultural issues is that of “contextual independence” which “essentially means that content elements become more independent the less they require their original context for meaning” (Edwards 2012: 29). “Any content’s meaning is typically dependent on a specific context of origin, but the more independent an element might be from that original context, the greater the potential for sensitivity” (Edwards 2012: 29).

“After identifying potential cultural issues” (Edwards 2012: 30-31), content creators must “effectively triage” them, draw a line of acceptability and assign severity codes to potential cultural bugs and later fix them as any other type of bug. Cultural severity is relative, it “often depends on each specific piece of content, its context within a product” and the target local market: consequently, cultural issues may range from “reasonable risks” to “overt offenses” (Edwards 2012: 31). Lastly, implementing culturalization is “a very precise, surgical operation” in which “one of the most important principles is to make the most minimal changes to the least amount of content”, it means changing only “what really must be changed in order to ensure distribution to the game’s target market, while also being mindful of the effects on surrounding locales” (Edwards 2012: 32).

Going even further, one might argue that also the contrary of Edward’s two notions above is true and may be used, instead, to identify what is not or what should not be a potential cultural issue in target locales, from the perspective of the relationship between the game world and the real world. In other words, one might suggest the use of a “contextual distance” concept and speculate that the farther a content element distance itself from the original context in person, place, time, and/or form, the lesser the potential for cultural sensitivity. Similarly, one might

advocate the use of a “contextual dependence” concept and say that the more a content element meaning depends from its original context, the lesser the potential for sensitivity.

The opposite interpretation of both Edwards’ (2012) concepts seems to represent a suitable lens to analyze culture-specificity in video games which do not re-create or mimic the real world but, instead, create their own fictional worlds, like science-fiction *Mass Effect 3*. Nevertheless, the analytical framework of culturalization does not exhaust the relationship between video games and culture or rather, the meaning and the role of culture in game worlds and the scope of culture-specificity in game localization as a research topic. Other aspects require to be discussed to provide a deeper understanding of this subject which is of special interest for the purposes of this work. Consequently, further speculations will be developed in Section 2.4 especially in relation to culture-related issues emerging in research when the perspective is TS proper.

1.2.4 Localization levels

The nature of the game industry as a global highly lucrative business influences the degree of linguistic accessibility worldwide. The extent to which game assets are localized can vary from project to project, mainly depending on cost and revenue analysis, namely a profit and loss statement for each localization (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 47), based on two major factors: money and time. It is a trade-off between the uncertain additional sales that localized versions can generate and the additional costs and risks associated with a longer and more complex process. In short, as for money, publishers compare the development, marketing, packaging, and distribution costs for each localized version against the projected sales. As for time, ideally aiming at simultaneously releasing the game worldwide, publishers evaluate the timing of the localization steps. On the one hand, game publishers’ decisions depend on the resources available to invest in the localization process and the likely ROI. On the other, the time factor also has substantial relevance because video games are governed by critical release dates (typically the beginning of each holiday season), namely Christmas and Easter, and missing them have repercussions on the revenue.

In summary, localization tends to be scaled “according to the needs and expectations of the game” (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 8). The following are the four localization levels used in the industry and they are increasingly riskier, expensive and time-consuming, but

also increasingly immersive for the player, thus they are reserved to products ranging from small to big budget games:

- 1) no localization: the original language version is shipped directly to international markets;
- 2) box and docs: only the game's packaging and manual are localized;
- 3) partial localization: the in-game text, the packaging and the manual are translated, not the voice-over, which is usually subtitled;
- 4) full localization: all game assets are translated, voice-over included.

For translation analysis purposes, partial and full localization are evidently the most interesting areas since the first level (no localization) does not provide phenomena to be investigated and the second one (box and docs) only involves the translation of paratext such as packaging and manual. In contrast, partial and full localization offer TS scholars plenty of room for investigation concerning, for example, subtitling and dubbing. On the basis of the levels above, it comes as no surprise to learn that dubbing is part of full localization only, since this costly and time-consuming translation mode implies setting up recording sessions, hiring professional voice actors, often celebrities, matching facial animations with lip-syncing, processing the sound files, etc., in order to deliver a quality target version. Indeed, full localization is mainly reserved to flagship titles, known as “AAA games”, like the games in the corpus of this research.

In particular, it seems worth specifying that in the game localization sector, the re-voicing in the form of dubbing is commonly referred to as “voice-over” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 163). Although this represents a clear point of contact between audiovisual translation and game localization, it must be said that the use of dubbing and subtitling modes in this field “is generally not well informed by the body of knowledge available” thanks to Audiovisual Translation Studies scholars, “and AVT norms are clearly not adhered to”, as O’Hagan and Mangiron complain (2013: 163-164). An in-depth contrastive analysis of dubbing, subtitling and voice-over use in video games and in other audiovisual products is beyond the scope of this work but represents a very significant area for future research.

Lastly, it seems worth briefly mentioning here some details about the localization levels of the three games in the corpus. As regards the scope of their international distribution, which refers to the number of target languages each game was translated into, where European FIGS are default, they are nine for *Medal of Honor Warfighter* (FIGS plus Japanese, Korean, Polish,

Russian, and Turkish), eleven for *Battlefield 4* (FIGS plus Chinese, Czech, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese and Russian), and seven for *Mass Effect 3* (FIGS plus Japanese, Polish, and Russian), but localization levels vary. As far as Italian and Spanish are concerned, they all present full localizations except for ME3 which has been partially localized into Spanish. Since *Battlefield 4* is the most recent game as for release, the higher number of TLs seems to confirm US publisher Electronic Arts' and, by extension, the game industry's tendency to expand the borders of its localization practice.

1.2.5 Localization phases, steps and staff

The three main phases of the localization process are planning, production and post-production (Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2012: 10-12). During the planning phase, based on historical sales data, the company determines which level of localization is appropriate for each target language and performs internationalization, thus making next phases smoother. The localization phase usually starts in the production phase and it means translating, integrating and testing the assets. Once the game code has been localized, in the post-production phase the process includes other localization items such as manuals, packaging and demos and, finally, a localization kit is created and contains relevant information about the project, as well as the files and assets to be translated.

More in depth, the major areas of the localization process are linked to four major steps: the game assets' organization, translation, integration and testing (Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2012: 68-69) and each of them involves specific roles (2012: 87-89). First, all the assets must be organized so that the text and context are clear for all the necessary translations. This means creating a glossary, adding time codes to the voice-over (VO) script and creating a master sheet with all the in-game text in order to ensure linguistic consistency in the game. A proper organization of game assets is essential for the whole process. For example, they can be placed in a centralized language-specific directory in the game code and each can then contain subdirectory folders for asset types, i.e. audio, art, cinematics and text. Three members of the localization staff are usually in charge of organization tasks: (1) the associate or assistant producer, often called localization manager, who is involved in all aspects of localization and represents the main point of contact between the development team and the localization staff since s/he provides all task, budget and staff estimates, s/he organizes all the materials to be sent to translators, s/he manages all functionality testers and engineers, etc. The localization

manager works with the (2) localization coordinator, which in turn serves as *liaison* between translators and linguistic testers, helps to develop the localized versions, organizes translations and manages the linguistic testers. Finally, there is an optional resource called (3) production coordinator who may be needed to assist the localization manager.

Second, all assets need to be translated, and also proofread and edited. The length of the translation process is usually estimated on word count, which can range from thirty thousand to five hundred thousand, and even more than a million in the case of some Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG) (Bernal Merino 2015: 171). This step requires at least a translator per language, be they in-house or freelance, for the whole duration of the project, although big games actually call for the work of a translation team per language. Additionally, other staff members may be a casting director, voice actors and a sound engineer to record and process the localized voice-over files, if full localization is performed. Sometimes translators are also in charge of integrating the assets and assisting linguistic testers.

Third, once translated, all assets need to be integrated into the game builds. This means replacing the source assets with the target ones. The task can be manual or automated, the former is more time-consuming, error-conducive and bug-provoking, and performed by either the development team, namely an engineer, or by the external localization vendor. As far as text assets are concerned, ST strings are usually sent to translators in Excel spreadsheets with separate columns per language and tags assigned to each row of text. This way, a simple parser created by the developer can integrate TT strings into the game engine files, thus avoiding a dangerous cutting and pasting (Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2012: 200). The game engine then determines the correct text to be displayed based on what the game tag indicates. Accordingly, as regards the overall method, a two-way process exports the ST into a multilingual spreadsheet and then imports the TT back into the game. Automated integration is preferable to manual work because “the longer it takes to integrate assets and create localized builds, the longer testing is delayed” and this “will negatively impact the overall localization schedule” (Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2012: 202).

Finally, localizations need to be tested and enter the so-called Quality Assurance (QA), since the QA department is involved. This phase can be one of the most time-consuming because it must be performed on two concurrent levels: functionality and linguistic testing, each consisting of several testing rounds. Moreover, testing time increases with the number of languages involved, game size, gameplay mechanics, etc. Functionality testers find all design,

art, or engineering bugs in the game code, while linguistic testers check all the language assets in the game to make sure that there are no incorrect translations, grammatical errors, typos, and incorrectly displayed text, namely overlapping, misspelling, truncations, etc. “Every piece of text in the game has to be checked, along with all the voice-over and cinematics” (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 237). Obviously enough, as regards staff, in addition to functionality and linguistic testers, this phase requires engineers and production people to fix both types of bugs (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 87). As for linguistic testers in particular, as Chandler and O’Malley Deming (2012: 237) point out, they should be native speakers who can best understand the context of the translations and comment on whether the translation fits with the look and feel of the game. They are often part of the same group of translators, so that they are already familiar with the language and tone of the game they are testing.

1.2.6 Localization models

The game industry shows two main different procedures as regards who performs the localization process and when. First, as regards time models, the release of the localized versions can follow a simultaneous shipping model or a post-gold one. Second, as to actors involved, publishers may carry out in-house localization or they may outsource it to a professional language service provider.

If the original game and localizations are distributed on the same date in different territories, the process follows the so-called “sim-ship” model, which means that localization runs in parallel to game development, thus posing a number of issues for translators who work on an incomplete and unstable text. Obviously enough, the simultaneous shipment is the goal most developers and publishers aim at, and accordingly the model is becoming more and more common. This is mainly due to marketing reasons: the short shelf-life of video games, the possibility to avoid grey market imports and pirate copies from other countries, the benefit of building a sense of community amongst gamers so to allow them to discuss the game on specialized forums or play online internationally, if online playing is included, and the advantage of exploiting a single but usually massive global marketing campaign to generate more publicity, especially for big-budget games.

In contrast, a post-gold model means that localized versions are shipped after the original game, the time lag ranging from a few months to a year. As regards the process, localization is performed on a finished game and this means better work conditions for translators.

Generally, according to Chandler and O'Malley Deming (2012: 47), “the publisher ships the European versions with the English version and staggers the ship dates of the Japanese, Korean, Russian, and Hebrew versions”. This way, since English and FIGS languages cover most of the USA, Europe and South America, publishers make sure that these versions are simultaneously available on the game’s launch date. As regards the other regions, such as Russia, Korea and Japan, localized versions tend to appear a few months later because third-party licensors, who are in charge of translation, integration and testing, work on the final product. According to O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 60), the ideal simultaneous shipment is already a standard for most Western companies. On the contrary, although the approach is changing, Japanese publishers usually release the original game first on the domestic market, a North-American localization some time later and finally European versions on its basis, thus using US English as a pivot language⁵.

With the in-house model, localization is performed “under the supervision of the developer or the publisher in their premises” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 116). It means that the developer, by means of a dedicated department and a steady group of freelance translators, is also responsible for localization into different languages and coordinates the project from beginning to end. Translators work under the direction of the localization coordinator, who serves as a *trait d’union* between them and the developers, and, more importantly, since localization usually starts when the original game is finished, they have full access to the product. They can play it, familiarize themselves with the storyline, characters and gameplay. It is a longer process on the whole, as opposed to out-sourced localization, but it results in better quality because translators can rely on a solid knowledge of the game. Thus, the QA process turns out to be smoother for specialized game testing vendors.

On the contrary, when localization is outsourced, an external specialized localization vendor is commissioned to perform the whole process. Outsourcing, although costlier, is currently the most widely used model in the industry. The vendor selects the translators and arranges all necessary phases according to the game’s localization level, such as voice-over for example, if full localization is selected, and sometimes they are also in charge of QA.

⁵ To give an example of the localization process length, although each project has different schedule, if properly planned in advance and run according to timetable, approximately two or three months can be spent to fully localize a game with an average number of assets, i.e. around 10,000 words of in-game text and about 3,000 words of voice-over (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 67).

From the point of view of translators, since the outsourcing model is often linked to simultaneous shipment, the job is much more complicated. They work on incomplete and unstable texts, subject to last-minute changes, because the product is still under development. They are not allowed to play or even see the game and they generally translate a spreadsheet with a series of unconnected text strings belonging to different parts of the game with little or no co-textual and contextual information. Unfortunately, this may influence the quality of translation especially if we consider that video games are multimedia texts based on the simultaneous use of different channels, where the synchronization between text (written, subtitled, voiced-over), images and sound is paramount. For this reasons, game translation is often referred to as “blind” (Dietz 2006, 2007): it requires language professionals to rely on their intuitions and game literacy to provide “the most flexible” solutions as possible, so that they can be suitable for different contexts (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 119).

In terms of localization models, the international distribution of the three games included in the corpus followed the sim-ship model: *Medal of Honor Warfighter* (2012) was released on October 23 in North America and on October 25 in Europe; *Battlefield 4* (2013) was released on October 29 in North America and on October 31 in Europe; *Mass Effect 3* (2012) was released on March 6 in North America and on March 9 in Europe.

Moreover, as regards the localization actors, MOHW was translated by a small localization vendor in Italian and by a freelancer in Spanish, while audio localization was performed by another company in both languages. BF4 was translated and voiced-over by a multinational localization vendor in Italian while in Spanish it was translated by a freelancer and audio-localized by another company. ME3 was translated in both Italian and Spanish by a multinational localization agency which also performed the audio-localized in Italian.

1.2.7 Localization assets

The scope of localization, which generally depends on the game type and size, is another important factor in publishers’ decision-making process. This means to determine the quantity of the game assets to be localized in the project: the number of words to be translated, the number of voice-over to be recorded, the number of art assets and graphics to be modified, etc. According to Chandler and O’Malley Deming (2012: 53), game assets can be grouped into five sections, namely (1) text assets in-game, which represent the bulk of translatable elements and include all texts displayed in-game like narration, tutorials, installer strings, help files, and error

messages; (2) art assets, also including game logo and in-game language embedded textures; (3) audio assets in-game, which basically refer to voice-over files; (4) cinematic assets, representing all movie-like sequences, both pre-rendered and created in-game, and (5) printed materials, such as the packaging and the manual. This subject will be further discussed in Section 1.4.5 with special attention to the consequent multitextuality translators deal with in game localization.

1.3 Historical Overview on Game Localization

Although the processes used in the game localization industry are still being improved and it is too early for a definitive retrospective account, an all-encompassing look at its origins and evolution over the past decades may serve to elucidate the role it has played in the advent of video games as contenders for a place within the audiovisual entertainment industry.

(Bernal Merino 2015: 157)

Gaming enthusiast scholars and journalists have been investigating the history of video games extensively⁶ but the process through which multimedia interactive entertainment has become a global phenomenon went largely ignored. As a result, mapping out game localization evolution since the early days of the industry turns out to be difficult. Yet, it seems very useful in order to paint a comprehensive picture of the topic under investigation.

Broadly speaking, by tracing the evolution of game platforms, it is easy to understand how technological capacities and limitations can shape video games in terms of graphics and sound, consequently affecting design, gameplay, localization and lastly translation.

According to Bernal Merino (2015) perceptible stages have taken place over the last four decades in the continuous progression that has lead the game industry to become a multibillion dollar sector. They are (1) the birth of digital entertainment in 1970s; (2) the establishment of the game industry in 1980s; (3) the fight for the markets in 1990s; (4) the professionalization of game localization in 2000s and, one might add, (5) the era of enhanced localization and new developments in 2010s.

⁶ See Donovan (2010), Hertz (1997), Kent (2001), Wolf (2008), amongst others.

Similarly, O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 46-63) divide the stages of game localization progress into: (1) Early phase (prior to the mid-80s); (2) Growth phase (mid-80s to the mid-90s); (3) Development phase (mid-90s to the late-90s); (4) Maturing phase (2000 to 2005), and (5) Advancing phase (2005 to date).

The video games developed in 1970s and early 1980s, mostly arcade titles, included a few or no elements to be translated, being the first digital games “almost purely mechanical, i.e. simple and intuitive gameplay with very little in the form of instructions, storylines, or voices” (Bernal Merino 2015: 158). During the 1970s, most games were normally distributed in their original versions to a few foreign markets, and trade took place mainly in English between the US, Japan and the United Kingdom; as a result, English terms such as ‘arcade’, ‘joystick’, ‘score’ and ‘game over’ into most languages, were introduced during this early period (Bernal Merino 2015: 159). Nevertheless, even if they posed no or little remarkable language barriers, their international shipping already required some sort of localization, especially for Japanese titles, thus offering a preview of what the phenomenon will mean for the industry in years to come. Actually, in order to make all their games immediately available to the enormous US market, it could be said that Japanese developers and publishers were the ones who started thinking about localization earlier (Bernal Merino 2011: 12).

Pac-Man (Namco 1980) is an internationally well-known classic example. According to Kohler (2005: 24 and 212), the original name of this Japanese title “Puck-Man” needed to be transliterated for socio-linguistic reasons. The name was “inspired by the Japanese onomatopoeic ‘/paku paku taberu/’, a phrase normally used to indicate that someone is eating greedily, in imitation of a fish-like opening and closing of the mouth” (Bernal Merino 2015: 160). With the US audience in mind, marketers thought that ‘Puck’ would likely sound too close to the coarse four letter word and opted for a similar but less rude spelling: Pac-Man. This not only proved successful but, unintentionally, it also turned out to be “the first game translation gem, encapsulating one of the principles of good practice in the adaptation of games, i.e. respect for the language and the culture of the players of each importing country” (Bernal Merino 2015: 160). “This led to changes in the cabinet art and the title screen of the game in arcade machines” (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 49). In addition, the original Japanese names and nicknames of the key four ghost characters, which were based mainly on their colors or behaviors, i.e. Chaser “red guy”, Ambusher “pink guy”, Fickle “blue guy” and Stupid “slow guy” became Shadow “Blinky”, Speedy “Pinky”, Bashful “Inky”, and Pokey “Clyde” in the

official US English translation in order to entertain the corresponding audience. *Pac-Man*'s US publisher "decided to give a certain American touch to the game in order to make it more appealing to US players", and "adopted a didactic and humorous approach, using euphonic and catchy names" (Bernal Merino 2015: 161). "This rather 'creative' way of dealing with the translation of video games for foreign markets is completely in line with the essence of games as customizable entertainment, to which changes can be made in an attempt to boost their sales" (Bernal Merino 2015: 161).

Likewise, the two main characters of the arcade title *Donkey Kong* (Nintendo 1981), originally named Jump-Man and The Lady in Japanese, turned into Mario and Polly for the US market. Being these two names supposedly inspired by those of the landlord of the Nintendo of America building and of an employee's wife (Kohler 2005: 212), this latter example testifies to how arbitrary some translation decisions were⁷. In this period, some computer-based American games were also localized into Japanese but the process was only limited to user manuals (Hasegawa cit. in O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 51). On the whole, the early phase of game localization is a trial and error era, in which:

developers had little - if any - knowledge about localization things and development kits didn't have any simple functions to simplify localization. Usually developers simply inserted their translated texts directly inside the code, hopefully not forgetting any parts. There was also little control over the quality of translations, usually performed by "friends" of developers, which resulted in some famous mistranslations you have surely heard about. There were no real game localization agencies at that time and localization was a pretty amateurish business.

(ActiveGaming Media 2011: online)

After the 1982-84 great game industry crash (Wolf 2012: 2), partly due to lack of creativity and clumsy repetition of ideas and gameplay mechanics, by the end of the decade the game industry was making healthy profits (Bernal Merino 2015: 162). Yet, in the beginning of mid-1980s, although many Japanese console games were exported to the US market, localization was still an afterthought (Corliss 2007). Moreover, due to technical limitations of early platforms, the translation from Japanese into European languages usually required more screen space to

⁷ See Kent (2001) and Kohler (2005) for further similar anecdotes.

convey the same ideas. This was also due to the fact that Japanese text used to be stored in picture format, also posing “the inherent problem of using too much of the little memory available” (Bernal Merino 2015: 161), and therefore the original game even had to be reprogrammed to fit the translated English text (Kohler 2005: 221). Characters’ display problems were overcome only in 1991, when the first version of Unicode was implemented.

However, in this period many of the most internationally popular games, such as *Super Mario Bros.* (Nintendo 1987), were shipped by means of “box and docs” localizations from English into FIGS and Dutch (Bernal Merino 2015: 163). The translation of packaging and documentation became standard practice among those publishers who understood that this small investment could easily increase their revenues simply by making their product slightly more accessible to foreign consumers (Bernal Merino 2015: 164). Nevertheless, at least in the beginning, the TLs were the dominant languages in Western Europe and, as already discussed, the ‘E-FIGS’ approach “quickly became the *de facto* minimum localization standard” (Bernal Merino 2015: 164). As claimed by Bernal Merino (2015: 164), the TLs were those of the countries presenting a certain maturity of their national markets in terms of computer users, availability *per capita* income, demand for new forms of entertainment and growth potential.

The increase of game consoles capacity produced a proportional expansion of translatable assets and other factors, i.e. cultural and religious, begun to be taken into account. Some developers started to use cinematic sequences in the game storyline, with narration provided through subtitle-like running text. There was no voice track, the only sound was computer-generated background music and some sound effects, while the texts scrolled from left to right in the lower half of the screen, synchronized with the graphics (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 52). From a TS perspective, it seems interesting to note that subtitling conventions and typographic norms were ignored. As explored by O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 52), for example, in the US version of *Ninja Gaiden* (Tecmo 1989) the text occupies four lines not marked in italics with what seems to be an arbitrary use of ellipsis markers with two dots.

As regards the practice, in this phase, “translations were either done in-house or organized directly by the developing team with the help of freelance translators and bilingual players. There were still no game localization specialists as such” (Bernal Merino 2015: 164).

In 1990s, the game industry started to become more and more professional. As Bernal Merino (2015: 164-165) points out, there was a shift from minimal “box and docs” translation to the so-called “partial localization” for most big titles; games were becoming more and more

sophisticated, and their translation was now a *conditio sine qua non*. Finally, European gamers (outside the UK) could enjoy games in their own languages (ActiveGaming Media 2011: online). Moreover, subtitling increased accessibility, since video games started to be enjoyable for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing gamer community too. Nevertheless, because of consoles' technical limitations to store text, translations usually needed to be reduced to make the TT fit within the available capacity of the system.

During this decade, many poor translations were produced and publicized online more recently by the so-called “retro-gaming” fan communities (Newman 2013: 59). One of the most frequently cited examples is from the Japanese shooter game *Zero Wing* (Toaplam 1991). The original Japanese line uttered by the alien character called CATS, “CATS has taken over all your base stations”, translated as “All your base are belong to us” first appeared in the European English version for the Sega console (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 56). The translation became a popular Internet meme, “*All Your Base* spread from office to office via e-mail like a benign virus” (my emphasis), the syntax-mangling phrase incorporated everywhere on earth, “cropping up everywhere from George W. Bush billboards to Budweiser ads to the cover of TIME” (Taylor 2011: online).

Other examples of blatant translation errors during this era included the major Japanese RPG titles such as *Final Fantasy VII* (Square Enix 1997), where one character soon after the beginning says: “That man are sick” and also where a yes/no answer option was phrased as: “Off course!/No, way!” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 56). Another poor localization during this period was that of *Metal Gear Solid* (Konami 1998). “The original game consisted of some 150 Japanese messages, of which just over half were translated into English of substandard quality” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 56).

The quantity of poor translations produced in this phase depended on technological and financial limitations, the emergent nature of the industry, but also resulted from, as claimed by O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 57), “not involving competent translators as well as from a lack of proper localization processes”.

Moreover, from the gamers' point of view, the localization of audio files was still an Achilles heel. Voice-over assets are the most expensive and time-consuming part to be localized (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 10), only very big budget titles with healthy expected ROI could aim for full localization at the time. In this light, a good practice example is *Baldur's*

Gate (Interplay 1998), a fantasy RPG which was one of the earliest games to be fully localized into Spanish.

It was especially meaningful from the localization point of view because, like most RPGs, it contained thousands of translatable strings stored in different files and formats. The strings were part of the manual, item descriptions, in-game history books, magic parchments, a complex user interface, maps [...], and several hundred voice-over files that had to be recorded for each of the language versions in which the game was commercialized.

(Bernal Merino 2015: 166)

Full localization was the first move towards treating international players in the same way as local ones, a step that could be said to have established the game localization industry as a necessary partner to the game industry (Sioli *et al.* 2007 cit. in Bernal Merino 2015: 171).

In early 2000s, game consoles moved from CD-ROM to DVD-ROM and text strings could be stored in ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) instead of picture format. These advances made the localization process much more efficient while allowing for a much bigger storage capacity for text, also in audio and video formats. This meant significant implications for translation, since bigger audio capacities allowed dialogues' voice-over by means of human voices. For example, in the *Grand Theft Auto* series (Rockstar Games 1997 – Present), game characters have been played by film and music veterans, including Ray Liotta in *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, Samuel L. Jackson in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, and Phil Collins in *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories*, among others.

As regards videos, the use of cut-scenes or cinematics, which are non-interactive sequences aimed at storytelling basically, unveils the nature of game localization as an AVT specialized sub-domain since these tools need subtitling and dubbing techniques, as far as translation is concerned. Moreover, the more technology progresses, the more localization and translation are affected. According to Hasegawa (cit. in O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 59), for example, increasingly sophisticated graphic technologies portraying game characters' facial expressions require more accurate lip-synching in dialogues' voice-over. This means engaging professional voice actors and AVT-specialized translators on the one hand, and programmers able to work on multiple language game versions and to efficiently code localization functions on the other (*ActiveGaming Media* 2011: online).

If the impact technology has on game design, and on localization consequently, is clear, it is easy to understand how immersive can be the game experience the latest generations of consoles can offer players. Nowadays online connectivity, huge storage capacity for text, picture, music, etc., motion-sensing controllers, enhance the experience whose linguistic and cultural dimension is tailored to the needs of specific audiences thanks to localization.

In this light, one of the major changes to localization, and to the game industry in general, was the great success of games in the online arena, mostly Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOG), such as *Ultima Online* (Electronic Arts 1997 – Present) and *World Of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment 2004 – Present), with thousand or even million subscribers who can play and interact online with real people, both locally and internationally. As regards localization, since subscription and online MMOG-dedicated forums allow developers to collect very detailed data about players, the former can make informed decisions about specific locales or TLs, as happened for the creation of *Club Penguin's* (Disney Interactive 2005) Brazilian server after players' claim on the official public forum of this MMOG title for children (Bernal Merino 2015: 170).

The more complex and sophisticated video games are, the greater are the challenges localization involves. Modern projects may involve several hundred experts, each specializing in different aspects of the game such as sound, programming, animation, graphics, marketing, design and production. As for localization alone, Chandler and O'Malley Deming (2012: 317) exemplify the complexity of the process by mentioning the case of *Fable II* (Microsoft Game Studios 2008), which required a pool of 270 actors and a team of 130 people to deal with five full localizations and three partial localizations. In order to take on all the challenges this task poses and standardize best practices, the industry's current objective seems to be professionalization. As a matter of fact, the success of the game industry paved the way for companies to specialize in game localization during the first decade of the new millennium, which is evidence of the constant volume of demand for their services over the years (Bernal Merino 2015: 245). They are the so-called language service providers or localization vendors, such as XLoc, Pink Noise, Babel Media, Gameloc, Synthesis International, and Binari Sonori - the latter two are the main providers for game localization into Italian.

A highly qualified workforce, together with better tools and cooperative strategies for team-working via web-enabled applications, is now increasing the speed and quality of the game

localization industry which has grown enormously, although rather haphazardly, over the past decades.

(Bernal Merino 2015: 157)

In 2000s, with few exceptions, and despite the time and financial resources required, full localization is becoming standard in more languages for “AAA games”. The latter are games whose development budget can even exceed £20 million (Wilson 2011: online). After all, especially for gamers, this is the minimum that may be expected from such highly-priced titles (Bernal Merino 2015: 171).

Nowadays, the industry’s objective should be even more ambitious and imply “deep” or “enhanced” localization (Bernal Merino 2011: 17).

This adjective is used to indicate an enhancement of the game in relation to consumer expectation in a given locale. In other words, any amendment that does not run counter to the game-world itself, and is capable of increasing the immersion of players through familiarity with gameplay features and specific story preferences, can be considered and accepted as the right way to approach a particular community or market. [...] Deep or enhanced localization staves off competition from other top games by presenting a product that caters directly to local tastes and sensitivities in a systematized way.

(Bernal Merino 2015: 173)

According to Bernal Merino (2015), this new approach requires the integration of localization within each content-creating department in the process of game development. Consequently, it entails the radical move of localization from post-production stage at the very end of product development to the early creative and planning stages. As a result, more professionals are required to determine and advise on how game contents, such as the stories and the socio-cultural features, are likely to be perceived from target locales’ audiences. In other words, developers, publishers and localizers re-create or remove all those game assets which could have an adverse effect on or which could be misinterpreted by target players. In this light, localization becomes closely involved with the creation of a game that takes into account the target markets’ preferences from the beginning.

As regards translators, they could play a creative and even somehow authorial role in the process, “a role that inevitably clashes with some of the traditionally accepted views of

translation as a ‘true’ copy of the original” (Bernal Merino 2015: 173). This is part of a very moot point, namely authorship, in both video games and translation, being the topic controversial in both Game Studies and Translation Studies.

Interestingly, although localization can significantly change the original game, this “should not be perceived as a mandate to modify everything, but rather as an awareness of the sensitivities and preferences of other cultures” (Bernal Merino 2015: 174).

To conclude this historical overview, it seems worth highlighting that deep or enhanced localization “is the goal towards which the most experienced game developers and publishers are starting to work, because it guarantees consumer satisfaction and loyalty to a particular brand, an approach which, in turn, ultimately becomes more profitable” (Bernal Merino 2015: 174-175) and, above all, turns out to be a benefit for all involved.

1.4 Game Translation

Given the international distribution of video games, as already discussed, translation is a key phase within the whole localization cycle. Video games reach every corner of the world and, let me say, “go global” thanks to the process of negotiation between texts and cultures, during which all kinds of transactions take place mediated by the figure of the translator (Bassnett 2014: 6).

In this sense, the linguistic and cultural transfer of video games is mediation and negotiation too. The assumption underlying the need for game translation is exactly that entertainment is not amusing to the global village as a whole. What is enjoyable in one country may not be equally agreeable in another, “since the concept of what constitutes fun is deeply rooted in culture, tradition, and history” (Bernal Merino 2015: 41). Also on the developers’ part, there is often the misconception “that just because something works in their territory it can work just as successfully in another territory” (Bernal Merino 2015: 42).

Regardless of all factors resulting from the industry’s business needs (as explored in the first part of the chapter), the localization of video games is influenced by considerations about the nature of the title to be internationally distributed and about the expectations of the target locale’s audience. For example, in a racing game the soundtrack must include the radio stations with locally popular DJs. Similarly, in a sports game there must be locally well-known sportsmen, or those belonging to national teams, together with sports commentators from local radios and television programs (see Fernández Costales 2012 and Pettini 2016). Localization

also affects specific game contents, namely violence, blood and gore, sexual content and/or strong language, when dealing with age ratings, which can vary according to the target territory. Age rating labels are particularly relevant for translation because they can outline the prospective target audience and consequently influence translators' overall approach or single strategies.

The paragraphs which follow illustrate the theories holding the present research. Given the difficulty of providing an exhaustive account of all concepts, contributions and points of view, and also of their numerous implications, this section explores the most relevant parts of these models, which represent useful tools for the analysis. In more details, the following sections explore the distinctive characteristics of game translation, while outlining the influence exerted on translators' task by the unique dimensions of game media. First, the relationship between game translation and AVT is explored (1.4.1); the nature of the former as a type of constrained translation and the unique constraints game translators deal with are discussed (1.4.2), namely space constraints and platform-specific terminology. Second, the distinguishing traits of video games as complex multimedial and multimodal interactive texts, i.e. interactivity and ludonarrative (1.4.3), textual non-linearity (1.4.4), and multitextuality (1.4.5), are brought to light to show typical translation challenges. Finally, on the basis of the *skopos*-driven nature of game translation, the concept of playability is explored (1.4.6).

1.4.1 The “periphery” of Audiovisual Translation Studies

As mentioned in the Introduction, game translation has been defined as “the periphery” (Bogucki 2013: 30) of “the emergent field of what can loosely be termed Audiovisual Translation Studies” (Bassnett 2014: 142). Video games are one of the new screen-based textual manifestations that have extended the boundaries of this area of study (Pérez González 2009: 13). By drawing parallels with AVT, some features of game translation can be examined because this is arguably “the most complex example of audiovisual translation, due to their [video games] multimedia and interactive characteristics” (Bernal Merino 2015: 46). Games can probably be considered as the most multifaceted and challenging form of audiovisual texts as well as the most extreme form of multimedia interactive software (Bernal Merino 2015: 47).

According to Pérez González (2009: 13), AVT is a branch of TS concerned with the transfer of *multimodal* and *multimedial* texts into another language and/or culture. According to the author (Pérez González 2009), audiovisual texts are *multimodal* inasmuch as their

production and interpretation relies on the combined deployment of a wide range of semiotic resources, or meaning-making “modes” (see Baldry and Thibault 2006), such as language, image, music, color and perspective. Audiovisual texts are *multimedial* in so far as this panoply of semiotic modes is delivered to the viewer through various media in a synchronized manner, with the screen playing a coordinating role in the presentation process.

The simultaneous use of different sign systems to communicate information, which is peculiar to audiovisual texts, is a key concept in AVTS. Like comic books, films, TV programs, websites do with their respective recipients, video games naturally and imaginatively interweave the linguistic system with the other semiotic systems to immerse players in their imaginary worlds. Therefore, translation, meant as textual transfer essentially, cannot ignore the content and value of semiotic systems other than language. “Translating only the written word can lead to error and, therefore, a disruption of the continuum and coherence that exists amongst the various sign systems in the source text” (Bernal Merino 2015: 46-47).

According to Bernal Merino (2015: 97), Audiovisual Translation Studies could provide the right framework and disciplinary context where the translation of video games can be positioned, and the AVT umbrella label is a valid one to encapsulate professional practices and translation modes such as subtitling and dubbing which video games share with other audiovisual products. Nevertheless, also because they are software, the way game interactivity and immersion through the maxim of playability severely affect translators’ tasks results in video game translation falling somewhat outside of the realm of AVT (Bernal Merino 2015: 97). This is the reason why GL should be considered as an interdisciplinary autonomous discipline within Translation Studies.

In this light, it seems also worth underlining that localization and audiovisual translation “face a constant erosion of their mutual boundaries due to technological advances” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 1). As O’Hagan (2006a: 1) argues:

The dynamic development of digital content and rapid changes in people’s communication and entertainment habits are creating a new type of translation content. The shift from print to electronic media is challenging the established translation procedure and provoking new ways of translating, in turn calling for new theoretical frameworks and new research methodologies in translation studies (TS). Given the increasingly indispensable role played by technology in the modern translation practice, the need for technology-oriented translation research has never been greater.

Localization “is the most technology-driven and technology-dependent sector of the translation industry, as it deals with electronic content which is not ‘translatable’ without using technology because of the very nature of the medium” (O’Hagan 2006a: 5). Therefore, the difference between localization (of which game translation is part) and conventional translation “lies in the nature of the (predominantly digital) content it deals with” (O’Hagan 2006b: 39).

“Such a blurring of borders [between localization and audiovisual translation] is also detectable in the emergence of the many different terms used to refer to the field of AVT” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 106), such as “media translation”, “multimedia translation”, “multimodal translation”, and “screen translation” (see Chiaro 2009: 141, Orero 2004: vii–viii). The spread of new media resulting from the convergence of technologies is seeing the previously separate domains of localization and AVT come together to deal with the need for global distribution of these new types of product (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 106), of which video game are a prime example.

In this sense, according to Bernal Merino (2015), a dedicated term would be highly desirable in order to properly define all game translation paradigms.

The translation and localization of video games show that a more comprehensive theory of translation is needed from TS if it is to accommodate and explain current translation practices in the MIES [Multimedia Interactive Entertainment Software] industry. While linguistic-based theories, process-oriented, descriptive and functionalist approaches, postcolonial, gender-based and corpus linguistics perspectives on translation all do contribute to explain some of the challenges encountered in TMIES [Translation of Multimedia Interactive Entertainment Software], it seems necessary that a harmonization of theories is achieved so that current professional practice can be fully explained and placed within TS.

(Bernal Merino 2015: 251)

1.4.2 Constrained translation

Since video games are multimodal and multimedial texts, or “screen products” (Chiaro 2009), their linguistic and cultural transfer must be defined as a type of “constrained translation”⁸ (Mayoral *et al.* 1988). According to Mayoral, Kelly and Gallardo (1988), when translation is required not only of written texts alone, but of texts in association with other communication media (image, music, oral sources, etc.), the translator’s task is complicated and at the same constrained by the latter (1988: 356). In other words, although not specific objects of the translation process, the non-linguistic systems or channels a ST relies on to convey information at a given moment must be considered by the translator (Mayoral *et al.* 1988: 358).

The relationship between all the systems involved is based on a fundamental concept: synchrony, referred to as “the agreement between signals emitted for the purpose of communicating the same message” (Mayoral *et al.* 1988: 359) and which can be of time, space, content, sound and character. Accordingly, the message must be seen as “a whole created as a result of the concurrence of different signals” and not as the sum of meanings transmitted by the sum of signals (Mayoral *et al.* 1988: 360). This does not imply that “the different parts of the message should mean the same thing but rather they should not contradict one another unless this has been the intention of the original” (Mayoral *et al.* 1988: 363). Translation is not possible without understanding how the other non-linguistic communicative elements add to or modify the meaning and sometimes even impose their own laws and conditions on the text. Synchrony is therefore paramount for the sake of the overall communicative function, that is to say to avoid a failure of the communication act or additional difficulty in decoding (Mayoral *et al.* 1988: 363).

As regards video games, the synchronous effect resulting from the relationship amongst all the layers of linguistic and non-linguistic information found in these products enhances the receiver’s experience. This is the reason why when translating such products, all semiotic systems must be analyzed by translators, localizers, coordinators, and editors, if they are to guarantee the recreation of the same fun experience for receivers in different locales around the world.

⁸ The term was first used by Titford (1982: 113) and, in its Spanish version “traducción subordinada” then adopted by different scholars, such as Rabadán Álvarez (1991: 72), Díaz Cintas (1998), Lorenzo García and Pereira Rodríguez (2000, 2001) to acknowledge a translation conditioned by both verbal and non-verbal communication purposes.

Game translation share a number of constraints with other audiovisual or multimedial and multimodal products, for the reasons discussed above. Beside the issues resulting from the transfer of messages conveyed by means of different semiotic channels, the process presents challenges related to time and space constraints when dealing with subtitling, the synchronous display of subtitles onscreen, whether verbatim or edited, the voice recording of the different characters, often requiring good performance and lip-synchronization. Moreover, there are some constraints which are pertinent to game localization and specifically affect translation decisions in terms of (1) space limitations, mainly related to the UI items; (2) the prescribed use of terminology specified by platform holders; (3) textual non-linearity resulting from the concatenation of text strings and linguistic variables which allow the game engine to customize players' experience through interactivity. While space limitations and platform-specific terminology will be discussed shortly, the textual constraints posed by interactivity will be dealt with in Sections 1.4.3 and 1.4.4.

Space constraints turn out to be very rigid when translating game texts. This is particularly true for the transfer into Romance languages (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 131). "Traditionally, translated text is about 20 to 30% larger than source language text" (Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2012: 5). User Interface text such as menus, lists, help and system messages, or textual graphics (maps, signs and notices that include text), have got pre-allocated space with a restricted number of characters or pixels. Yet, they require an "unobtrusive and fully functional" (Dietz 2006: 126) translation because they represent the player's access into the game world. "The UI text needs to be short, clear, and precise in terms of the information displayed, because its main purpose is to facilitate play without interrupting immersion or breaking the suspension of disbelief" (Bernal Merino 2015: 112). To deal with such an issue, as discussed in Section 1.2.2, especially to avoid text display problems such as overlapping, truncations or excessive abbreviations, which can be very misleading, it is important that the design of menus, lists, text boxes, etc. allows space to be scaled up or down according to the size and the length of the text. In contrast, redesign "is rarely an option because it impinges on engineering time", and "a reduction in the font size, [...] affects the legibility of the text displayed" (Bernal Merino 2015: 112).

As regards the three games included in the corpus of this study, constraints are usually indicated in a specific column of each title database spreadsheet but they do not really affect dialogue lines, the text type under investigation. In particular, in MOHW database spreadsheet,

space constraints are specified in a column named “MaxLength” which includes limitations ranging from 1 to 4000 characters per text string, the latter concerns dialogue lines. In *Battlefield 4* database spreadsheet, the space constraints’ column is also called “MaxLength” and ranges from 0 to 4000, the former is the limitation concerning BF4 dialogue strings which are termed “BF4_Subtitles”. In *Mass Effect 3* database spreadsheet, there are no indications on space constraints, there is a column called instead “audio restriction” with no values. As Synthesis audio manager Ambra Ravaglia clarifies in an e-mail message to the researcher on February 5, 2016, ME3 voice-over actors were not pressured by time constraints thanks to the automatic synchronization performed by the game engine, as explored by Pettini (forthcoming).

Platforms are electronic systems, the hardware devices used to play video games. According to Bernal Merino (2015: 107), “they can be broadly grouped into two categories: desktop devices (PCs, PS3, PS4 Xbox 360, Xbox One, Nintendo Wii, Wii U), and portable devices (PlayStation Portable, Nintendo 3DS, mobile phones, smart phones, and tablet computers)”. Accordingly, multimedia interactive entertainment software can be categorized into: console games, computer games, handheld console games, and mobile games.

Platform developers, namely Sony, Microsoft, Apple and Nintendo, “have specific technical requirements, since their game standards differ in Asia, Europe and the United States” (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 7). Localizations “must fulfil these requirements and adhere to the platform-specific terminology” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 132), whose transfer represents “one of the main areas of interaction between terminology and game translation” (Pettini 2016: 68).

Many game text types require translators to strictly use an approved body of specialized terms which relate to a particular platform, official terminology and trademarks that do not allow for translation errors or variations. As Bernal Merino points out (2015), the content and wording of these messages must follow style, formatting and terminology guidelines within each language and across all localized versions. No variation is permitted unless it has been formally validated by the platform holders. Platform-specific terminology constraints can be found in:

- the UI, which is “used to control the hardware preferences as well as the many aspects of gameplay”, thus requiring “terminological appropriateness and accuracy” (Bernal Merino 2015: 110);

- system messages, which contain technical information in the form of official error reporting messages, as well as promotional information that the game publishers, the console manufacturers or any of the stakeholders wish to promote (Bernal Merino 2015: 112-113);
- game installers, which contain technical information and system dialogue strings that have been approved by platform manufacturers and must always be expressed and displayed in the same manner. These texts are short and syntactically simple, but it is precisely this succinctness coupled with the need for specific terminology that makes the task difficult for translators (Bernal Merino 2015: 114).

Moreover, platform-specific terminology constraints are particularly hard when the title is multiplatform, i.e. designed to be released simultaneously on several platforms, since the whole number of requirements and terms may considerably grow.

As regards the professional practice, official terminology lists or databases are usually compiled and updated internally by a dedicated team of the localization vendor or of the localization department if translation is performed in-house. The importance of this issue is testified to by the fact that platform holders “reserve the right to ban the release of a game for their system if it does not comply with [...] the correct use of their trademark and their copyrighted terminology, which must remain consistent across the whole product line in all the languages covered” (Bernal Merino 2015: 180).

The three games included in the corpus are all multiplatform titles and Electronic Arts Localization Department has compiled a spreadsheet called “EA Terminology Glossary” for all European languages. This database contains all the correct terms translators must use in game texts of each localized platform-specific version of EA games. However, as demonstrated by the above-mentioned list of text types affected by this category of constraints, dialogue strings do not contain platform-specific terminology. Indeed, no occurrence of such terms is found in the corpus and, consequently, they are not included in the analysis.

1.4.3 Interactivity and ludonarrative

Interactivity can be seen as a basic characteristic of any technology or computer-based activity, and it is often referred to as the feature that sets video games apart from other forms of entertainment. However, as Bernal Merino claims (2015), the concept is not new or exclusive

to digital media: all types of entertainment can arguably be defined *interactive*, since they rely on some kind of interaction between the recipient and the author, there are examples of interactivity in drama, reality TV shows, literature, etc. The main differences lie in the level of authorship granted to the recipient, the reader, the spectator, or *the player* in the case of video games.

Indeed, multimedia *interactive* entertainment intrinsically implies players' active participation to unfold. Players' agency is the *conditio sine qua non* for video game to function and, especially, for the game storyline to develop. Interactivity "empowers users and encourages them to become active agents in direct control of an adventure to an extreme never seen before in any medium" (Bernal Merino 2015: 38).

In this light, as happens in Game Studies in general⁹, also for translational analysis, video games' most relevant dimensions are play and narrative. Therefore, they must be analyzed as both play (ludology) and story (narratology). Ludologists focus on the play action, the experience of playing games, and acknowledge them as simulation, a highly-structured world governed by pre-determined rules according to which players can choose among different paths to finally reach different scenarios, thanks to regulated interactivity (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 76). In contrast, narratologists focus on games as narratives and representations, as texts decoded by players, and this latter interpretation is particularly relevant for the purposes of research on game translation.

According to Fulco (2004: 58), the external structure of a video game can be represented as two intersecting levels: the ludic and the narrative. Game contents belong to either the first or the second according to their function. The ludic level includes all the elements related to interactivity while the narrative contains those of storytelling (dialogues, texts and characters), the latter being partly fixed in cinematics (Bissell 2010: 37). Multifunctional game contents are part of both and place themselves in the intersection area, the "ludonarrative" level where game mechanics and story fluidly interact and direct the gameplay development by means of the player's actions. Ludonarrative is therefore unscripted and gamer-determined (Bissell 2010: 37) and results in game texts' non-linearity. In summary, ludonarrative is the dimension which

⁹ See, for example, Dovey and Kennedy (2006), Egenfeldt Nielsen *et al.* (2013), Frasca (2001a, 2001b, 2001c), Juul (2005), Kerr (2006), amongst others.

allows game analysis as regards both ludic and narrative elements, and “attempts to bridge the narrative and the play dimensions as two sides of a coin” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 151).

This twofold dimension seems to depend on video games’ “half-real” nature (Juul 2005: 1): “video games are rules *and* fiction” (2005: 12, original emphasis), “to play a video game is therefore to interact with *real* rules while imagining a *fictional* world, and a video game is a set of rules as well as a fictional world” (2005: 1, my emphasis). Juul’s (2005) argument about games’ real-fictional duality is a particularly relevant viewpoint for the purposes of this study.

As regards storytelling, in the light of Fulco’s (2004) and Bissell’s (2010) “ludonarrative” concept, and also Juul’s “half-real” label (2005), players go through a game fictional world which progressively unfolds and they are told the story they are determining, a “played out narrative” (Bateman 2006) within the main pre-determined narrative.

In this sense, if we consider games as the result of the interaction of the two dimensions, it is worth noting that, in Dovey and Kennedy’s words (2006: 102), “to play is to generate meaning, to express it through play. Play allows us to actively express meaning” and “play is always about action and reaction” (Bernal Merino 2015: 39), namely interactivity. The relationship between text and end user considerably changes and this inevitably affects translation.

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. [...] 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.

(Bernal Merino 2015: 39)

As Bernal Merino (2015: 39) underlines, since “a significant proportion of the communication taking part between players and games is provided by language, whether in text, audio, or video format”, the game engine must present a considerable linguistic flexibility and “game programming must take into account syntactical and morphological rules in order to phrase exchanges with players correctly”, especially as regards gender and number agreement, modes of address, etc. Syntactical and morphological issues complicate game translation, especially if we consider the usual lack of co-text and context of localization practice. Therefore, it is easy

to understand how interactivity influences translators' task whose objective is to maintain players' suspension of disbelief, to offer an immersive experience into the game world or, better said, guarantee *playability*. This latter concept is worth further exploration since it can be referred to as the *skopos* of game translation. Consequently, section 1.4.6 will be entirely dedicated to it.

Going back to ludonarrative, since either voiced-over and subtitled dialogue strings uttered during both interactive and non-interactive sequences are the focus of this research, it is worth noting that monologues and dialogues are among the major tools used for narrative development. Video games' (interactive) storytelling is paramount in the overall game experience. After all, as maintained by Adams (cit. in O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 151), "without a story a game is just an abstraction". Moreover, story-driven games, as opposed to action-driven ones, best satisfy translational analysis purposes. For all these reasons, narrative and its devices in video games, especially in the form of digital storytelling, would deserve greater attention and further examination by taking advantage of Game Studies scholars contributions¹⁰. Nevertheless, it is beyond the scope of this research and relevant references will be made only when beneficial to the analysis of *realia* and *irrealia*, especially when investigating the narratives of the games included in the corpus.

1.4.4 Textual non-linearity

The interactive nature of games gives the player authorial agency, in so far as his or her decisions and skills move the story to a certain direction, he or she becomes an agent in the storytelling process. Players can influence the pace and flow of the game, their actions affect what textual content is displayed and when: the order of certain events can be changed, lines of dialogue may or may not be heard, instructions from the game may or may not be triggered by the player, etc.

More relevantly, as far as texts are concerned, this kind of customization is possible thanks to their non-linearity. In other words, game texts are non-linear mainly because they are presented as separate and decontextualized independent strings or text fragments, which are displayed in different locations of the product in obedience to the player's actions and which often do not have a clear meaning outside the context of the game.

¹⁰ See Bateman (2006), Miller (2014), Newman (2013), Tavinor (2009), Thabet (2015), among others.

The non-linearity of game text composition exacerbates the challenge of dealing with the isolated text fragments (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 130) because they are combined according to the user's decisions by way of concatenation. This refers to a technique "whereby text stored in different parts of the game code is put together in a sentence or paragraph by means of linguistic variables and formulae" (Bernal Merino 2015: 280).

Linguistic variables are parameters replaceable with different values when certain conditions are met (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 11) and generally stand for proper names, numerals, and objects. They are directly relevant to the interactivity in games because they allow displaying a wide number of attributes for players' characters such as: name, gender, profession, nationality, and religion (Bernal Merino 2015: 147).

This method "works relatively well for analytic languages such as English" (Bernal Merino 2015: 149) but, when translation is concerned, special attention must be paid. In the shift from English into Romance languages, such as Italian and Spanish for example, "due to the degree of concordance required between the articles, pronouns, substantives, adjectives, and verbs in a sentence" (Bernal Merino 2015: 149), this method is likely to give rise to linguistic issues because it can lead to inconsistencies and incorrect sentences. Moreover, translations, especially from English into Romance languages, tend to be longer and this may pose issues related to space constraints. Translators also must take into account different languages' syntax to relocate the variable or foresee potential morphology changes.

Text fragmentation reveals itself in the Excel spreadsheets translators usually work on, with little or no contextual information and, above all, without the possibility to see the game before the release. These work conditions prompted some professionals to label game translation as "blind" (see Dietz 2006, 2007).

The corpus used for this research, which includes the three products selected as representative of the realism-fictionalism spectrum of video games this study aims to simulate and which will be described in more details in Section 2.2, was compiled exactly on the basis of the three titles' database spreadsheets. Despite remarkable differences concerning the overall number of words, of text strings and of text types, all games' databases are Excel spreadsheets which organize information in typical table style format with several columns and tens, or even hundreds, of thousands of rows. The columns the three titles have in common contain, for example: the "identifier" or "string ID"; the "source text" or "English text"; the "language text" or the target language name, i.e. "Italian", "Spanish", etc.; and the "category" or "parent string"

which categorizes string types. Other pieces of information organized in the spreadsheet columns may concern platform, space constraints and audio restrictions, if any, translation “status”, i.e. “translation done” and “LT [Language Text] modified”, among others. In more details, it seems worth underlining that a comparison between the spreadsheets of the corpus’ three games clearly show better work conditions for translators of BioWare games. Indeed, as regards *Battlefield 4*, the project manager at Synthesis International Giorgio Anselmi explains in an e-mail message to the researcher on May 5, 2016, that *Battlefield 4* translation team was provided with (only) some (extratextual) background information concerning characters and story although they could contact Electronic Arts and ask for explanations whenever they deemed necessary for the purposes of translation quality.

Conversely, the database of *Mass Effect 3* provides language professionals with many pieces of contextual information which may prove very useful, such as the speaker character’s name and his/her gender, the listener character’s name and his/her gender, some descriptions of the string location in the game code, a brief synopsis of the context in which dialogue strings are uttered, and instructions for voice-over actors. As far as localization is concerned, for the sake of translation quality BioWare developers commit themselves to provide as much contextual information as possible to translators (Christou *et al.* 2011).

Moreover, as regards dialogue strings especially, in BioWare games interactivity and textual non-linearity translate into conversations which “contain many branching options, and are best represented by a tree structure” (Christou *et al.* 2011: 48), since it is the player who is in control of dialogues with non-playable characters. BioWare “dialogue tree” consists “of a list of all dialogue options which branch off into further options. The latter account for every single possibility that can arise from selecting a given dialogue option” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 144). In order to allow translators to deal with it, BioWare developed its own proprietary tool which orders conversation strings in a tree structure, showing the preceding and following lines, so that translators can cross-reference adjacent lines of dialogue (Christou *et al.* 2011: 48). It is the so-called “Conversation Previewer”, which “presents the English source text, and its available translations and localized VO files, as an accurate representation of how translated content will be experienced in-game, as well as how the English source text flows” (Christou *et al.* 2011: 49).

BioWare’s commitment to high quality translation is also testified to by what they call “character bible” (Christou *et al.* 2011: 42), which “contains information that is not part of in-

game data, so it does not appear in dialogues or menus” and concerns “the virtual characters experienced in-game” in terms of “pertinent background information such as name, gender, species, age, character archetype, importance (major/minor character), speech patterns, accent, demeanor, etc.”. Provided to both the English voice-over team and the localization team, “the character bible contains any information that an actor will need in order to accurately portray the character, as envisioned by the writers [...]. This information is not just useful to the VO recording teams, but it is also essential for translators as reference text” (Christou *et al.* 2011: 42). In practical terms, given the remarkable number of BioWare games’ characters, BioWare designed a database which allowed all this information to be tracked, displayed and sifted in an informative and smooth manner and which was readable by the ubiquitous and functional Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

As O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 144) underline, “this type of meta-data is not only useful for maintaining consistency in the development of the game, but also for the localization process, as it provides background and contextual information for the translators, allowing them to provide a more accurate and consistent translation”.

As previously mentioned, video games scripts consist of sentences and paragraphs which result from the concatenation of independent text strings which in turn are combined by means of formulae, algorithms and, more interestingly, linguistic variables. In the dialogue strings of the three video games included in this study corpus, the only variable found concerns gender in the role-playing game developed by BioWare. *Mass Effect 3* is a gender-customizable videogame and, in the transfer from English into Italian and Spanish, in order to allow the game engine to display gender-specific strings correctly, strings have been gender-tagged by translators thanks to the computing mechanism of “meta-language” (Heimburg 2006). Although variables represent a very interesting topic for investigation in game localization, given the unique challenges they pose in translation, and although gender may be interpreted as a reality, thus being pertinent to the analysis of the relationship between the real world and the game world, due to the complexity and the scope of the analysis of gender-related issues in video games (see Pettini forthcoming), it seems necessary not to include this area in the present research. Nevertheless, in Chapter 5, gender issues in *Mass Effect 3* localization into Italian and Spanish will be briefly discussed when relevant in the examples provided.

1.4.5 Multitextuality

The nature of video games as texts is very complex. As multimedia products, translatable assets can significantly vary. As a result, they present wide-ranging translational challenges and require very different translational skills.

Game localization affects different game elements, generally known as “assets” in the industry, namely: text, art, audio, cinematic assets and printed materials (Chandler and O’Malley Deming 2012: 53). What really matters in translation is text, and more precisely its genres and types in terms of conventions and functions because “all of them have their own textual characteristics and communicative purpose” (Bernal Merino 2015: 108). A first distinction must be made between diegetic and non-diegetic elements in relation to the game world, or between in-game text and paratext (promotional material, box cover, manual, etc.). Secondly, a taxonomy of textual typologies is needed for these two broad categories so that translation approaches and strategies can be investigated accordingly. For translational analysis purposes, video games’ texts must be examined from a functionalist perspective, which shifts the focus away from equivalence-based thinking tied to the ST to that based on the TT function (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 150). Alternatively, borrowing Toury’s concept of “equivalence” as norm-determined, it could be even said that game translation is another example of the shift “from an ahistorical, largely prescriptive concept to a historical one” (1995: 61). Equivalence, then, should not be meant as an abstract *tertium comparationis* between ST and TT but as a historically-bound changing concept which reflects a particular relationship between the two texts, which in turn should be described according to the norms that govern translation in a given time and space which, in the case of video games, might be defined as global market-driven.

Drawing on O’Hagan and Mangiron’s classification (2013: 155-158), which is in turn grounded on Reiss’ (1971/2000) and Nord’s (1997, 2005) work, game texts can be analyzed from a Skopos Theory perspective (Reiss and Vermeer 2014; Vermeer 1989/2000). Being Reiss’ text categorization based on ST functions, this turns out to be very relevant because one of the major purposes of game translation is to maintain the source game assets’ functions while adhering to TT conventions.

Major text functions are: (1) informative, (2) expressive, and (3) persuasive (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 153-154). Content-focused texts with informative function may include the UI texts, system messages, tutorials, textual graphics, voice-over and cinematics’ texts,

manuals and strategy books, for example. Form-focused texts with expressive function may include narrative texts, especially literary passages, textual graphics, voice-over and cinematics' texts, audio assets (songs and ambient sound), amongst others. Appeal-focused texts with persuasive function may include textual graphics, advertising texts, the game's official website and box cover. Each specific function of source game texts must be maintained in the target ones and this requires translators to deal with a wide range of constraints and needs, as regards time, space, style, translation mode, etc.

Bernal Merino (2015: 108) offers a comprehensive examination of game translatable assets and points out that the most common ones can be found in:

- a) the game itself, made of a variety of texts encoded in a variety of formats, such as:
 - packaging and manual documentation (word processors' files);
 - installer programs (XML format or binary code);
 - 'readme' files and end user agreements (.txt format);
 - UI and pop-up help captions (XML format or binary code);
 - audio files (.wav, .mp3 or other audio formats);
 - video files (.avi, .mov, .mp4, or other video formats).
- b) the game official website (XML format);
- c) promotional articles and merchandising in general (analogue, electronic or paper formats), such as television commercials, interactive banners, and game magazines;
- d) game patches, i.e. small downloadable programs which fix existing bugs missed in the testing process;
- e) game updates: periodical downloadable content related game chapters, map-packs, features, storylines, and characters.

Moreover, as the list above clearly shows, translators must work on texts in different file formats, which require them to own and familiarize with many different software programs.

More importantly, as already mentioned, all translatable assets present their own textual features and purpose. In this light, the concept of text genres and text types is particularly significant because translators are usually expected to adhere to TL and TC conventions as regards the given text genre or type (Baker 2011: 121). Drawing on Bernal Merino (2006, 2007 and 2015) and Vela Valido (2011), according to their communicative function, game text types fall into seven main categories:

- 1) narrative: heard or displayed, it carries the information about the game world and its characters;
- 2) oral/dialogic: heard or displayed, it represents the transcription of characters speaking to themselves or others in the game world;
- 3) technical: displayed or printed, it contains detailed information about the software and hardware required to enjoy the game;
- 4) functional: displayed as part of the menus, it enables players to choose between different game options;
- 5) didactic: displayed, printed or heard, it trains players to use the game application;
- 6) promotional: printed or displayed, it encourages users to buy more products;
- 7) legal: printed or displayed, it advises buyers of their rights and duties as owners of the game product.

For example, while the variety of in-game texts can include all the types above, voice-over and cinematics assets consist of texts with narrative, oral/diegetic, functional and didactic functions, art assets have functional and promotional purposes only, glossaries and translation memories simply contain technical or legal texts, etc.

“Linguistically speaking, software products are multi-textual, i.e. they contain different types of texts: technical, pedagogical, and specific (to the purpose of the application)” (Bernal Merino 2006: 29). In details, “games are made up of a diversity of texts, such as technical messages, witty dialogues, songs and literary passages, which have to be translated differently” (Mangiron 2007: 316). Different types of games require different translation strategies (Bernal Merino 2007b: 2) and since no one project is like another (Bartelt Krantz 2011: 86), it is quite difficult to adopt a systematic *modus operandi*. In other words, the streamlined standardization approach common in software localization is often unworkable in game translation (Darolle 2004). Each title requires a different translation set of strategies in relation to the unique features of the game (Chandler 2008a: 37). Moreover, “factors such as audience, the client, the media, and the component of the game (asset) where the text is going to appear will inevitably influence the translation approach and the decision making about the methods, strategies and techniques to be employed” (Granell 2011: 194).

“A wide range of text types, from literary to technical with the use of literary narrative devices, legal text and contemporary dialogue scripts full of street-speak, can be present within

one game” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 154). “Most texts that are part of video games share a number of characteristics with texts that belong to other translation modalities, such as literary, technical, legal, or marketing translation, software and web localization or other audiovisual translation modalities” (Granell 2011: 187). More relevantly, “this combination of texts within the same product could be one of the characteristics that sets the translation of multimedia interactive entertainment software apart from other audiovisual products. [...] It is the first time that one single product requires all types of language transfer specializations” (Bernal Merino 2006: 29).

With regards to language specialists, the video game industry requires a translation professional with an array of skills rather different from other areas of the established language transfer profession. The translator of video games needs to have good computer skills in order to work with different file formats and software packages, as well as to be able to translate a wide variety of textual types ranging from the promotional to the technical, the creative, the didactic and the literary. Although these skills may not be in themselves new to the field of translation, their convergence is unusual and it deserves to be studied separately and on its own merits.

(Bernal Merino 2015: 2)

As already discussed, the text type this study focuses on is dialogue, i.e. dialogue strings which are uttered by both playable and non-playable game characters during both interactive and non-interactive sequences. According to the classification above, dialogue falls into “narrative” and “oral/dialogic” text; indeed, it has been selected as the most suitable text type to be investigated for the purposes of this research, due to its narrative role in story-driven games. In the game original version, i.e. the ST, dialogue strings “tend to be the transcription of the dialogue exchanges” (Bernal Merino 2015: 72), i.e. verbatim intralingual subtitles. In localized versions, dialogue strings “tend often to follow the verbatim written rendition of the voices (dialogue and narration) that can be heard in the audio track” (Bernal Merino 2015: 124), i.e. verbatim interlingual subtitles. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to speculate that game writers compose dialogues in the ST, they become (optional) intralingual subtitles which are then voiced-over in the SL in case of full localization. Similarly, intralingual subtitles are translated into the TL and they become interlingual subtitles which, in full localizations, are voiced-over by professional actors, thus becoming optional. Obviously enough, this considerably distance subtitling and

voice-over in game localization from subtitling and dubbing in audiovisual translation proper (see, for example, Le Dour 2007: online, Mangiron 2013) but, as already mentioned in Section 1.2.4, a description of subtitling, dubbing and voice-over features in game translation, especially if compared to the use of these modes in the translation of other audiovisual products, is beyond the reach of this research.

1.4.6 Playability

Game translation is primarily driven by its purpose (*skopos*), which is ultimately to entertain the end user of the translated product (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 150).

In this light, video games' linguistic conversion may require a functionalist approach where the *skopos* is keeping the same look and feel of the original and preserving the gameplay experience (Mangiron and O'Hagan 2006; Bernal Merino 2009). When studying video games as STs and localizations as TTs, the analysis tends to draw on Skopos Theory (Vermeer 1989/2000). This means that the focus of translation is no longer equivalence to the ST, but rather to the TT function (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 150). Accordingly, "with games, fidelity takes a different meaning whereby the translator does not have to be loyal to the original text, but rather to the overall game experience" (Mangiron and O'Hagan 2006: 15).

The experience offered by a video game is extremely complex and multifaceted; moreover, different video games offer different game experiences. Translating the game experience means both guaranteeing functionality and enhancing players' immersion into the game world. It means allowing players both to use the product and to enjoy the artefact, since "a video game is both a product designed for mass consumption and an artistic creation at the same time" (Bernal Merino 2015: 103) with both utility and expressive purposes.

Since entertainment is the *skopos* of game translation, the approach and the strategies of the linguistic and cultural transfer vary according to the type of entertaining experience offered by the game itself. In this regard, due to the difficulty in defining a game experience objectively, for the purposes of this study, it seems reasonable to rely on what developers and publishers place emphasis on for marketing purposes. Indeed, games' official websites and dedicated pages on publishers' website prove to be very useful to understand what experience they aim to offer players worldwide. The wide range of game experiences determines a wide array of linguistic and translational challenges, and very different skills are required on the translators' part, sometimes even calling for such a high degree of creativity, and shared-authorship, that

the resulting target versions “can (apparently) depart vastly from the original in an attempt to enhance playability, engage players and maintain their immersion” in the game world (Bernal Merino 2015: 250). This approach seems “practically unheard-of in the translation of other texts where (literal) faithfulness to the ST tends to be considered sacrosanct, often in a rather simplistic manner” (Bernal Merino 2015: 250-251).

In this light, playability is “a crucial concept for the translation and localization 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” (Bernal Merino 2015: 40). It means that the quality of localization and translation can either greatly enhance or considerably diminish playability, i.e. players’ interaction with the game (Bernal Merino 2015).

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.

(Bernal Merino 2015: 40)

In game translation, any technical, cultural and linguistic transformation is allowed in order to bring the product closer to the local taste and expectations of the TC.

According to this principle, almost everything in a video game is open to change in order to meet the needs of specific territories if a potential increase in sales is at stake. In other words, games may be played differently and look (slightly) different depending on the country where they are purchased.

(Bernal Merino 2015: 106-107)

Nevertheless, game translation “should not be perceived as a mandate to modify everything, but rather as an awareness of the sensitivities and preferences of other cultures. In this sense, it involves creative decisions and the game worlds themselves often tend to establish their creative parameters by indicating what would be admissible and what would not” (Bernal Merino 2015: 174). In other words, “it is only by applying the concept of playability that the creativity required for the translation and localization of video games can be fully understood” (Bernal Merino 2015: 42).

Chapter 2

Methodological Framework

2.1 Realism and Fictionality in Game Localization

The concepts outlined in Chapter 1 represent the background to the set-up of the main hypothesis and research questions of this monograph: does the relationship between the game world and the real world affect the nature of the challenges translators must face? Does it influence translation approach and strategies to transfer the look and feel of the original game, offer an experience just as entertaining as the original and finally enhance playability? Does the degree of realism or fictionality of game contents quantitatively and qualitatively affect linguistic material? If so, does it constrain or loose translators' agency for the sake of players' immersion?

Nowadays the realm of video gaming covers an enormous spectrum of products which differ from one another in terms of genre, volume of text, difficulty, platform, playtime, etc. They range “from almost completely visual puzzle games to complex role-playing games containing hundreds of thousands of words, from quick coffee-break entertainment to huge sagas lasting hundreds of hours of playing time” (Dietz 2008: 8). As a result, the phenomenon cannot be captured holistically and comprehensively.

“Besides the enormous range in size and complexity between casual and hardcore games, there is also a major difference between mimetic and imaginative games” (Dietz 2008: 8), that is to say, video games differ from one another according to their relationship with the real world. In this light, a lively and interesting debate among scholars has taken place about the potential distinguishing features of translation approach to video games, which proves particularly meaningful for the purposes of this study.

According to Dietz (2006: 122), “games create alternate worlds whose relationship to the real world can range from extreme realism to utter fantasy”. On the one hand, simulations and military strategy games represent the highest degree of verisimilitude, the closest approximation of the outside world. On the other hand, science fiction and fantasy titles create (rather than recreate) worlds of magic. As Dietz (2006: 123) argues, “the realism-magic spectrum” does affect translation, as “it demands very different skills from the translator”: specialized subject knowledge and terminological mastery are required when transferring

verisimilar contents, since this is a technical translation; on the contrary, “the localization of science fiction or fantasy titles is more akin to literary translation” (Dietz 2006: 124) and creativity is of paramount importance. In Skladanowski’s words (cit. in Serón Ordóñez 2011: 107), “generally, the more liberties the creators of the game took while writing the text, the more leeway the translator has in rendering it in the target language”. Indeed, according to Bernal Merino (2007b: 3), “from the point of view of translation, we could say that there are only two types of games, based on the degree of freedom translators are given. Effectively, some games require more research than creativity, and others require more creativity than research”.

Analyzing the fictional edge of the spectrum, namely the fantasy genre, on the basis of examples from the *Final Fantasy* series (Square Enix 1987 - Present), Mangiron and O’Hagan suggest that “the translation issues arising from this domain call for a new model that we call ‘transcreation’ to explain the freedom granted to the translator, albeit within severe space limitations” (2006: 11) and highlight that:

Game localizers are granted quasi absolute freedom to modify, omit, and even add any elements which they deem necessary to bring the game closer to the players and to convey the original feel of gameplay. And, in so doing, the traditional concept of fidelity to the original is discarded. In game localization, transcreation, rather than just translation, takes place.

(Mangiron and O’Hagan 2006: 20)

As Bernal Merino (2011: 17) points out, “in a way, game localization can at times take a creative role that traditional views on translation would sanction as being beyond the scope of language experts’ duties”. Transcreation is therefore considered one of the distinctive traits of game localization:

The difference between multimedia and other types of translations is most remarkable in the level of creativity that is given to - and also expected from - the translator. Unless working on a book or movie license, the translator is asked to «transcreate» the text freely, for example giving proper names to characters and places that replicate the user experience in the target language. [...] While some translators may relish this creative freedom, this

always has to be balanced with research activities for text parts with realistic background [...].”

(Bartelt Krantz 2011: 85-86)

In order to debate this topic, it is also worth exploring the products whose translation requires more research than creativity (Bernal Merino 2007b: 3), since they provide examples of the realism edge of the spectrum.

“Video game renderings of popular books do not seem to enjoy the same *carte blanche* as other games, as far as the translation process is concerned” (Bernal Merino 2009: 244). The lesser extent of freedom that is granted to the translators of games based on children’s books depends on two basic reasons: “first of all, if the deviations are too pronounced, it could be interpreted as an infringement of the licensee contract. But, most importantly, communities of fans around the world would be most disappointed and they could boycott the game by not buying it”. Localizers must follow the official copyrighted translation, prepare and use glossaries, do meticulous research, apply similar lexical and syntactic choices, maintain the internal cohesion of the text. “It is a balancing act” which “relies on the artistry of good translators, and, quite often, on their research skills” (Bernal Merino 2009: 245).

As far as the relationship between video games and literature is concerned, remarkable constraints also influence the localization of game titles which result from intersemiotic translations within the wider process of “remediation” (Bolter and Grusin 2000). In other words, as Pettini (2017) argues, be it part of a franchise or not, in order to transfer the look and feel of a video game based on literature, translators have to be faithful and loyal to the literary source of inspiration because the *skopos*, i.e. entertainment, is the players’ immersion in that (interactive) literary universe. For example, in the case of *Dante’s Inferno* (Electronic Arts 2010), translators successfully decided to deviate from the game source text, which is a loose adaptation from US poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s 1867 translation of the *Inferno*, and they produced a digital imitative Dantesque experience both literally and literarily (Pettini 2017). On the one hand, by means of research, translators borrowed integral or partial quotations from the poem; on the other, they boasted their writing skills to create a literary-like style making phonological, morphological, syntactical and semantic choices, which turned the Italian game definitely more Dantesque. According to Pettini (2017), this approach may also depend on the game’s mature target audience: Italian 18-year old players. Since *The Divine Comedy* is a pillar of the Italian high school curricula, the players’ previous knowledge may

have required translators to engage intertextually with the poem in order to enhance their immersion into *Dante's Inferno*. Players' expectations are a variable to be seriously taken into account in video games, especially in the localization for a specific target audience. Since Dante's work is so deeply rooted in Italian culture, and his memorable lines are so vivid in Italians' memory, the translation quality of the game's intertextual references to the poem results from the tribute paid to "one of the most beloved, imaginative and influential works of Western civilization" (Jonathan Knight cit. in Electronic Arts and Visceral Games 2010: ix).

Within the varied sector of video games, also those with historical content "could help refine the claim made by Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006) that video games give the translator a particularly high degree of freedom to stray from the source text" (Serón Ordóñez 2011: 103). In her case study on the US game *Age of Empires III* (Microsoft Game Studios 2005), Serón Ordóñez explains that "this type of game may generally require more research than creativity, due to the game's realism", thus placing "games with historical content alongside those based on children's books, where the translator's freedom is limited by the fact that translation is conditioned by the official translation of the literary works the products are based on" (Serón Ordóñez 2011: 103).

Another prime example of realistic video games which constrains translators' work is the sports simulator, "a genre which aims to virtually imitate a real-world sport, whose verisimilitude also depends on the language used and whose transfer is akin to technical and specialized translation" (Pettini 2016: 64). For example, the games of the famed football simulation series *FIFA* (Electronic Arts 1993 – Present), in order to be realistic, imitate football language and are rich in football specialized vocabulary. Accordingly, to localize the experience offered by *FIFA* titles, domestication turns out to be the key translational approach in order to satisfy players' expectations and allow virtual footballers to immerse in "the beautiful game" (Pettini 2016).

Furthermore, it is worth considering that, as Bernal Merino (2011: 17) suggests, "some games require only a straightforward translation of texts, because the concepts explored and the gameplay put forward is perhaps part of the common shared knowledge". Sometimes, games partly and occasionally draw on elements of literature, cinema, comic books, TV series, etc. and show a different kind of relationship with the reality they refer to, thus posing translational challenges related to intertextuality, for example. In her study on the *Metal Gear* series (Konami 1987 - Present), Pettini (2015) shows how the intertextual engagement of this series' "author",

namely the cinephile game designer Hideo Kojima, with pop culture and the American cinematic tradition influences the translation of the meaningful film quotations Kojima makes to pay tribute to cinema and communicate with movie-cultured players.

Video games may also present different degrees of realism or fictionality within the same game world, and within the above-mentioned spectrum the boundaries are not clear-cut. All video games offer players fictional spaces to immerse in, even the most realistic simulator title is actually fictional, as well as many of the contents of several fantasy titles are not boundless. Moreover, it seems that the very nature of the video game is on the borderline between real rules and fictional worlds (Juul 2005).

In the light of the discussion above, the analysis of the corpus of this study aims to throw new light on the topic in order to contribute to the ongoing debate and outline translational theoretical guidelines in the linguistic and cultural game localization.

2.2 Corpus

In order to simulate a realism-fictionalism spectrum of video games and test this study hypotheses, a corpus of three *purposefully* selected video games has been created. The objective of the selection lies in representativeness, mainly in terms of game content and genre/subgenre-related characteristics, as will emerge in the following paragraphs. The selection, whose criteria will be discussed in depth below, includes three games whose release spanned over a period of two years. As regards genre, they belong to the “action” macrogenre or “super-genre” (Arsenault 2014), one of the most best-selling genres in videogaming¹¹, and in terms of subgenre, they are representative of two popular types, namely “first-person shooters” and “role-playing games”¹². As regards platform, it seems worth underlining that the focus is on console games, mainly on those designed for the latest generations (seventh and eighth), because they “most fully represent the spectrum of characteristics and issues which arise from translating digital interactive games” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 40).

¹¹ The Entertainment Software Association’s yearly statistics provide clear evidence of this genre long-running popularity (see ESA 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016).

¹² Burn (2014) and Voorhees (2014) offer interesting insights into the characteristics of the role-playing and the shooting subgenres respectively.

More in detail, the corpus has been assembled on the basis of the following three major selection criteria:

- 1) local distribution: all games were officially released in Italy and Spain and they were all translated by localization professionals, as opposed to fan or amateur translation, a very popular transfer mode that would deserve a different perspective (see Muñoz Sánchez 2008, 2009);
- 2) time proximity: all games were published in a two-year period (2012-2013), in order to limit the implications of constant technological advancement on localization;
- 3) genre and subgenre-related characteristics with respect to the degree of realism or fictionality of game contents. As discussed earlier, games have been selected so that they can represent different positions on a realism-fictionalism¹³.

The main principle which has guided the selection of the material for this analysis was the need of compiling a *sufficiently* large corpus, since tendencies or regularities in translation cannot be detected with clarity by analyzing only one video game.

Not only should the corpus be large, with special reference to the number of playtime hours and to the volume of in-game text, while involving different translators so that findings can be considered representative, but it should also include games presenting contents whose relationship with the real world varies. The degree of realism or fictionality of their game worlds, whose selection criteria will be explored below, has therefore been the determinant for their inclusion in the corpus. This has been possible thanks to the following common features these games share, in terms of:

- genre: they all fall under the macrogenre of “action” (Arsenault 2014) and, more precisely they are two first-person shooters and one role-playing game;
- theme: they all represent war settings, be they inspired or based on actual events or completely fictional. In more detail, *Medal of Honor Warfighter* theme is the (topical) present-day global war on terror, in *Battlefield 4* it is a (political fiction) 2020 war

¹³ As regards realism and fictionalism, it seems worth specifying that the corpus does not include any games which belong to the gameplay genre of simulation or to the narrative genre of fantasy. Both types were intentionally excluded for different reasons in order to focus on story-driven titles which were originally designed as fictional game worlds which interrelate with the real world.

between Russia, China and USA, *Mass Effect 3* theme is a (science-fiction) 2186 galactic war to save Earth;

- seriality: they all belong to popular game franchises, i.e. long-running series, namely *Medal of Honor* (1999 – 2012), *Battlefield* (2002 – Present), *Mass Effect* (2007 – Present);
- audience: on the basis of age rating, they are all labelled “Mature” according to the US Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB - www.esrb.org) and, more relevantly given the focus on localization, “18” according to the Pan-European Game Information system (PEGI - www.pegi.info);
- platform: since it has technical implications for game localization, all games included are multiplatform titles designed for seventh and the eight generation consoles like Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Xbox One, PlayStation 4;
- mode of play: the walkthroughs of the games included are all single-player (as opposed to multi-player);
- high production value: i.e. large development budget and strong marketing campaign;
- audience reception, reviews and global sales were also taken into account, with respect to their year of release;
- publisher: all the games are Electronic Arts’ titles. A Non-Disclosure Agreement with this US publishing company – which comes in at number six on the “Top 25 Companies by Game Revenues” rankings, behind publishing giants like the Chinese Tencent, the Japanese Sony and the US Microsoft (NewZoo 2016c: online) – allowed me to gain access to authentic materials, i.e. the three games’ original localization databases.

Table 1 below summarizes the characteristics of the three games included in the corpus, on the basis of the above-listed selection criteria.

	MOHW	BF4	ME3
Year of release	2012	2013	2012
Developer	Danger Close	DICE	BioWare
Publisher	Electronic Arts	Electronic Arts	Electronic Arts
Genre and subgenre	Action FPS	Action FPS	Action RPG

Theme	present-day global war on terror	political fiction 2020 war	science-fiction 2186 galactic war
Series	<i>Medal of Honor</i>	<i>Battlefield</i>	<i>Mass Effect</i>
Age rating (PEGI)	18	18	18
Platform	multiplatform	multiplatform	multiplatform
Localization level	full	full	full
Global sales in millions of units (VGChartz: online)	2.88	13.87	5.69

Table 1. Characteristics of the games included in the corpus

The video games included in the corpus, whose cover arts are shown in Figure 1, will be explored in depth in the respective chapters as regards story, characters and themes in order to outline how these narrative features justify their selection and their position on the realism-fictionalism spectrum axis shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1. *Medal of Honor Warfighter* (MOHW), *Battlefield 4* (BF4), *Mass Effect 3* (ME3) cover arts (copyright 2012-2013 Electronic Arts)

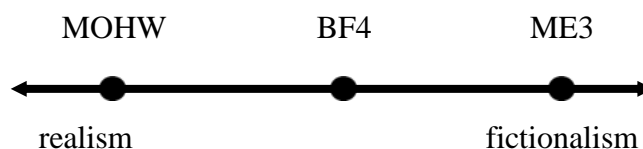


Figure 2. The realism-fictionalism spectrum axis

It is important to emphasize how the homogeneity of the corpus calls for the careful evaluation of the games' both common and distinctive features, which will be discussed in the analysis. The focus of this research is to evince tendencies in the translation of *realia* and *irrealia*; however, each game has other characteristics which challenge the uniform approach adopted in this study, whilst opening new angles and perspectives to the researcher.

Table 2 illustrates the features of the three games as regards time and text size. As will be better explained in Section 2.3, in order to create the corpus, I selected three walkthroughs, also known as “playthroughs”, one per game, played by an Italian gamer and uploaded on the latter’s personal YouTube gaming channel. Later, I divided them into four parts, and I analyzed 40% of each walkthrough. The online playlists of the walkthroughs selected are “Medal of Honor Warfighter FULL ITA Campaign GamePlay HD” (iTechHardware YouTube Channel 2012: online), “Battlefield 4 - FULL ITA Campaign GamePlay HD” (iTechHardware YouTube Channel 2013: online) and “Mass Effect 3” (Matteo Emanuele Russo YouTube Channel 2012: online).

GAME	PLAYTIME	WORDCOUNT			
		EN ST	IT TT	SP TT	TOTAL
MOHW	84'	7,372	6,410	6,693	20,475
BF4	96'	6,684	6,198	6,052	18,934
ME3	304'	26,751	24,770	26,610	78,131
TOTAL	484'	40,807	37,378	39,355	117,504

Table 2. Playtime and wordcount of the corpus

More precisely, the table above shows the size of the corpus according to two useful units of measurement: (1) playtime and (2) number of words, named “wordcount” in Table 2. “Playtime” refers to the time length, expressed in minutes, of the corpus (40% of the walkthrough), which corresponds to a total of 484 minutes (8:04:00 in the format hh:mm:ss). “Wordcount” refers to the total number of words in the corpus, namely 117,504, and also displays the wordcount of each language version of each game, so that data can be read both vertically, which allows the reader to look at the corpus size per language and horizontally, which shows each game size as a subcorpus. In both cases, data result from the sum of the

number of words uttered by game characters in the single parts selected: the first 10%, the fourth 10%, the seventh 10% and the final 10% of the walkthrough and this is due to the objective to include fundamental parts of the games' storytelling process, i.e. the beginning and the end, together with middle sections. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the total playtime of each single game walkthrough is 3:30:06 (*Medal of Honor Warfighter*), 3:50:53 (*Battlefield 4*), 13:20:03 (*Mass Effect 3*), for a total of 20:41:02. However, in order to establish the unit of 10% of the walkthrough playtime, adjustments were deemed necessary and some parts like credits in all games, and character customization in the role-playing game, have been excluded from the calculation due to the total absence of dialogues. As regards playtime, a brief clarification is worthy: the length of the walkthroughs selected does not provide a truthful picture of the actual average playtime of the three games in the corpus, since players tend to upload their walkthroughs after playing the game several times, for the sake of their web reputation as gamers and youtubers¹⁴.

Nevertheless, as data in Table 2 show, the more the game is bondless, the greater the game world, the longer the gaming experience offered to the player in a specific subgenre-related context. Indeed, as Bateman (2006: xxvi) explains, science fiction is, together with fantasy, RPGs' main setting because role-playing involves the fantastic and the unreal almost naturally, due to the nature of RPGs in general and of this genre audience. On the contrary, although many FPS games quite naturally involve the verisimilar, given the focus on shooting, no equally clear-cut connection can be found between this subgenre narrative gameplay and realistic setting.

Furthermore, although the difference in both playtime and text size between the two FPSs and *Mass Effect 3*, as Table 2 demonstrates, points to a difficult comparison and examination of the corpus as a whole, if subgenre-related aspects must be taken into account, it is also true that ME3, like all Bioware's *Mass Effect* series titles, "is unique in its canon, as it mixes role-playing conventions with the gameplay elements of 'military shooters'" (Patterson 2015: 212). "Although *Mass Effect*'s story is science fiction RPG, much of the action-intensive gameplay is distinctly that of a military shooter. First, the game's overhead role-play view zooms-in during battles to give an over-the-arm 'shooter' point of view" (Patterson 2015: 212). Second,

¹⁴ The average playtime is generally reported in specialized magazines and website. According to Gamelengths (online), for example, the average gaming experience of *Medal of Honor Warfighter* and *Battlefield 4* ranges from 5 to 10 hours, that of *Mass Effect 3* is around 50 hours.

especially during combat, ME3 language is the military lingo (Patterson 2015: 212) and since this point is of special interest, it will be explored in depth in Chapter 6.

Nevertheless, despite its hybrid nature as regards “gameplay genre” (Bateman 2006), ME3 has narrative and textual features specific to role-playing games. In particular, the latter is one of the most text-heavy subgenres of video games¹⁵.

From a wider perspective, in order to investigate localization and translation, it seems pertinent to show the number of the words in each game ST together with the number of the words in each game TTs, namely the Italian and Spanish translations, in the whole database (Table 3). The objective is, on the one hand, to demonstrate the different sizes of the three games as localization projects and, on the other hand, to compare the size of each game original version with the respective localizations. Moreover, if data in Table 3 are contrasted with data in Table 2, it is possible to understand the partial experience in the game textual world of a single player in a single walkthrough, as opposed to the overall textual world the game offers him/her. In the words of Wolf and Perron (2009: 11), “even when games are finished, portions of them may still go unseen or not experienced”. This also seems to confirm that one single player’s experience is only one of the multiple ways a video game can be played and, consequently, although with remarkable differences between first-person shooters and role-playing games, it is only one of the possible ways a game story can unfold.

GAME	EN ST	IT TT	SP TT
MOHW	254,553	250,093	276,242
BF4	122,207	118,916	127,399
ME3	808,875	769,153	833,868

Table 3. Wordcount of the ST and TTs of the games’ databases

The data shown in Table 3, on the one hand, by adopting a vertical reading, turn out to be consistent with the different subgenre-dependent textual size of the three video games which was already evident in Table 2 at corpus level. On the other hand, if read horizontally, figures

¹⁵ As regards the text volume of BioWare’s *Mass Effect* series, to my knowledge, a meaningful contribution has been offered by Christou, McKearney and Warden (2011).

above show an unusual relationship between the ST and the TTs, especially in the transfer from English into Romance languages, like Italian and Spanish, and especially as regards Italian. Indeed, while the Spanish translation confirms the TT general tendency to be larger than the source text (Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2012: 5), and percentages range from 3% in *Mass Effect 3* to 8% in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* (4% in *Battlefield 4*), Italian TTs are all shorter than the original. Percentage ranges from 2% in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* to 5% in *Mass Effect 3* (*Battlefield 4* Italian TT is about 3% shorter than its ST). This seems to be particularly interesting if we consider that, as will be exemplified in Chapter 5, *Mass Effect 3* Italian translators added gender-specific tags in variables within dialogue strings, thus making those strings longer than their original. Going into more details is beyond the reach of this study, since it would require the analysis of all text types of all games' databases. However, it is worth remembering that, since AVT modes constraints are often neglected by game localization professionals, and the game engine may even allow automatic synchronization, as far as dialogues are concerned, voice-over constraints do not seem to influence translation. Pettini (forthcoming) provides an example in this regard when dealing with the gender-specific dialogue strings which depend on actress Cinzia Massironi's audio localization of ME3 female protagonist.

2.3 Methodology

As emerges in the previous sections, and as Wolf and Perron argue, "the video game is really a complex object of study" (2009: 11). This is the reason why this research on the interlinguistic and intercultural transfer of video games requires an interdisciplinary macro approach which combines different viewpoints and angles in order to examine and understand this "multilayered phenomenon" (Wolf and Perron 2009: 11). Consequently, references to studies and theories from different related perspectives, such as Game Studies and Media Studies, will be made when relevant throughout the dissertation.

As regards translation, the analytical approach is descriptive or, better said, DTS-based: a parallel corpus of the selected products has been compiled with the English full localization representing the original or source text, and the Italian and Spanish localizations, representing the target texts. Thus, texts have been observed, examined and compared in their original and translated versions. This study mainly focuses on the game world-related in-game texts (diegetic) while making a rapid reference to paratext when it proves functional to the research

objectives. In-game or onscreen texts, including narrative and descriptive texts, written and voiced-over dialogues, are to be preferred in translation analysis because they provide a loyal picture of the variety of typical challenges in the linguistic and cultural game localization. Moreover, the industry seems to currently pay great attention to video games as narrative, as testified to by the recurring narrative-related themes discussed at the 2016 Game Developers Conference (Campbell 2016: online).

As for the methodological procedure followed, first I watched all the three games' walkthroughs in their Italian fully localized version using online available resources on YouTube. Second, I arranged dialogue strings chronologically in the three languages by adopting the Italian dialogue string uttered as the point of reference, in order to make texts linear and dialogues meaningful. This was deemed necessary due to the fragmentation or non-linearity of interactive texts, as discussed in Section 1.4.4, and this was possible thanks to the access to the authentic databases I was provided with by Electronic Arts. Finally, I contrasted the Italian dubbed and subtitled dialogues with the original dialogue strings. Given the authenticity of the source, I did not have to switch the localized version to listen to the original dialogue in the US English game in order to double check the accuracy of the dialogue script, as usually happens in AVT Studies for example. Moreover, it seems highly unlikely to find three identical walkthroughs across languages, unless the player is commissioned by the researcher himself/herself.

Going into the linguistic and translational object of this investigation, as already sketched out, I carried out a transverse analysis of the corpus in order to examine *realia* and *irrealia*, which will be categorized in the next section, and finally test the main research hypotheses.

The aim was to detect all culture-related elements which are present both in the original texts and in their localizations and to assess translators' strategies. While analyzing the treatment of *realia* and *irrealia*, I have also observed the strategies they activated when dealing with the translation of culture-related content (racial, sexual, political, socio-political). This has led me to make brief and relevant references also to their representation via the visual and the auditory channels. Although these features are not the prominent part of the present analysis, they have allowed me to form a more detailed picture of the three products and of the work carried out by localization and translation professionals.

As regards the criteria according to which I have interpreted an element of interest as belonging to *realia* and *irrealia* categories, while drawing on my personal knowledge

concerning the three games, I have relied on two different sources which express two different perspectives on the game worlds under investigation: first, the games' glossaries I was provided with by Electronic Arts; second, the online multilingual fan wikis of the series each game title in the corpus belongs to. The former are official in-house terminology databases which contain the body of terms belonging to the game world the series has been creating over the years, i.e. the vocabulary which refers to fictional and non-fictional entities existing in that world. These glossaries represent invaluable reference material for translators for the purposes of terminological consistency and they testify to the publisher's commitment to quality translation (see Pettini 2016). Conversely, fan wikis are an example of the participatory culture around popular culture products (see Jenkins 2006b, 2010) and, while augmenting "fandom" (Jenkins 2010), they serve an encyclopedic function, "as *documentation* of their cultural objects" (Mittell 2013: 38, original emphasis). In particular, video games' wikis go beyond the documentary impulse "by offering collectively authored walkthroughs, strategies and guides to popular games", in as far as they "mirror the game's storyworld with comprehensive analysis and discussion of how the game works" (Mittell 2013: 40).

In the case of the three video games of this study corpus, while *Medal of Honor* has no glossary as far as the publisher is concerned, since Electronic Arts did not look after this series' terminological management, *Battlefield* franchise and *Mass Effect* franchise glossaries are multilingual spreadsheets listing hundreds or thousands of terms referring to a vast array of contents. As regards the three games' wikis, they are the *Medal of Honor* Wiki (online), the *Battlefield* Wiki (online) and the *Mass Effect* Wiki (online).

However, although both official glossaries and fan game wikis have turned out to be very useful tools for this research, as will emerge throughout the analysis, they cannot meet the expectations of the translational perspective of this study since they do not fully mirror the variety of *realia* and *irrealia* found in the corpus. This is the reason why this research cannot, and does not aim to, adopt the theoretical and methodological framework of Terminology from a descriptive perspective (Cabr  1999) and, consequently, the culture-related linguistic phenomena expressed by *realia* and *irrealia* must be examined under the magnifying glasses of TS in general and of GL in particular.

2.4 Realia and Irrealia

As discussed in the Introduction, in order to investigate whether and how the relationship between the real world and the game world or rather, the degree of realism or fictionality of game contents influences the nature of the linguistic and translational phenomena occurring in game texts and, consequently, translators' approaches and strategies in order to localize target players' game experience, *realia* and *irrealia* seem to be the right linguistic items to be analyzed. In other words, they are the answer to the following research questions: how does language reflect the relationship between the two worlds in game texts? How do the two worlds interact through language? What linguistic device or phenomenon connects the two worlds? Do linguistic borders between the two exist?

Before illustrating the concept of *realia* and *irrealia*, an explanation of 'game world' is essential since, while it is easy to understand what the actual or 'real' world refers to, for the purposes of this dissertation the virtual game world needs a clear definition, which is provided by borrowing from notions developed by the game industry professionals.

According to Rollings and Adams (2003: 55), a "game world is an artificial universe, an imaginary place whose creation begins with the (usually unspoken) words 'Let's pretend....' Every game, no matter how small, takes place in a world" but, as Adams (2014: 137) specifies, "not all games have a game world". A football sports simulator, for example, although it "requires pretending because the players assign an artificial importance to otherwise trivial actions", "doesn't create a game world" (Adams 2014: 137). The real-world football field defines its physical boundaries and the real-world football match defines its time, "when the clock runs out, the [football sports simulator] world ceases to exist; the game is over" (Rollings and Adams 2003: 55)¹⁶. On the contrary, a "game world" is a video game's "fictional component, the aspect of a game that is fantasy¹⁷" (Rollings and Adams 2003: 56), no matter how *realistic* or *irrealistic* this may be. The world, also intended as the setting, is essential to the fantasy; without it, the game "would not exist, and if it had a different setting, it would be

¹⁶ These authors' viewpoint contributes to better explain the reason for the exclusion of simulators in the corpus of this study. Simulators require a different analytical approach which evaluates the realism of their contents, which is the objective this genre strives for, starting exactly from the reality they aim to simulate.

¹⁷ Fantasy here must be interpreted as a synonym of fictional, with no reference to the literary and narrative genre of the same name.

a different game” (Rollings and Adams 2003: 56). Obviously enough, the more a game depends on its gameplay mechanics to entertain, the less its world matters (Rollings and Adams 2003: 56) and, usually, vice versa. In the latter case, players enter the game world and temporarily make their own reality, they suspend their disbelief: this illusion is commonly interpreted as the game immersiveness, “one of the holy grails of game design”, and its power depends on the game world harmony, meant as “the feeling that all parts of the game belong to a single, coherent whole” (Rolling and Adams 2003: 58). This single coherent whole is “defined by many different variables, each of which describes one dimension of the world, one of the aspects of *the game’s look and feel*” (Rollings and Adams 2003: 60, my emphasis).

According to Rollings and Adams (2003: 60-80), the constitutive dimensions of a game world are five, namely the physical dimension, the temporal dimension, the environmental dimension, the emotional dimension, and the ethical dimension. Since many of their characteristics are related to game design proper or they refer to aspects which are irrelevant for this research, here only the spatial, the temporal, and the environmental dimensions are discussed because they are the properties according to which I have evaluated the degree of realism or fictionality of game contents when selecting the products to be included in the corpus. The most important dimensions examined are the physical and the temporal dimensions, which are interpreted as space and time; they represent the places where the action unfolds and where the player moves his/her avatar, and the time when the (story) action takes place, known as plot time in narratology. The two dimensions are the starting point to evaluate whether and how a game world differs from real world space and time. The third fundamental dimension is environmental and refers to what inhabits the game world space, including the cultural context and the physical surrounding. In the notion of “cultural context” (Rollings and Adams 2003: 69) lies the core of the present analysis.

When we speak of a *cultural context* of a game, we’re talking about culture in the anthropological sense: the beliefs, attitudes, and values that the people in the game world hold, as well as their political and religious institutions, social organization, and so on. These characteristics are reflected in the manufactured items that appear in the game: clothing, furniture, architecture, landscaping, and every other man-made [or, I would add, human and non-human being-made] object in the world. The culture influences not only what appears and what doesn’t [...], but also how everything looks. The appearance of

objects is affected not only by their function in the world, but also by the aesthetic sensibilities of the people who constructed them [...].

(Rolling and Adams 2003: 69, original emphasis)

Moreover, the cultural context includes the game's back story which is another crucial concept for the purposes of this research since, as far as game series are concerned, as in the case of the corpus games, it provides the background to the story "played out" (Bateman 2006) in the single episode of the saga.

The back story of a game is the imaginary history, either large-scale (nations, wars, natural disasters), or small-scale (personal events and interactions) that preceded the time when the game takes place. The historical background helps to establish why the culture is the way it is. A warlike people should have a history of warfare; a mercantile people should have a history of trading. [...] For most game worlds, it's not necessary to define their culture in great detail. If the game is set in your own culture, you can simply use the things you can see around you. [...] But when your game begins to deviate from your own culture, you need to start thinking about how it deviates and what consequences that has.

(Rolling and Adams 2003: 69)

In particular, if the game is an alternate reality, by paraphrasing Rollings and Adams (2003: 74), the peoples in the game world may have a complex, highly organized society or a simple, tribal one; they may have their own forms of government and social structures, classes, guilds or specialized occupations; they may have their own values, like martial prowess, imperialism, or peace; they may be superstitious or religious, have visible institutions or religious practices and buildings; they may have flamboyant or reserved, chaotic or orderly, bright or subtle aesthetic qualities. In sum, they may be as amazingly complex, varied and unique as real world peoples.

Be they about real world cultures or fictional cultures, this study assumes, perhaps simplistically as Juul (2001) would complain, that video games can tell stories, they can be storytelling media, and their texts, especially through some text types like dialogues, can be

interpreted as narrative, basically meant as a text that tells a story (Kücklich 2003, 2006)¹⁸. Going further, it can be said that some games are *the* story of such cultures: they have a detailed, involving, convoluted and more or less linearly structured storyline (Rollings and Adams 2003: 89). In terms of genre and subgenre, Rollings and Adams (2003:90) illustrate the concept by means of a “story spectrum” which, from left to right, shows the increasing importance story plays in gameplay across subgenres, ranging from the “light backstory – usually a brief sentence or paragraph that sets the theme for a game” of arcade games (Rollings and Adams 2003: 90) to epic-like stories of role-playing games. This is particularly relevant for this research since it places first-person shooters in the center-right position and role-playing games on the right edge of the story spectrum, and this also seems to suggest a connection with the increasingly higher degree of fictionality of story-driven video games. In sum, most video games which present a game world, as defined above, do have a more or less developed story which unfolds through interaction and where the player plays the role of the storyteller (Rollings and Adams 2003: 92).

In the light of the discussion above, a definition of *realia* and *irrealia* in game localization can now be outlined. Given the fictional nature of game worlds, it seemed reasonable to use the concept of *irrealia* as the starting point of the present model and, consequently, to reinterpret the meaning of the concept of *realia* in Translation Studies to finally elaborate a simple working definition suitable to Game Localization (GL) research. The reason lies in the fact that, as Leppihalme (2011: 126, original emphasis) argues, *realia* proves to be “a problematic term when applied to fictional texts: Loponen (2009), discussing the translation of fantasy literature and science fiction, proposes the neologism *irrealia* for invented items presented as real in the fictional world but non-existent in our world”. More importantly, Loponen defines “a new concept for studying fictional cultures” (2009: 165). Thus, *irrealia* is *realia* corresponding term in fictional worlds which are meant, within the broader philosophical framework of possible-worlds semantics, as “fictional worlds of literature”: as “a special kind of possible world, they are aesthetic artifacts constructed, preserved, and circulating in the medium of fictional texts” (Doležel 1998: 16).

¹⁸ A more detailed discussion about the nature and working of narrative in video games, whose debate is very lively inside and outside academia, would be very fascinating (see, for example, Bateman 2006; Egenfeldt Nielsen *et al.* 2013; Rutter and Brice 2006; Tavinor 2009; Thabet 2015; Wolf 2008) but it is outside the translational perspective of this dissertation.

According to Loponen (2009: 167), if regarded as semiotic world constructs, when dealing with fictional worlds translators are presented with issues similar to *realia* due to the factual non-existence of the referred cultures, time periods and/or geographic locations. Thus, in Translation Studies, a specific set of fictional *realia* was necessary. *Irrealia* are “non-existing *realia* tied to a fictional setting, whose effect is to define and determine the fictional cultural, geographical and historical settings” (Loponen 2009: 167).

In fictional contexts, *irrealia* can be seen as the cultural anchors of the fictional culture, creating implicit and explicit *references* that can define the fictional culture on multiple simultaneous levels [...]. The *irrealia* can tie the text into a specific genre or pre-existing fictional world [...], define the fictional world in relation to the real world or other fictional worlds [...], or define explicit breaking points from our world or other fictional worlds [...]. As such, *irrealia* can be called the signs through which a fictional world establishes its fictionality, signs through which it breaks off from the real world and announces its independence as a fiction – or its belonging, dependency or intertextual relations to another fictional world.

(Loponen 2009: 167, my emphasis)

In this model, *realia* and *irrealia* are also purposely called real-world and game-world references respectively, because a reference is, by adapting and paraphrasing Pedersen’s perspective (2011: 49), the locus where the *real* world and the *irreal* (game) world interrelate through language, and where the relationship between a linguistic sign in game texts and *reality* or *irreality* lies. They are linguistic items which hook on to either the *real* or the *irreal* (game) world. This is possible thanks to the *realia* and *irrealia* nature as reference which, in linguistics “is a property of a noun phrase in context (i.e. as used in an utterance)” or of a noun-phrase “in use” which “‘hooks on to’ the world, or the text in which appears” (Pedersen 2011: 49). In this light, in the present model *irrealia* comprise all references to fictional entities related to the fictional cultures of the game world, whereas *realia* include all references to real entities related to real cultures of the real world, the world we all know. “Irreal” and “real” are here used as synonyms of “non-existing” and “existing”, a simple working distinction which, however, does not overlook the complexity of the topic. On the one hand, it might be said that *irrealia* actually exist as text-internal elements of the fictional worlds and, through the fictional texts in which they occur, they exist in real world and, by means of intertextuality, they exist also in other

texts. On the other hand, it must be said that the entities *realia* refer to in game worlds do not really exist, they are fictional representations of the real world, given the intrinsic fictional nature of almost all video games.

Another complex aspect concerns the notion of “cultural” or, better, “culture-related”. What is culture in video games? Given the “culture-bound” or “culture-specific” essence of both concepts in Translation Studies¹⁹, it seems necessary to briefly explore the subject in order to clarify its meaning and delineate its scope in the present model, as compared to those established in TS research.

As Consalvo (2006: 120, my emphasis) argues, the contemporary video game industry is “a *hybrid* encompassing a mixture of Japanese and American businesses and (more importantly) cultures to a degree unseen in other media industries” and its peculiarities “can be recognized in the transnational [and multicultural] corporations that contribute to its formation and development; in the global audience for its products; and in the complex mixing of format, style and content within games”. “Hybrid” precisely means, from Consalvo’s viewpoint (2006: 120), “the melding of business and culture” which creates “a global media culture” which, however, “avoids becoming homogenous [...] because the demands of the local still shape cultural products as they travel around the world” and “products destined for global consumption are carefully localized, to ensure that their international flavor is not *too* foreign” (original emphasis). Consequently, the analysis of the relationship between video games and culture requires “an approach that starts from the macroscopic and continues to the particular” (Consalvo 2006: 123). “The game industry is significant in that it has never been the product of one particular culture. Even in its ‘glocal’ instances, when translation will not work and games are country specific, evidence of the transcultural [and multicultural] can be found” (Consalvo 2006: 123). “Glocal” means that “the global meets the local, as the games must of necessity be played by real people, in actual locations, using specific hardware” (Consalvo 2006: 126). “The games are the realization of the ‘glocal,’ as they signify where the global flow finally arrives at local markets, and how it is understood, accepted, embraced, or perhaps rejected in that locale” (Consalvo 2006: 126-127).

¹⁹ Culture-specificity has been investigated by several TS scholars whose literature review could comprise a book-length project. Consequently, references will be made when relevant throughout the dissertation.

In sum, although games are not “produced in a cultural void” (Consalvo 2006: 128), “it is difficult if not impossible to determine a singular national source for these cultural products (much less gauge their accuracy), given the transnational [and multicultural] nature of corporations as well as ‘native’ peoples” (Consalvo 2006: 119). “It is foolish if not dangerous to attempt to determine with any authority the ‘essential’ or ‘fundamental’ national qualities that may be found in individual games, and how these qualities are understood by players” or, if any, whether players “would ‘read’ them as such” (Consalvo 2006: 127). Accordingly, the “hybrid global culture [game] industry” poses considerable challenges “to such ideas as national cultures and geographic borders” (Consalvo 2006: 123).

Taking all the above into account, in order to determine the referent of the source culture (SC) in the analysis of *realia* and *irrealia* in this study, the traditional TS approach does not seem workable: the identification of the SC as the culture ST is anchored in and also as the author’s culture, not to mention the complexity of the concept of authorship in video games (see Pettini 2015), is extremely problematic. It seems more appropriate to rely on the notion of culture in game worlds, as reported above (Rollings and Adams 2003: 69). A SC referent may be located in the main culture of the multicultural world of each game. A suitable perspective seems to be the player’s one: thus, the culture of the playable character and, going back to *realia* and *irrealia*, this may be real, since its referent exists in the real world, or completely fictional, since its referent exists in the game world only. By adapting Pedersen’s viewpoint (2011: 49), a wider sense of reference is attributed to *realia* and *irrealia*: they are where language meets *real* and *irreal* culture(s). They are linguistic expressions of the “cultural context” of “game worlds” (Rollings and Adams 2003: 69) and, as in the case of Pedersen’s extralinguistic cultural references (2011), their referent is accessible and, one might add, really enjoyable or entertaining, only by means of the target players’ encyclopedic knowledge, i.e. the knowledge s/he has about the game world and the real world.

Lastly, once outlined the concepts of *realia* and *irrealia* as the phenomena of linguistic and translational inquiry, with respect to the corpus composition, it seems worth mentioning the reasons why the fictional edge of the spectrum does not extend to fantasy proper, in terms of narrative genre. The left-side limit of the realism-fictionality continuum of the corpus, namely *Mass Effect 3* as shown in Figure 2, is science fiction because it takes place “in the world of everyday experience extended” (Gunn 2003: 76-77).

Fantasy creates its own world and its own laws; science fiction accepts the real world and its laws. We could not live in the real world if we operated by the assumptions of the fantasy world; but the assumptions of the science fiction world are compatible with our own. We can believe in the existence of aliens somewhere else in the universe; or that [...] faster-than-light spaceships eventually may be developed, and still function without real-life problems [...]. When we read [or, one might add, play] science fiction, we recognize that it applies to the real world, and we ask it real questions [...]. In science fiction story, [...] the realistic questions are essential for full understanding and enjoyment; the reader [or the player] is supposed to compare the fictional world to the real world and find it not only better or worse, or simply different, but be able to ascertain what made it better or worse or different.

(Gunn 2003: 77)

As Spivack explains (1996: 259-261), the fantasy genre is an intellectual play transforming an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possible or realistic into a seeming fact, fantasy reverses the rules of extratextual reality, the value of the fantasy genre is indeed often seen in its inherently subversive nature, which may offer an escape from reality as well as an investigation, an interpretation or a revision of it, i.e. some kind of response to reality fantasy departs from²⁰.

Consequently, in order to investigate whether and how the relationship between the real world and the game world reflects itself on game linguistic contents and, consequently, on translation approaches and strategies in localization, an interrelationship must exist and genres whose gaming experience tends too much towards either realism, like simulators, or

²⁰ As Gunn (2003) and Spivack (1996) remark, although it is undoubtedly true that no game world exists in a vacuum and no game world is completely bondless, the relationship between the real world and a fantasy game world is a very special one and, as such, it requires an appropriate analytical framework and set of critical standards to understand the qualities that make it special. In this light, the dimensions (Rollings and Adams 2003) of a fantasy game world, namely fantasy places, fantasy time, and fantasy cultures do not lend themselves to be evaluated in terms of realism-fictionalism. Accordingly, the application of this study model to the fantasy genre turns out to be difficult, if not impossible, since fantasy *irrealia* in video games require a different theoretical and methodological perspective, thus showing many potential avenues for future research.

fictionalism, like fantasy games, present phenomena which are beyond the scope of *realia* and *irrealia*, meant as two facets of that multifaceted interrelationship.

2.4.1 Taxonomy of realia and irrealia

Since, to my knowledge, there are no taxonomies of *realia* and *irrealia* in game localization, on the basis of the arguments developed in the previous section, I have developed a working classification by drawing from topic-related sources in AVTS, namely Pedersen (2011), Ranzato (2015) and particularly Díaz Cintas and Remael (2014: 201), and by taking into account the game medium specificity. For this reason, the *realia* and *irrealia* classification is based on the corpus, i.e. actual data. Thus, the model is data-driven: the taxonomy is created on the basis of corpus data analysis and is developed in order to make the categories found in the data fit the classification, rather than making the data fit a preconceived model.

The resulting taxonomy contains (a) categories belonging to *irrealia* only, (b) similar categories whose dimensions requires different labels, and (c) categories of both *realia* and *irrealia* whose difference lies in the either real or fictional, existing or non-existing nature of the referent.

The first groups of *irrealia*, namely individual and collective references, are game-world specific since characters are fictional entities existing only in the game world. From a linguistic perspective, they are proper names including first names, surnames, nicknames, codenames, and call signs. In order to analyze the translation of characters' names, under the macro-categories of "playable character(s)" and "non-playable characters", the latter have been further classified according to the role they play in the game's narrative, namely "helpers", "villains" and "other characters", by creating working labels based on the taxonomies provided by Wolf (2001) and Newman (2013) concerning characters' roles in video games.

The second group of categories deals with the textual relationships each game world's texts can build with other texts. Within *irrealia*, "metaludic intratextuality" describes the (textual) relationship between the game world of the game series' single episode and other instalments of the same series, or other game worlds or the world of video games and gaming in general, whose notion of "metaludic" in the present model is "about any aspect of games or gameplay" (Ensslin 2012: 171). On the contrary, as a type of *realia*, references translate into the purposeful use of "intertextuality" in video games to engage players and convey meaning (see Duret and Pons 2016). It concerns how game texts relate to and reference other texts,

including both speeches and pieces of writing of both fictional and non-fictional origin, through different and more or less overt devices such as quotations and allusions, and how they meaningfully interweave them with aspects of their game worlds.

As regards intratextual and intertextual references, it seems worth specifying that, in terms of methodology, their analysis is only qualitative. As opposed to the other categories, quantitative data concerning the instances of intratextuality and intertextuality are not provided. This is due to the very nature of these *realia* and *irrealia* which present multiple forms, ranging from single words to full quotations, which make a quantitative approach difficult to apply. Nevertheless, given the role they play in game worlds, and given their relevance to the topic under investigation, their inclusion as objects of the analysis is essential to provide a faithful picture of how the relationship between a game world and the real world can develop and diversify.

The other four categories include both *realia* and *irrealia*: the difference lies in the real or unreal nature of their referent. For example, geographical references may be made to both fictional and game-world specific places and locations, and to existing places and locations. In linguistic terms, they are fictional or real toponyms. Ethnic references concern all the peoples or “cultures” (Rollings and Adams 2003: 69) in the game worlds which may be fictional or real ones. In *Medal of Honor Warfighter* and *Battlefield 4*, they basically include nationality nouns and adjectives, while in *Mass Effect 3*, they are races and mostly proper names. Sociopolitical references include both fictional and real institutions, functions, organizations, forms of government and they usually represent proper names. Lastly, artefactual references include all artefacts created and used by the peoples inhabiting the game world. Moreover, given the war setting, the more the game is realistic, the higher the number of artefacts which fall into the *realia* phenomenon of “military language” which deserves a separate discussion in Chapter 6. Conversely, the more the game focuses on fictionality, the higher the number of fictional artefacts which can be realistic, i.e. designed in the image of, and named after real world artefacts, or completely imaginary, also in their naming. Instances of military language and terminology are found also in *Mass Effect 3* and, when belonging to *realia*, they are discussed in Chapter 6. In all cases, most artefactual references are names including proper and common nouns. More in detail, for the purposes of a transverse analysis of military language in the corpus, artefacts in *realia* have been divided into “military terminology” and military communication-related phenomena such as “military titles”, the “clock code”, the “military

phonetic alphabet”, “radio communication procedures” and “abbreviations”, the latter also include acronyms and initialisms. Moreover, military terminology has been categorized according to three semantic fields, namely “vehicles”, “weapons” and “equipment”. These subcategories represent the most important artefacts in war settings and, from a methodological perspective, they serve the objective to compare artefacts which refer to either *realia* or *irrealia* in war video games.

Figure 3 below illustrates the taxonomy of realia and irrealia developed for this study.

REALIA	IRREALIA
(a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual references • collective references
(b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>intertextual</i> references • <i>intratextual</i> metaludic references
(c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • geographical references • ethnic references • sociopolitical references • artefactual references

Figure 3. Taxonomy of realia and irrealia

From a linguistic perspective, as Pedersen (2011: 51) suggests with regard to extralinguistic cultural references, it comes as no surprise that most *realia* and *irrealia* occurring in the corpus are nouns or “proper names of some sort, either the name of a person, [...] a place, [...] or an institution, etc.” since, as already mentioned, “reference is mainly a property of the noun phrase” (Pedersen 2011: 51). This is the reason why a brief review of the most relevant TS and GL literature concerning the translation of proper names or proper nouns will be dealt with in Section 2.5.

2.4.2 Translation strategies for realia and irrealia

In order to verify whether and how realism or fictionality influences translators’ approaches and translations when localizing the game experience and transferring the look and feel of the

game world, the present study employs an adapted version of Pedersen’s taxonomy (2011) of translation strategies as a working analytical tool to classify the instances of translators’ decision process when rendering the *realia* and *irrealia* present in the corpus. Figure 4 illustrates the classification adopted, which presents six strategies ranging from the most source-language oriented or foreignizing approach, namely retention, to more target-language oriented or domesticating approaches, like transcreation or even omission, where foreignization and domestication represent broad labels covering many translation strategies.

By adapting Pedersen’s taxonomy (2011) which has considerably contributed to the development of this categorization, the strategies can be defined as follows. However, it seems important to highlight that most of them have subcategories and that translators may also use a combination of different strategies to deal with specific types of references.

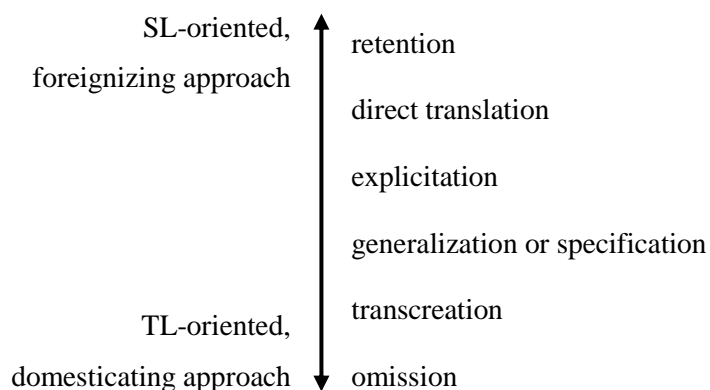


Figure 4. Taxonomy of translation strategies for *realia* and *irrealia*

Retention occurs when *realia* and *irrealia* are kept unchanged in the target text. It can be complete or slightly adjusted to meet the target language requirements, for instance, in terms of spelling.

Direct translation includes shifts such as calque, literal translation and official equivalent. The latter includes expressions resulting from both common usage and administrative decisions. As regards this concept, the boundaries between retention and direct translation in the taxonomy might reveal particularly blurred in the case, for example, of geographical references belonging to *realia*, since the TL official equivalent of a real-world toponym may be the result of both strategies. An “exonym” or a “conventional place name” is an official equivalent resulting from a standardization process (see, among others, Jordan *et al.* 2007; Kadmon 2006a, 2006b) performed by the competent authorities, during which the toponym

may have been retained or substituted. In this model, place names in *realia* are interpreted as the geographical dimension of a linguistic and cultural reality translators should not deviate from. If necessary, indeed, by means of research, translators should, as Newmark suggests (1988: 216), “check all terms in the most recent atlas or gazetteer” because, as Leppihalme (2011: 129) argues, “language cultures have conventional assimilated or translated forms” for geographical proper names. Accordingly, for the purposes of this study, since the transfer of real-world toponyms in the corpus seems to pose little, if any, translation challenge, their discussion is limited to qualitatively analyze the most relevant instances in terms of linguistic and translational features.

As regards the combination of translation strategies mentioned above, for example, retention and direct translation may be used together to deal with noun phrases including a proper noun and a common noun which compose a proper name. They might be classified as instances of either partial retention or partial direct translation depending on which of the two elements the researcher places emphasis on. Given the nature of most *realia* and *irrealia* as proper names, which are usually the head of the noun phrase, the former perspective seems to be more suitable for the analysis: they are interpreted as cases of partial retention falling into the category of retention, where the actual proper name is retained while the common name is translated. The latter is usually a category name which is transferred into the target language equivalent common name and, although this disambiguates the whole expression, in the corpus it is usually the proper name of a noun phrase to refer to either reality or irrealia and, more importantly, from the translator’s perspective, what may prove to be challenging is not the transfer of the common name. Consequently, retention seems to be the right strategy to interpret this type of combinations.

Explicitation refers to a group of strategies including explanation or definition which aim to disambiguate *realia* and *irrealia*. It occurs, for example, when a translator clarifies or spells out acronyms or abbreviations, sometimes in combination with other strategies.

Generalization and specification are two sides of the same coin. They occur when *realia* and *irrealia* are translated into a superordinate expression, mostly a hypernym or a paraphrase, or into a more specific term like a hyponym.

Transcreation is meant as the strategy which produces a creative translation aimed at making *realia* and *irrealia* more enjoyable to the target player; it refers to the decision-making process which creatively substitutes a SL expression with a TL expression for the purposes of

target players' entertainment. Accordingly, the focus here is on the creativity arising from the translator's agency, on the translator's decision to depart from the SL item and rely on his/her inventiveness in order to substitute it with another item which may sound more meaningful and playful and may better suit local players' tastes. The rendering may include both a translation by invention, namely a neologism, and a translation which makes the most of existing linguistic material to enhance the intended meaning of the SL instance of *realia* or *irrealia*. Originally coined by Indian and Brazilian scholars (see Lal 1964, 1996; Vieira 1999; Bassnett and Trivedi 1999) in TS, transcreation "is a buzzword that is often used by the translation industry nowadays. It denotes adaptive translation strategies typically associated with advertising" (Zanotti 2014: 110) and, as Yunker (2005, 2009) explains, it is marketed as an added value by those marketing firms and advertising agencies who want to distance their services from more traditional translation services, simplistically and misleadingly reduced to literal and word-for-word translation. In the context of AVT, transcreation has been used, for example, "to account for processes of transfer where verbal and visual language cannot come apart" since images "determine the semantic content and, ultimately, the perception of words"; words and visual references "form broader cultural units" (Di Giovanni 2008: 40). In AVT, transcreation has been also used "to denote transformative translation practices that [...] lead us to reconsider the notions of translator's agency and authorship" in dubbing (Zanotti 2014: 110). In Game Localization research, O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 107) use "transcreation" to "highlight the unusually extensive freedom taken by translators working under constraints specific to game text and products" and "the role played by a translator or localizer as a creative agent" (2013: 109) who often performs deliberate "transformative operations" (2013: 199) affecting the verbal and the non-verbal. Moreover, these multifaceted manipulations are beyond the scope of the mainstream theories of TS (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 198).

The term "transcreation" in game localization and translation would deserve an in-depth discussion concerning, for example, interesting topics such as the debate surrounding it, its origin and its exemplification²¹ but exploring the extent of this notion goes beyond the reach of this dissertation. This study adopts the term as a working label to refer to a particularly creative

²¹ See, amongst others, Bartelt Krantz (2011), Bernal Merino (2006, 2015: 88-91), Crosignani and Ravetto (2011), Mangiron and O'Hagan (2006), O'Hagan (2005, 2006c, 2012b), Ray and Kelly (2010), for more information on transcreation, especially in game localization.

target-language oriented translation strategy, and the analysis focuses only on verbal expressions of *realia* and *irrealia*.

Going back to the taxonomy of translation strategies, omission occurs when the translator decides to not reproduce the source text *realia* and *irrealia* in the target text. If relevant, the reasons behind this solution are hypothesized and the issues it may pose are discussed especially as regards the player's understanding of the referent itself or of its meaning and purpose in the context and co-text.

2.5 What's in a Name?

In the light of the topics discussed in 2.4.1, it seems worth mentioning some of the most relevant TS studies which examine the interlinguistic transfer of proper nouns in fiction, given the fictional quality of the game worlds this research deals with, and whenever possible, within the field of AVTS, given the audiovisual nature of video games. As regards the latter, the translation of proper nouns has been analyzed by many scholars (see, for example, Mayoral 2000) who have focused on different audiovisual media, such as films, cartoons, television series and documentaries (Matamala 2009), and on different characteristics of proper names: to name just a few, their culture-specificity (see Pedersen 2011, Ramière 2006, Ranzato 2015), their connection to humor (Fuentes Luque 2014, González Vera 2015), their nature as vocatives in film dialogue (see Bruti and Perego 2005, 2008, 2010), their untranslatability (Dyrel 2011, Tomaszewicz 2011), the implications of their translation in bilingual contexts (Agost 2004), their transfer across media (Heller 2014). Nevertheless, most of the contributions within the framework of AVTS reasonably take into account the specific constraints of AVT modes, subtitling and dubbing in particular, and this seems to bring into question the suitability of this domain analytical system to investigate proper names in game localization because, as already discussed, the established "AVT norms are clearly not adhered to" (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 164) and, thus, they do not constrain game translation as they do constrain audiovisual translation.

As Hurtado De Mendoza Azaola (2009: 76) suggests, the translation of names, especially of people and places, is rather controversial in TS (see Franco Aixelá 2000, Moya 2000, Newmark 1981, amongst others) and the debate has been approached using Venuti's (1995) two key concepts of domestication and foreignization. In Zarei and Norouzi's (2014: 152) words, "one of the questions which usually addresses the notion of 'proper nouns' in any

language is whether they should be translated or not”. Unfortunately, such question remains unanswered since each text seems to require different decision making processes at both macro and micro levels. Moreover, the same text, when intended for different audiences, may require different translation strategies for proper names, ranging from retention to substitution. According to Aixelá (2000: 222-223) “asking oneself ‘if proper names should be translated or not’ is a case of unproductive speculations, since we have the possibility to study how and why they are translated, as in fact they are”.

Indeed, as underlined by Nord (2003: 182-183), “looking at translated texts we find that translators do all sorts of things with proper names”: retention, both complete and slightly adjusted to meet TL orthographic and phonetic requirements, transcription or transliteration from non-Latin alphabets, cultural adaptation, substitution and so on. In sum, there is not a single and deeply rooted rule to deal with the translation of proper names. That said, it seems that a different tendency in the approach to their transfer may be found in fictional or non-fictional texts, or rather in the translation of names referring to fictional or non-fictional entities, such as characters, places, items, institutions, etc.

“In non-fictional texts, it seems to be a convention to use the target culture” version “of a source-culture name, if there is one, but if a translator prefers to use the source-culture form”, no issues arise as long as the referent is clear: “wherever the function of the proper name is limited to identifying an individual referent, the main criterion for translation will be to make this identifying function work for the target audience” (Nord 2003: 184).

On the contrary, in fictional texts, proper names do not refer to real, existing entities in a factual way (Nord 2003:183) and authors often “invent new, fantastic, absurd or descriptive names” whose function goes beyond identification and becomes descriptive and informative at the same time, and these functions may be implicit and explicit (Nord 2003: 185). Moreover, fictional names may be “culture markers,” which implicitly indicate to which culture the entity, especially a character, belongs to (Nord 2003: 184). As regards characters in particular, according to Matkivska (2014: 41), their names represent a constraint for translators since “in some cases, they have their meaning which comprises information about characters or their life. Translators need to find the way to convey that additional meaning into the target language or the pragmatic effect can be partially lost”.

The translation of proper names has often been considered as a simple automatic process of transference from one language into another, due to the view that proper names are mere labels used to identify a person or a thing. Contrary to popular views, the translation of proper names is a non-trivial issue, closely related to the problem of the meaning of the proper name.

(Vermes 2003)

Within the phenomenon of culture-specific items, following Hermans (1988), Aixelá (1996: 59) argues that proper nouns can be divided in two categories: conventional and loaded. The former are those seen as “having no meaning of themselves, i.e. those that fall under the collective perception we have of ‘meaningless’ proper nouns, apart from the possible textual or intertextual analogies authors [...] tend to activate” while loaded proper names “are somehow seen as ‘motivated’; they range from faintly ‘suggestive’ to overtly ‘expressive’ names and nicknames and include those fictional and non-fictional names around which certain historical or cultural associations have accrued in the context of a particular culture” (Aixelá 1996: 59).

The concept of culture, in the light of the definition provided in Section 2.4, and that of the “meaning” or “load” of proper nouns is particularly relevant since behind names in game worlds there is often a sort of authorial intent, an intended meaning, whose localization may be challenging. In gaming history, *Pac-Man* (Namco 1980) is considered to be the title “which gave rise to the need for [meaningful] names and characterization” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 49) and since then games have been “full of names and labels not only for people, but a wide array of things” (2013: 176). More importantly, the transfer of names seems to be “where a translator’s creativity is put to the test, as often the names for items, weapons, commands, and abilities come with the game designer’s specific intentions often expressed in an edgy, quirky, or even poetic selection of words” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 159). However, “the need to convey such covert meanings has to be balanced against the need for functional translation” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 159) especially when these names occur in text strings constrained by severe space limitations or in variables. Similarly, names in video games may present special translational challenges when they are too culture-specific and thus, according to O’Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 176), they are substituted: “the original name is replaced with a reference analogous in the target culture with the aim of achieving a similar effect on the target user” (2013: 176). According to O’Hagan (2009a: 148), “in games, attributing names that are punchy and memorable is often more important than a faithful rendition of the original

meaning; even proper names can be drastically changed for the sake of added entertainment value, contrary to norms in literary or screen translation”. This arises from the *skopos* of games localization, which lies in maximizing the entertainment value of the product, thereby allowing players a smooth gameplay experience without the jarring effects that can result from foreignization strategies in translation (Mangiron and O’Hagan 2004, O’Hagan 2009a).

Also according to Bernal Merino (2015: 57), the translation of proper names in video games, like in literature, especially in children’s literature, “is evidence of the need for creativity and imagination, though the challenge is not always resolved with equal creative zest, or it is left in the original language, which can actually go against the very nature of the text”.

According to Fernández Costales, “the non-translation of certain names, terms, places or expressions may be subject to a wider foreignization strategy” (2012: 397) in game localization, which often starts with the title of video games. “Unlike the tendency in the film industry, in which the titles of the films are usually translated, the name of video games is kept in English in the different locales, so titles [...] are easily recognizable all over the world” (2012: 398). Retention may also depend on the internationalization policy of some video games: as Fernández Costales explains (2012: 398), “weapons, vehicles or places are given a ‘proper noun’ or they are named after a mythological place or a biblical event; therefore, they are not translated into any language as they are regarded to be specific terminology associated with the story” or rather, one might add, the game world. In this sense, retention may be particularly functional in case of online gaming since players all over the world compete and collaborate with each other in massive campaigns (Fernández Costales 2012: 387-388) and, given the importance of online communication, a uniform body of game-world related terms may be extremely useful.

Nevertheless, when there is a meaning behind a name in a game world, especially when it is hidden behind connotation, wordplay or intertextuality, it is also true that TL players are less likely to enjoy it if it is simply retained in localizations. Moreover, if compensation strategies are not used at all, the intention behind that name gets lost in translation and target players’ experience, at least as far as language and culture are concerned, may not be as “meaningful” as the original.

Chapter 3

Medal of Honor Warfighter

3.1 Introduction

As presented on the game's official page of *Electronic Arts* (EA hereafter) website (online), "written by active U.S. Tier 1 Operators while deployed overseas and inspired by real world threats", namely "the ongoing global terror threat", *Medal of Honor Warfighter* (MOHW hereafter) "delivers an aggressive, gritty, and authentic experience that puts gamers in the boots of today's most precise and disciplined warrior", namely the US Navy SEAL Tier 1. "Following on the heels of 2010's Medal of Honor which took the game series out of World War II and introduced players to today's most elite U.S. warriors" fighting in Afghanistan, *Medal of Honor Warfighter* asks players "to continue to experience gameplay missions with a dotted line to real world incursions", "from rescuing hostages in Abu Sayyaf's stronghold in Basilan, Philippines to assaulting Al-Shabaab's Pirate Town on the Somali Coast".

Medal of Honor Warfighter tells the story of U.S. Tier 1 Operator, "Preacher," as he returns home from overseas only to find his family torn apart from years of deployment. Trying to pick up the pieces to salvage what remains of his marriage, Preacher is reminded of what he's fighting for - family. But when an extremely deadly explosive (PETN) penetrates civilian borders and his two worlds collide, Preacher and his fellow teammates are sent in to solve the problem. They take the fight to the enemy and do whatever it takes to protect their loved ones from harm.

(Electronic Arts Website: online)

In other words, as the game executive producer Greg Goodrich explains (cit. in Laughlin 2012: online), MOHW is inspired by "real warriors, real locations and real threats. The 'dotted line' simply means that every mission has a connective tissue to one of these things in the real world". The game "is set in the modern day" and "in a world that we 'know'" (Campbell 2012: online); the global war on terror events from September 11, 2001 and places like Spain, Pakistan, the Philippines, Yemen, Somalia, the United Arab Emirates and Bosnia (Smith 2012: online) are the context of MOHW single-player campaign thirteen missions, titled: (1) "Unintended

consequences”, (2) “Through the eyes of evil”, (3) “Shore leave”, (4) “Hot pursuit”, (5) “Changing tides”, (6) “Rip current”, (7) “Hat trick”, (8) “Finding Faraz”, (9) “Connect the dots”, (10) “Hello and Dubai”, (11) “Old friends”, (12) “Bump in the night” and (13) “Shut it down”. The line ‘inspired by actual events’ that appears at the start of most missions is designed to represent situations directly “ripped from the headlines” (Dyer 2012: online), although a few of those real-world events are recognizable by civilian people, such as “the 2004 Madrid train bombings, the time Navy snipers rescuing a ship captain from under three pirates, and a hurricane in the Philippines”, as also Thier (2012: online) complains.

MOHW developers’ strive for authenticity or realism aims to offer players a shooter “with *real* Operators, *real* gear and a *real* terror threat” (as written on MOHW limited edition back cover, my emphasis). Given the focus of this study on the realism-fictionality continuum of video games, these three aspects deserve special attention.

First, as regards *real* operators, in order to write the storyline, Electronic Arts involved many US Navy SEALs, both active and retired, as paid consultants, one of which was supposed to be a member of the team which killed Osama bin Laden in 2011 (Sarkar 2013: online). As the producer at Danger Close Games Luke Thai explains, they “worked really closely [...] on the mission objectives, operations, maneuvers and various elements [...] like the weaponry, the gear, the way these operatives perform door breeches, etc.” (cit. in Lang 2012: online). Moreover, as Robinson (2016: 8) underlines, during promotion, Danger Close commissioned a series of films titled “The Six Seal Team Series” made in collaboration with the Special Forces community and hosted on YouTube. For this reason, some weeks after the game’s launch, seven members of the secretive Navy Seal Team 6 were disciplined for revealing secrets to the game developers (Lang 2012: online). They received reprimand letters and had half of their pay docked for two months; they were charged with violation of orders, misuse of command gear, dereliction of duty and disclosure of classified material (Martin 2012: online).

Secondly, as regards *real* gear, Danger Close used “real-world brands [...], be it clothing, tactical equipment or guns” (Meier and Martin 2012: online) and for this purpose, as one of the game’s creative directors Kristoffer Bergqvist explains (cit. in Reilly 2012: online), they worked “with weapon manufacturers and operators to build the most authentic set of tools”. As Robinson (2016: 8-9) illustrates, during the six-month long promotional campaign, the game developers released a weekly series of 2-3 minute films announcing official partnerships with weapons and military equipment manufacturers. “Each film contained interviews between Greg

Goodrich [MOHW executive producer] and senior personnel within the featured company in which they described the functionality of their equipment and formally endorsed their involvement with the game: they were thus key to the claims for the game's authenticity", according to Robinson (2016: 9). Electronic Arts went even further and created a game-specific website that promoted the manufacturers of the guns, knives and combat-style gear depicted in the virtual world. Links allowed visitors to click on the websites of the game's partners and peruse their catalogues. After receiving harsh criticism, EA disabled the links and, in its own defense, said that the initiative was aimed at raising money for charities like the Navy SEAL Foundation and the Special Operations Warrior Foundation. Be EA cause true or not, this clearly exemplifies the link between the war video game industry and the USA private arms industry (Keeton and Scheckner 2013: 3) which seem to "have quietly forged a mutually beneficial marketing relationship" (Meier and Martin 2012: online). In sum, as Robinson (2016: 12) remarks, the controversy "resulted from the explicit exposure and celebration of the military-entertainment complex".

Thirdly, as regards *real* terror threat, the enemy "Other" in MOHW is, expectedly enough, Jihadism and its network of terrorist organizations. From a typical American-versus-Muslim perspective, Islamists are portrayed as violent, untrustworthy, and short-tempered. This type of (mis)representation is very common in popular culture and the resulting racialized stereotypes and Islamophobia have been widely investigated²². In video games, MOHW is only one of the titles which target Muslims as the world threat: in *Conflict Desert Storm II: Back to Baghdad* (Sales Curve Interactive 2003), *Counter-Strike Condition Zero* (Vivendi Universal 2004), *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* (Activision 2007), amongst others, the enemy is always the stereotypical Arab Muslim with a turban, long loose clothes, dark skin, and thick beard who mostly plays as a suicide bomber. As Schulzke (2013: 207-208) remarks, "terrorists make perfect video game enemies, as they can be easily characterized as intrinsically evil and threatening targets" or, he adds, "natural villains". Visually, they are dehumanized, simplistic and homogeneous figures and, more interestingly, from a linguistic viewpoint, enemies "tend to have very limited dialogue, only shouting a few insults or commands to each other, which are repeated endlessly over the course of the game, giving them the appearance of being automatons" (Schulzke 2013: 209). In MOHW, this linguistic oversimplification of the enemy

²² See, for example, Boigon (2013), Semmerling (2006), Shehzad (2014).

is evident, for example, in the Arabic training instructions provided by the Arab terrorist leader “The Cleric” to another Arab fighter named Argyrus in the mission “Through the Eyes of Evil”.

In terms of culturalization, the representation of one of the Muslim peoples playing the role of the enemies, namely the Pakistani, provoked Pakistan backlash against MOHW. In more details, according to Brown (2013: online), Pakistan banned the game exactly for portraying “the south Asian country as a haven for terrorists” and suggesting that “the country’s Inter-Services Intelligence agency supports Al Qaeda”. Moreover, it was not the first time that the MOH series turned out to be contentious for cultural reasons. In 2010, for example, the multiplayer mode of *Medal of Honor* created a controversy when it was revealed that gamers could play as Taliban fighters in multiplayer mode (Alexander 2010: online). Due to pressure from various military officials’ and veterans’ organizations, “who cited that it was insensitive to include such an option, particularly when the United States was still in conflict with the Taliban group” (Edwards 2012: 29), the word “Taliban” was replaced with the general term “Opposing Force” (Frum 2010: online). Such a backlash clearly exemplifies Edwards’ (2012: 29) concept of “contextual proximity” according to which, within the broader framework of culturalization, “the closer a content element approaches the original context in person, place, time, and/or form, the greater the potential for cultural sensitivity” (2012: 29).

The contextual proximity in both time (the present) and situation (U.S. soldiers fighting and dying) make the potential response much more volatile. Also, the general public perception that a game is supposed to be “fun” strongly influences their negative response; in other words, they perceive that EA [Electronic Arts] was turning the present-day fight against the Taliban into something fun and enjoyable.

(Edwards 2012: 29)

Although set in the contemporary historical context, *Medal of Honor Warfighter* is still a fictional story “of a soldier toeing the line between family and duty” (Hinkle 2012: online) and, as such, “is a story about a community. A story about the individuals who are doing things on our behalf overseas and sacrificing” (Greg Goodrich cit. in Campbell 2012: online). In Dyer’s words (2012: online), “it’s clear from the first cutscene all the way to the end credits that developer Danger Close has the utmost respect for the extraordinary skills and bravery of these soldiers”. After all, as the series’ title itself suggests, the warfighters represented in the game are those being worth awarding the “medal of honor” which is the foremost U.S. military

decoration awarded by the president to a soldier who “distinguishes himself or herself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life *above and beyond the call of duty* while engaged in action against an enemy of the United States” (Taylor 2010: 215, emphasis in the original). This “tone of uncritical reverence for both its subjects and its subject matter”, however, may sound rhetorical and be perceived simply as a “celebration not of heroism, but of violence and killing” (Smith 2012: online), or even as “a piece of propaganda” (Stanton 2012: online), or “strategic communication” (Schulzke 2014: online). MOHW players are “soldiers from liberal democracies fighting insurgents from (and in) countries hostile to what most of us would recognize as ‘Western Values’” (Campbell 2012: online) and, especially, the values of “the institutions and culture of Western military forces” (Schulzke 2013: 209) through the “soldier’s eye view” (Robinson 2016: 9). This way, the political ideology behind these operations easily takes shape and allows players to become acclimatized to the US military as the globe’s moral force. “Players of war games become virtual members of armed forces engaged in simulated combat and they progress through games by securing victory for their side. This tends to embed players firmly in a particular perspective, thereby privileging that perspective over others” (Schulzke 2014: online).

To conclude, as a cultural artifact and a representational medium, the setting of MOHW and its connections to the real world, i.e. the relation with the US arms industry, the use of actual US Navy SEALs as consultants, and many more areas of interface between the real and the game worlds, which will be discussed in more details in sections dealing with *realia*, make this game the most realistic and culturally loaded title on the left-hand edge of the realism-fictionality spectrum the corpus of this study aims to recreate. More relevantly, *Medal of Honor Warfighter* may be seen as an example of the popular culture products serving as “a vehicle for militarism” since it conveys “strong militaristic messages” (Robinson 2016: 2), some of which are expressed through the linguistic and translational challenges localization professionals deal with when rendering MOHW texts into Italian and Spanish.

3.2 Synopsis

The following paragraphs outline the series of events which shape the backstory and the story of *Medal of Honor Warfighter* according to the walkthrough selected. In particular, it describes the storyline on the basis of the thirteen single-player campaign game missions, with special attention to the ones which are played in the four parts of the walkthrough analyzed. The

objective is to provide a brief narrative background to the examination of *realia* and *irrealia* in MOHW dialogues.

After displaying a quotation from John F. Kennedy, whose function will be discussed in Section 3.4.4, the game opens at an undisclosed ship dock in Karachi (Pakistan), where the playable US Navy SEAL Tom “Preacher” Walker, together with his Task Force Mako comrade “Mother”, has to sabotage a black-market arms deal, involving an Al-Qaeda linked jihad movement. This is the first mission of game’s single-player campaign, titled “Unintended Consequences”, and requires players to blow up a truck and a small cargo container. Unfortunately, something goes wrong after detonating the charge and a secondary massive explosion rocks the entire port, forcing the operatives to fight through the chaos and run away. Preacher and Mother quickly exit the site and leave the port on board of a lifeboat driven by another TF Mako member, “Voodoo”. This failed mission is also the game prologue.

After a sequence displaying the game title and its developer’s and publisher’s names, a brief cutscene introduces the personal side of the story. Preacher is in a hotel room in Madrid and talks on the phone with Lena, his wife. The conversation is tense; they argue with each other. Their marriage is breaking down due to the nature of his job and the frequency of his deployments. This is the reason why he goes to Spain to meet with her and their daughter Isabella, spend some time together and try to save his family. The next scene presents another game character, “Dusty”, a former Tier 1 operative who is now working for CIA as an OGA (Other Government Agency), serving as coordinator in the missions. He contacts Mother and debriefs him on the operation in Karachi to finally ask him to go back to Pakistan and investigate. Therefore, he mentions one of their local assets, Argyrus, an infiltrator in a cell in the Arabian Peninsula, specifically Yemen. This is the second game mission, titled “Through the Eyes of Evil”, since the player controls the above mentioned undercover agent and experiences terrorist training under the Arabic instructions of an elderly man who later turns out to be the game main antagonist, Hassan Rasheed, also known as “the Cleric”. The following sequence gets back to the conversation between Dusty and Mother. They continue discussing the dynamics of the incident in Karachi and they deduce that explosive was inside the container ship, thus involving a shell company based in Dubai. Moreover, Dusty tells Mother that Voodoo has been promoted to leader of TF Mako, after the mission caused him and Preacher to be discharged. The next section shows TF Mako, now being composed of “Stump”, Voodoo, “Dingo” and “Tick”, together with TF Grizzly, including sergeants Wright and Xaysana,

assaulting a Somali pirate enclave in order to curtail piracy and insurgent activity in the region and finally free some trapped marines. This is the third mission of the game, titled “Shore Leave” and Kyle “Stump” Hendrix is the playable character. As specified on the bottom left of the screen at the beginning, this mission is inspired by actual events. The two Task Forces assault the shores of Mogadishu, fight their way through the Somali beaches, streets and buildings, and engage in intensive combat against the terrorist group Al-Shabaab pirates and militants to finally allow marines to escape and annihilate the whole enclave.

In the sixth game mission, titled “Rip Current”, which is inspired by actual events, gamers can play as either Preacher and Stump, with both ground and air warfare respectively. The two TF Mako operatives, together with their comrades Mother and Voodoo and a NAVSOG (Naval Special Operations Group) operator call-signed “Tiger 12”, must rescue several hostages kidnapped for ransom by the Philippine terrorist organization Abu Sayyaf Group. This is a joint operation with the Philippine NAVSOG under the command of General Barrera. The setting is Isabela City, the provincial capital of Basilan, in the southern part of the Philippine Islands. After a long and fierce fight against local combatants, which causes many casualties, regardless of General Barrera orders to negotiate with kidnapers, TF Mako manages to reach the hostages and bring them to safety. The following scene shows Mother and Preacher in the hospital where the latter was admitted because of the serious injury and even the coma he suffered from after the explosion a suicide bomber named Khalifa triggered in a train station in Madrid. Even if not openly mentioned, this seems to be inspired by the Spanish city train bombings in March 2004. In the game, that incident, causing the death of dozens of people, made Preacher feel at the umpteenth crossroads between family and job but eventually Mother manages to dissuade him from resignation and invites him to join a new task force named Blackbird. The next section unfolds the seventh campaign mission of the game: “Hat Trick”, inspired by actual events which, according to series’ Wiki (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online), are supposedly connected with the real April 12, 2009 rescue of Richard Phillips, captain of the container ship Maersk Alabama, by US Navy SEALs. The protagonists are Voodoo, Tick, Dingo and Stump, the latter being the playable character. They must save a merchant vessel’s captain from three Somali pirates holding him hostage in a drifting lifeboat. After waiting for eighteen hours, Stump can finally shoot the pirate who held the captain while Voodoo and Dingo kill the other two. According to the game series’ Wiki, this seems the reason for the mission title: a “hat-trick” in

sports means three points or goals scored by the same player while in the game it refers to the three effective shots fired by the characters (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online).

The following scene casts Dusty and Mother on the phone talking about what they have just found out thanks to their intelligence sources. The explosive in the cargo ship in Karachi was PETN (pentaerythritol tetranitrate), one of the (existing) most powerful explosive materials, which was used in various bomb attacks throughout Europe and, more importantly, which is the *fil rouge* which connects most terrorist groups they fight against. The objective now is to go to Pakistan and look for Faraz Iqbal Khan, a gunrunner who could provide them with more information about the explosive trajectories and the minds behind this new wave of global terrorism. This conversation introduces the eighth campaign level of the game, titled “Finding Faraz”, whose playable character is Preacher.

In the tenth campaign mission of MOHW, titled “Hello and Dubai”, as ordered by Dusty, TF Blackbird members, namely Preacher and Mother, must go to Dubai to capture Hassan Rasheed, or “the Cleric”, the wealthy Arab banker who is the mastermind behind the PETN attacks the Task Forces are trying to stop. With Hassan trapped in the car trunk, in order to escape from his security, Preacher (the player) must drive as fast as he can to get to the extraction point. It is a driving mission. At the same time, Mother accesses Hassan’s laptop to transmit his files to Dusty while the latter navigate them with a GPS. Hassan’s chief of security, Sad al Din and his men closely chase Preacher and Mother in the streets of Dubai although they try their best to lose their tail. Finally, they all drive into a sandstorm which causes a car crash between the two and allow Sad al Din to capture them. The next section shows Dusty on the phone asking Stump information about Preacher and Mother who have been incommunicado for hours. However, thanks to the data retrieved from Hassan’s laptop, TF Mako was able to determine that PETN is sold in Sarajevo and especially by a weapons dealer named Stovan Botic, whom Dusty used to work with during the Bosnian war in the mid-1990s. In order to find him, Dusty contacts Voodoo and orders him to find the so-called “Engineer”. The eleventh campaign mission, titled “Old Friends”, begins and Stump is the playable character. It is a joint operation between TF Mako and TF Atlas Polish GROM special forces operators including Greko, an old friend of Voodoo’s and other members, namely Kaska, Zuku, Szczuply, Diabel and Maniek. They look for the gunrunner through the mined ruins of Sarajevo and fight the countless mercenaries he hired.

After the events which took place in Dubai, Preacher and Mother were imprisoned by Sad al Din and his men. Unfortunately, Mother did not make it. Sad al Din executed him when, under interrogation, Mother refused to answer his questions. Once Preacher stealthily manages to get free and escape, the twelfth campaign level of the game, titled “Bump in the Night”, begins. TF Mako flies to the Merchant Vessel *Mistress* which carries PETN to Pakistan and which, needless to say, must be seized. While Preacher’s comrades engage in a shootout against the terrorist crew and try to reach the cargo, he chases Sad al Din and nearly beats him to death in revenge for Mother’s execution. Meanwhile, after securing the vessel, TF Mako enters the ship control room and arrests Sad al Din.

The next sequence presents Dusty listening to TV news which report on the operation in Pakistan and describe it as the hijacking of a merchant vessel by American spies causing serious consequences in the rocky diplomatic relationship between Washington and Islamabad. Therefore, he decides to enter back into the battlefield and join TF Mako. The thirteenth and final campaign mission in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* begins. Titled “Shut it down”, it is inspired by actual events, supposedly the SEALs team raid which led to Osama bin Laden’s death in Pakistan in May 2011. In the game, this level requires both TF Mako and TF Blackbird to assault the compound where The Cleric is hiding in Chitral, Pakistan. Preacher is the playable character. While hunting for the terrorist, they clear their way fighting against dozens of his men who guard the area inside and outside the compound. Hostiles are numerous and combat challenging but the task forces manage to enter the building and finally find The Cleric. Once breached the door of the room he was hiding, Preacher and Voodoo see he is going to commit a suicide bombing with an explosive backpack but, just as he is about to detonate the bomb, Preacher shoots the Cleric in the head and kills him.

The following scene is Mother’s funeral, a ceremony attended by his family, all his comrades and many other soldiers in uniform. Images show the US typical military burial rite: honor guards carrying the casket, the USA flag draping over it, military decorations such as patches and badges, the USA flag folding and its presentation to a family member, i.e. Mother’s wife in the game, the casket being decorated with SEAL tridents pinned onto the wood before it is lowered into the ground. After displaying a quotation from the widow of a Navy SEAL really killed in action, whose relevance will be discussed in Section 3.4.4, the walkthrough ends with Preacher, his wife and his daughter in a coffee shop. In the background, TV news report that a terror network has been “shut down”, thus making reference to the title of the final game

mission. Nevertheless, Preacher's phone suddenly starts to ring, hinting at a new call to action he is not going to take, at least, for the moment.

3.3 Irrealia

Despite the realism of its setting, *Medal of Honor Warfighter* is a coherent textual system with fully developed fictional components which, interpreted as constitutive of this game world, are investigated under the broad category of *irrealia*. The following paragraphs analyze the translation of this type of references on the basis of the classification made in Section 2.4.1 and specifically deal with individual references to MOHW characters (3.3.1), collective references to task forces (3.3.2) and intratextual metaludic references (3.3.3). As regards the other categories, since they are clear areas of interface with the real world, geographical, ethnic, and sociopolitical references are discussed as *realia* in Section 3.4 while artefactual references are dealt with as military language, explored in Chapter 6.

3.3.1 Individual references

Under the macro categories of playable (3.3.1.1) and non-playable characters (3.3.1.2), the latter have been classified according to the role they play in the game's narrative. As Table 4 in Appendix A shows, NPCs have been divided into "helpers", "villains" and "other characters". Out of a total of 28 MOHW actors, the parts analyzed of the walkthrough selected cast 23 characters but, for the purposes of this study, only 9 of them are explored in more details due to the relevance of their narrative role and of their names in linguistic and translational terms. The other characters are briefly discussed on the basis of the translation strategy adopted for their appellations. In particular, Table 4 in Appendix A shows the number of occurrences of each character's name in both the game database source text and in the corpus, while translation strategies are illustrated in Figure 5 in Appendix A.

3.3.1.1 Playable characters

Playable characters in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* are three and their codenames are Preacher, Stump and Argyrus.

Thomas "Preacher" Walker is the main protagonist of MOHW and also the soldier featured on MOHW box cover but, despite the game's first-person perspective, since Preacher is not the only avatar available, the player can see how he looks like in-game. Preacher is a US

Navy SEAL veteran operating first in Task Force Mako and then in Task Force Blackbird. In-game, he is mostly referred to as ‘Preacher’ (58 occurrences), ‘P’ (2 occurrences) and ‘Preach’ (1 occurrence), the first being his codename and the other two its abbreviations. Only his wife Lena calls him ‘Tom’, but this name does not occur in the corpus. As regards the three codename variants, as shown in Table 4 in Appendix A, quantitative results confirm that the codename has been transferred in its original forms by means of retention and that, in some cases, the full form ‘Preacher’ has been substituted by its short versions in both target texts, thus pointing to the translators’ decision to use them interchangeably. In Italian, for example, ‘Preacher’ is abbreviated into ‘P’ as in example (1), while in Spanish it is shortened into ‘Preach’ twice, as in examples (2) and (3):

3.(1)	Stump, Preacher just painted some targets south of the Capitol entrance. No friendlies. Light ‘em up.	Stump, P ha segnato dei bersagli a sud dell’edificio governativo. Nessun alleato. Falli saltare.	Stump, Preacher ha marcado objetivos al sur de la entrada del Capitolio. No hay aliados. Hazlos estallar.
3.(2)	Preacher , you’re driving! Let’s go! Go!	Preacher , guida tu! Andiamo! Via!	¡ Preach , conduces tú! ¡Vamos! ¡Vamos!
3.(3)	Preacher , cut the power.	Preacher , taglia i fili.	Corta la energía, Preach .

As regards ‘Preacher’, however, it seems worth mentioning that in the transfer from English into Italian and Spanish, this codename has lost part of its implicit meaning. According to the series’ Wiki (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online), this codename ironically refers to the character’s silent and introverted personality which makes his demeanor cold and elusive. While Anglophone players can perceive and enjoy the reference quite easily, it seems very unlikely for target players to appreciate the original wordplay. Nevertheless, a literal translation or a functional equivalent in the target languages would have been inappropriate and would have posed issues of textual coherence.

In the relationship between the real world and the game world, it seems interesting to briefly cite that Preacher’s physical appearance in MOHW is based on his voice actor Christian Mortensen (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online), as Figure 6 in Appendix A clearly shows. This is

just one of the countless examples of video games' characters inspired by real people, mostly celebrities.

Kyle “Stump” Hendrix is a US Navy SEAL member of Task Force Mako, he is mostly the team’s sniper. In MOHW he is the second playable character but his name and surname never appear in game texts. He is always addressed and referred to as ‘Stump’.

Retention is the strategy translators used to transfer this codename although quantitative results show a few instances of omission both in Italian as in example (4) and in Spanish, as in examples (5), (6) and (7). Since the following utterances appear during the third mission of the game, namely “Shore Leave”, in which Stump is the playable character, the omission of the addressee does not seem to pose any problem in the communication between the characters. Gamers, who play as Stump, know they are the recipient of non-playable characters’ instructions.

3.(4)	Stump , let’s pick-em off.	Ø Facciamoli fuori.	Stump , eliminémoslo.
3.(5)	There they are, Stump !	Eccoli, Stump !	Ahí están. Ø
3.(6)	Stump , take out the RPG! Second deck!	Stump , l’RPG! Secondo piano!	Ø ¡Cárgate al lanzacohetes! ¡Segunda planta!
3.(7)	Near the entrance, Stump .	All’entrata, Stump .	Cerca de la entrada. Ø

“Argyrus” is an Arabic covert operative who infiltrated a terror cell in Yemen and then went missing in action after being discovered and probably killed. Actually, as the second game level which casts him as playable character suggests, it is possible to speculate that Argyrus defected and is intentionally acting as a terrorist (Schulzke 2013: 216). As such, in a very brief and single training mission, MOHW offers players the possibility of taking the role of the virtual opponent (Schulzke 2013: 208). Nevertheless, because of the lack of a sufficiently developed narrative, which is also testified to by the very single occurrence of this codename both in the game database and in the corpus, as in Table 4 in Appendix A, the experience of being a terrorist remains largely empty (Schulzke 2013: 218). Argyrus is never addressed by anyone, not even by his trainer during the mission, he is only mentioned once by Dusty as in example (8), and his codename is left unaltered in both the target texts, while his proper name is never revealed

as opposed to the other two playable characters, which confirms the lack of indications of any individuality (Schulzke 2013: 209).

3.(8) We had a guy, code name Argyrus . Deep in a cell in the Arabian Peninsula.	C’era un tizio, nome in codice Argyrus . Infiltrato in una cellula della penisola araba.	Teníamos a un tipo, con nombre código Argyrus . Infiltrado en una célula en la península arábica.
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3.3.1.2 Non-playable characters

The most important characters playing the role of helpers in MOHW are US Task Force Mako members: Voodoo, Dusty, Mother, Dingo, Tick and Tiger 12.

“Voodoo” is a US Navy SEAL who operates in Task Force Mako. As quantitative results demonstrate, he is a central non-playable character in MOHW who appears in almost all levels. According to the series’ Wiki (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online), this character is probably based on an ex-DEVGRU (United States Naval Special Warfare Development Group) operator called “Coop”, who also worked as a consultant for the game. As regards the transfer of this codename, as Table 4 in Appendix A illustrates, retention is used in both target texts except for one instance of omission in Italian, as in example (9).

3.(9) The skinnies are getting jittery, Voodoo . They’re getting rough with the captain, arguing with each other, it’s not good.	Gli sfigati sono nervosi, Ø se la prendono col capitano, litigano fra loro... non va bene.	Los flacuchos están nerviosos, Voodoo . Dan caña al capitán, discuten entre ellos, no pinta bien.
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“Dusty” was a SFOD-D (Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta) operator who left the Army and entered the CIA’s Special Activities Division as an OGA (Other Government Agency) asset who coordinates the operations, to finally join Task Force Mako in the final game level. Physically, he is known for wearing a long, tick beard, sunglasses and a backwards cap which reads “FDNY” (Fire Department City of New York), as shown in Figure 7 in Appendix A. According to the series’ Wiki, this is probably a tribute to the firemen who died during emergency services on September 9/11 (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online). Moreover, Dusty seems

to be based on and named after one of the Special Operations Forces consultants hired by Danger Close. As one of the cutscenes suggests during mission “Finding Faraz”, Dusty has a prosthetic right leg. In game texts, this is made clear in another cutscene which introduces the final campaign mission, when Dusty joins Task Force Mako to hunt The Cleric. His comrades look very surprised and wonder why Dusty decided to fight again. He tells them “This OP’s too important to leave up to a bunch of frogmen” and Dingo answers “Yeah, well, last time I checked, there’s no handicapped parking at the DZ”. Apart from military terms such as the abbreviation ‘OP’ for operation and the acronym ‘DZ’ for Drop Zone, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, this exchange poses an issue linked to politically correct language. In English, ‘handicapped’ sounds quite offensive and Dingo uses it on purpose in order to make fun of Dusty. Interestingly, in Italian and Spanish, Dingo’s original intention is toned down and ‘handicapped’ is rendered into more neutral and respectful expressions such as *disabili* and *discapitados*, which are both English calques of ‘disabled’ according to the *Treccani Dictionary of Italian language* (2016: online) and the *Real Academia Española Dictionary of Spanish language* (2015: online), and which are to be preferred to equivalent forms such as *handicappato* and *handicapado*, because of the offensive and discriminatory connotation of these terms.

Going back to the translation of Dusty’s codename, it is retained in its original form in both target languages, with only one instance of omission in Spanish, as in example (10).

3.(10)	This is outside the Navy’s wheelhouse, Dusty . [...]	Questo va oltre le competenze dalla marina, Dusty . [...]	Esto queda fuera del mando de la Armada Ø. [...]
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“Mother” is a US Navy SEAL, leader of the Task Force Mako until he is assigned to Task Force Blackbird with Preacher. Mother is a very important NPC in MOHW, especially for the role he plays in the story. In this light, the interpretation of the results Table 4 in Appendix A, which ranks him only third in the group, should take into account Mother’s death and the resulting absence in the last part of the walkthrough analyzed, in which he is referred to only twice by Preacher.

Mother is brave, responsible, and respected as a leader and, despite his brash and harsh personality, he shows deep care for his teammates also during operations. This seems the reason

for his codename ‘Mother’ (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online) but, as in Preacher’s case, the translation strategy used, namely retention, does not allow target players to grasp the irony behind his codename, although, given the transparency of this English very common noun, it is possible to speculate that Italian and Spanish players may understand its meaning. As in the case of Dusty’s name translation, there is only one instance of omission in Spanish, as in example (11).

- 3.(11) **Mother**, that car’s hotter than a 2 dollar pistol. **Mother**, quell’auto l’ha vista persino mia nonna. Ø Ese coche tiene más peligro que una pistola rebajada.

The example above contains an idiom which seems worthy of a brief discussion. “Hotter than a two-dollar pistol” is “an old Americanism meaning very hot, an allusion to cheap 19th-century pistols that got hot when fired” (Hendrickson 2008: 419), thus referring to the ideas of time and use or overuse. In the game, it is used by Dusty during the mission “Hello and Dubai” in order to advise Mother and Preacher to swap the car they are driving to escape Sad al Din’s men so that they are less likely to be spotted. In Italian, the idiom is translated into the equivalent of “Even my grandmother saw that car” which uses the image of an elderly person and suggests the idea of time, while meaning that if she saw that car, everybody did as well. On the contrary, in Spanish, it becomes “That car is more dangerous than a discounted / on sale pistol” which refers to the original “two-dollar” part of the idiom and suggests the idea of cheapness.

Going back to Mother’s codename, it seems worth mentioning a sentence uttered by the character in the walkthrough although it appears in a portion which is not included in the analysis. It exemplifies another translation strategy dealing with his codename. At the end of the tenth mission, Mother and Preacher are captured by enemy Sad al Din, they are held prisoner on the Merchant Vessel *Mistress*, which carries explosive PETN to Pakistan, and they are interrogated and repeatedly beaten for not revealing any information. This led Mother to death. In particular, during interrogation, Mother’s phone starts vibrating on the table and Sad al Din asks Mother “Who is on the other end of this phone?” and he answers “Your mother” which is translated literally into both Italian and Spanish. These are Mother’s last words. Although the expression seems a simple rude answer showing pride, it is not by chance that Mother’s very last words sound somehow self-referential. In English this wordplay works perfectly while in the target versions it may be more difficult to enjoy.

Dingo and Tick are two US Navy SEALs of Task Force Mako. As quantitative results in Table 4 of Appendix A exemplify, they are minor characters in the game. Very little or nothing is known about them and in localizations, their codenames are transferred unaltered in all instances.

“Tiger 12” is the call sign of a Philippine NAVSOG (Naval Special Operations Group) operator who plays as a minor and temporary member of Task Force Mako. As shown in Table 4 in Appendix A, its transfer presents two different translation strategies: retention in Italian and direct translation in Spanish, as in example (12).

3.(12) Roger, **Tiger 12**.

Sì, **Tiger 12**.

Recibido, **Tigre 12**.

As discussed in the Introduction (3.1), villains in MOHW are terrorists belonging to the global-scale terrorist network which is threatening the Western world. In the game, and also in the walkthrough selected, their role is played by five characters, but in the sections analyzed only three of them go on the stage and, therefore, are discussed in this paragraph. They are Hassan Rasheed, also known as “the Cleric”, Stovan Botic, also known as “the Engineer” and Sad al Din. However, for the purposes of completeness, it seems worth mentioning that those who do not appear are minor “baddies”, namely Faraz Iqbal Khan who is a Pakistani arms dealer who dies during the same single mission casting him as the target, and Marwan al-Khalifa, the suicide bomber in Madrid train station attack.

As Table 4 in Appendix A shows, the Cleric is the principal antagonist in *Medal of Honor Warfighter*. His full name is Hassan Rasheed according to the series’ Wiki (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online) but in game texts he is always addressed and referred to as simply ‘Hassan’ (33 occurrences) and ‘the Cleric’ (25 occurrences), being the latter the name he is also known as a religious leader. Hassan is a wealthy Arab banker who works in Dubai and leads the terrorist network behind the deadly weapon PETN attacks. As fans reasonably remark (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online), this character seems to make a reference to Osama bin Laden: he seems a fictional stand-in. Both are elderly Middle Eastern men, lead terrorist organizations, dress similarly, and are killed in Pakistan.

As regards his first name, Hassan is transferred as it is in all instances, as in example (13). On the contrary ‘the Cleric’, always with a capital letter, is translated directly into *il Sacerdote* and *el Clérigo* in Italian and Spanish respectively, as shown in (14). By using direct translation

instead of retention, translators allow players to understand the sense of this meaningful nickname which reveals Hassan’s role in the holy war against the infidel lands, namely jihad.

- | | | | |
|--------|--|---|---|
| 3.(13) | Hassan ’s men ahead, take it slow. | Ci sono gli uomini di Hassan più avanti, rallenta. | Hombres de Hassan , delante, ¡ve despacio! |
| 3.(14) | These are the Cleric ’s men for sure. | Sono gli uomini del Sacerdote . | Estos son los hombres del Clérigo . |

Stovan Botic is a greedy Bosnian arms dealer based in Sarajevo, who is supposed to sell PETN to the Cleric. The jihadists call Botic “mohandes” which means “engineer” in Arabic, a common honorific for fighters with education or technical expertise (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online). In game texts, this character’s name and surname, the latter is more frequently used alone (32 occurrences out of 34), are transferred by means of retention. The same strategy is used for his handle in Arabic ‘mohandes’, thus conveying the same exotic flavor as the original, while the translation provided by Stump ‘engineer’ is substituted by direct equivalents in both languages, i.e. *ingegnere* in Italian and *ingeniero* in Spanish. However, while in Italian the definite article is part of the quote and the noun has no capital letter, in Spanish the translator has followed the English form, as the original sentence shows in (15):

- | | | | |
|--------|---|---|--|
| 3.(15) | Yeah, he’s an arms dealer. The jihadis call him “ mohandes ” the “Engineer.” | Già. È un trafficante d’armi. I jihadisti lo chiamano “ mohandes ”, “l’ingegnere”. | Sí, es un traficante de armas. Los yihadistas le llaman “ mohandes ”, el “Ingeniero”. |
|--------|---|---|--|

Sad al Din is the utterly cruel and short-tempered right-hand man of the Cleric who chases Preacher and Mother during the “Hello and Dubai” level, the one who captures and tortures them, the one who executes Mother in cold blood, and finally, the one who is arrested by Task Force Mako. Retention is the strategy used to render this proper name into Italian and Spanish.

Together with Task Force Mako members, other (minor) characters playing the role of the multinational “goodies” are Ajab, who serves as the local asset in Pakistan and belongs to Task Force Blackbird; sergeant Xaysana, sometimes abbreviated into ‘Sana’ (2 occurrences) and sergeant Wright of Task Force Grizzly; Greko, Maniek, Kaska, Diabel, Zuku and Szczuply, who are Polish GROM operatives of Task Force Atlas; Lena who is Preacher’s wife; Isabella

also abbreviated into ‘Bella’ who is Preacher’s daughter. Another proper name occurs in the corpus and refers to Rabbit, a veteran Tier 1 counter-terrorism operator who was killed in action in Afghanistan in *Medal of Honor* (2010). Since this character does not belong to MOHW cast and he is only referred to in dialogues, the translation of his name will be discussed as an intratextual metaludic reference in Section 3.3.3.

As Table 4 in Appendix A testifies to, on the basis of the number of their occurrences, all the above-mentioned characters play minor and more or less limited roles. In localizations, all their names are retained in both TTs, although the abbreviated form of Xaysana becomes *Sana* in Spanish without apostrophe, since this mark does not exist in Spanish. Retention turns out to be the suitable translation strategy to adhere to this game-world specific terminology which also include proper names, especially if we consider the constraint posed by MOHW status as the final chapter of MOH series. In addition, from a cultural viewpoint, it seems worth mentioning that Preacher’s wife and daughter perfectly exemplify the concept of “gendered militarism” in war-themed video games, which represent violence as masculine only, power as structured to promote male authority whereas women are seen as needing protection (Robinson 2016: 10-12).

3.3.2 Collective references

As already discussed, MOHW main characters are US Special Forces operatives who carry out specific missions against terrorists. The groups or teams of these military units are the so-called “task forces” whose names, as illustrated in the previous sections dealing with their members, are Mako, Blackbird, Grizzly, and Atlas. Table 5 in Appendix A shows the number of occurrences of each task force’s name in both the game database source text and the corpus while translation strategies are illustrated in Figure 8 in Appendix A. As regards the transfer of these references, a distinction must be made in the analysis of the translation of the military noun phrase ‘Task Force’ on the one hand, and that of Task Forces’ proper names on the other. First, as regards the former, which is explored purposefully in this paragraph although it belongs to military language, it seems worth mentioning that the full form has only four occurrences in the whole database and only one occurrence in the corpus and concerns Task Force Blackbird, as described by Mother during the cutscene set in the hospital, as in example (16). The translation of this task force name will be discussed later.

3.(16)	It's compartmented program, brand new joint effort between us and Langley. They're calling it Task Force Blackbird .	Si tratta di un nuovo programma, un'operazione congiunta tra noi e Langley. La chiamano Task Force Blackbird .	Es un programa compartimentado, un nuevo esfuerzo conjunto entre Langley y nosotros. Lo llaman Fuerza de combate Mirlo .
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Moreover, as the example above clearly shows, the two target versions present different translation strategies: retention in Italian, since this military Anglicism has even become part of the Italian civilian language, generalization in Spanish. At first sight, the Spanish rendition could seem a direct translation but, as one can easily understand on the basis of its usage on the Internet, in Spanish *fuerza de combate* seems to refer to military forces on the battlefield in general and not to a temporary military unit which works on a specific task. In this light, it can be considered a hypernym. On the contrary, according to Solá Gardell (2006: 43), these characteristics are at the base of the many equivalents which are used in translation practice, such as, amongst others, “grupo operativo”, “grupo especial”, “grupo de tareas”, “unidad operativa” and, above all, “fuerza operativa”, the latter being the equivalent term provided for every entry containing ‘task force’ in the glossary of the Spanish Government’s Ministry of Defense Website (online). The Spanish translator’s decision, however, influences all the other occurrences of the noun phrase ‘Task Force’, namely the abbreviation ‘TF’ which presents twenty-five occurrences in the whole database and five in the corpus and which is maintained in Italian and translated into *FC* in Spanish. These abbreviations mostly appear on the bottom right of the screen at the beginning of every mission, together with the name of the Task Force involved, the name of the playable character, the place where the mission is set with its latitude and longitude coordinates, and if so, the ‘inspired by actual events’ line. The following is an example (17) of this kind of mission setting information:

3.(17)	TF MAKO – INTERNATIONAL WATERS, ARABIAN SEA 1°25’ N 45°38’ E – Inspired by Actual Events	TF MAKO - “STUMP” ACQUE INTERNAZIONALI, MARE ARABICO 1°25’ N 45°38’ E – Ispirato a eventi reali	FC MAKO - “STUMP” AGUAS INTERNACIONALES, MAR ARÁBIGO 1°25’ N 45°38’ E – Inspirado en acontecimientos reales
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Moreover, some occurrences of the abbreviated form ‘TF’ can be found in game dialogues in both the whole database (9 instances) and the corpus (1 instance) and, as regards translation, they are expanded in both target languages, as in example (18).

3.(18)	Check. We’ll let TF Grizzly take care of anyone who wants to start some shit.	Ricevuto. La Task Force Grizzly si occuperà di chiunque rompa i coglioni.	Recibido. Que la fuerza de combate Grizzly se ocupe de quien quiera armar lío.
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As demonstrated by quantitative results in Table 5 of Appendix A, which contains the number of occurrences of the task forces’ names in game dialogues, Mako is undoubtedly the prominent group in the storyline throughout the game. Task Force Grizzly presents a significant number of occurrences too, while the number of instances in which Task Forces Blackbird and Atlas are referred to is very limited. Nevertheless, in order to fully understand these figures, it seems worth underlining that out of 25 instances of Mako, only 8 refer to the whole team because the other 17 occurrences represent the call signs of some of its members in radio conversations, namely ‘Mako One’ (the team leader, Mother first and Voodoo later) with 14 occurrences and ‘Mako Five’ (not specified) with 3 occurrences.

As regards translation strategies, Mako presents 24 instances of retention and one instance of omission in Italian, while in Spanish retention is used for all instances. Omission is used when Mako refers to the whole team and Mother learns that Voodoo is the new leader of the Task Force, as in example (19), where the expression *al comando* [in command] in that context implicitly means ‘in command of Mako’, and whose omission does not pose any comprehension problem.

3.(19)	Check. So, Voodoo’s running Mako now...	Ok. Quindi... ora c’è Voodoo al comando...Ø	Recibido. Así que ahora Voodoo dirige Mako ...
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As to call signs, it is interesting to note that while in Italian the number identifying each member is rendered into figures, in Spanish, the English original version is faithfully followed and simply translated in letters, such as in ‘Mako One’ which becomes *Mako 1* in Italian and *Mako Uno* in Spanish.

The same strategies are used to transfer ‘Grizzly’, i.e. retention in both target languages while the call sign ‘Grizzly Six Actual’ becomes *Grizzly 6 Actual* in Italian and *Grizzly Seis* in

Spanish. It refers to sergeant Xaysana, Grizzly's team leader and 'actual' precisely means "the [Marine] unit commander" (original addition) according to the glossary of military terms of the Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH 1996: online) at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. 'Actual' has been retained in Italian and omitted in Spanish; in other words, both translators did not transfer the term but, as opposed to omission, retention in Italian seems to be inappropriate.

The limited number of occurrences of 'Blackbird', which is the second most important Task Force of the game for the weight of its members, namely Preacher and Mother, is due to the fact that it is not also a call sign. Nevertheless, its translation provides the only example of direct translation. Indeed, as shown in example (16) above, while in Italian Blackbird is left unaltered, in Spanish it is directly translated into *Mirlo*, its literal equivalent. Moreover, this task force presents another linguistic element deserving special attention: the adjective 'joint'. As Mother describes it in example (16), Blackbird is a "joint effort" with Task Force Mako, specifically "JOINT TF BLACKBIRD/MAKO". In Italian, 'joint' in 'joint effort' is correctly translated into *congiunta*, being *operazione* [operation] for 'effort' a feminine noun as well as 'task force', while in Spanish, it is translated into *conjunto* in *esfuerzo conjunto*. However, when rendering the line preceding the mission, the Italian translator omitted the adjective while the Spanish one chose *combinada* in *FC COMBINADA MIRLO/MAKO*. The two Spanish adjectives, i.e. *conjunto* and *combinado*, which may seem synonyms, actually present different nuances in military language and, as Solá Gardell remarks (2006: 43), the equivalent for "joint task force" should be "fuerza operativa conjunta".

Finally, as regards Task Force Atlas, this name does not present any occurrences in the corpus because, like Blackbird, it is not used as a call sign and during the mission which involves its members, they are called by their codenames, i.e. Greko, Diabel, Kaska, etc.

3.3.3 Intratextual metaludic references

As mentioned in the sections, MOHW helper character Voodoo mentions another character of the series in one of the final scenes of the game: Preacher and Voodoo are about to breach the room where the Cleric is hiding, and Voodoo says "For Mother. And for Rabbit.", thus dedicating the last effort to their fallen comrades. 'Rabbit' is the codename of a veteran Tier 1 counter-terrorism operator who was killed in action in Afghanistan in *Medal of Honor* (2010), the series' penultimate chapter. In this light, Voodoo's reference to Rabbit provides an

interesting example of intratextual metaludic reference within the series, which creates an interrelationship between the text of MOHW and that of its predecessor. Intratextuality generates related understanding in separate but interdependent game works and adds layers of depth to the text, based on the readers' prior knowledge and understanding. Indeed, by mentioning his fallen ex-colleague at the end of the game and before the final decisive battle against the Cleric, Voodoo rings a bell in players' memory and, more importantly, requires them to call their encyclopedic knowledge into play. Last but not least, Voodoo's reference shows great team spirit and respect for the heroes fallen in the war on terror or, in Robinson's words (2016: 9) "a strong sense of camaraderie between 'heroic' troops", thus contributing to the whole rhetorical tribute paid to the US Special Operation Forces, as discussed in the Introduction (3.1). In localizations, both Italian and Spanish translators transferred 'Rabbit' by means of retention, thus consciously or not, keeping intratextuality intact in both target versions. However, as in Preacher's and Mother's cases, as reported in the series' Wiki (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online), this name carries an ironic implicit meaning which is not conveyed. He is called Rabbit because he has six children, this being a sexual innuendo.

3.4 Realia

Still fictional as all four games included in the corpus, *Medal of Honor Warfighter's* strive for authenticity aims to provide players with an authentic experience (*Electronic Arts Website*: online), which is based on a very close relationship between the game world and the real world. The game's story is mostly inspired by actual events and the setting is the world we know, whose components refer to existing entities. The following sections explore the translation of MOHW *realia*, that is to say, the references made in the game's texts to actual entities, which have been classified into: geographical references (3.4.1), i.e. the toponyms mentioned; ethnic references (3.4.2) regarding the peoples living in the game world; sociopolitical references (3.4.3) which include the institutions mentioned, and intertextual references (3.4.4). Artefactual references will be dealt with in Chapter 6 since they fall under the category of military language.

3.4.1 Geographical references

MOHW missions take place in real world hotspots central to the war on terror. In the game's texts analyzed, the geographical relationship between the game world and the real world is established by means of the toponyms which appear on-screen in two text types.

On the one hand, as already mentioned, the information regarding every mission geographical setting is displayed on the bottom left of the screen at the beginning of each level. The names of the cities, regions, areas, countries are written in capital letters and provided together with their latitude and longitude coordinates. Although these geographical references are made in a text type other than dialogue lines, and consequently they are not included in the analysis, they are worth briefly mentioning because these pieces of information are peculiar to MOHW texts. The following is an example concerning the first mission and the two lines in example (20) are placed below other two strings, the first specifying the playable character's name, the second concerning the task force involved in the mission, as shown in example (17) in Section 3.3.2.

3.(20)	KARACHI, PAKISTAN	KARACHI, PAKISTAN	KARACHI, PAKISTÁN
	24°50' N 66°58' E	24°50' N 66°58' E	24° 50' N 66° 58' E

On the other hand, existing toponyms are referred to in dialogues and appear in the game subtitles. Moreover, the scope of the geographical relationship between MOHW world and the real world is even broadened in conversations between characters, who refer to a wider number of cities, regions, areas, countries, and even roads and squares of places which are not necessarily subordinate to the game story's setting. Conversely, they are references to the real-world terrorism-related hotspots which often make the headlines of breaking news.

The most frequently occurring place name in the corpus is Dubai and this seems to depend on the fact that this United Arab Emirates' city is closely linked to the main game antagonist, namely the Cleric. Most references are indeed made in relation to him or the terrorist network he leads. Moreover, Dubai offers the two most accurate toponyms mentioned in dialogues: Al Rigga Road and Sheikh Zayed are two streets of the city. The former is located in the namesake eastern area and the latter, also known as "E 11", is the longest highway in the United Arab Emirates. As regards the translation of these references to the streets of Dubai, which occur in their internationalized English version, as example (21) shows, 'Al Rigga Road' is completely retained in Italian while in Spanish the common noun is directly translated and the whole noun phrase expanded into "carretera de Al Rigga". As example (22) illustrates, 'Sheikh Zayed' is retained in both target languages but in Italian it co-occurs with the feminine definite article "la", which is usually placed before the proper noun of a street, thus making the reference

clearer. Moreover, as regards Dubai in example (23), there is one instance of omission in the Italian texts due to the transformation of ‘Old Dubai’, meaning the city center, into *città vecchia* [old city] which represents a generalization but which, thanks to the clear setting, does not pose any comprehension problem.

- | | | | |
|--------|---|--|--|
| 3.(21) | Al Rigga Road, get some distance from those guys. | Al Rigga Road, cerca di distanziarli. | Carretera de Al Rigga; alejaos de esos tipos. |
| 3.(22) | Dusty, we’re going on Sheikh Zayed. We can outrun them there. | Dusty, andiamo verso la Sheikh Zayed. Così li seminiamo. | Dusty, vamos por Sheikh Zayed. Les dejaremos atrás. |
| 3.(23) | Take the offramp to Old Dubai. It’s just ahead. | Prendi la rampa per la città vecchia. Più avanti. | Toma la salida al viejo Dubái. Está justo ahí delante. |

Another accurate geographical reference is Sarajevo’s United Nations Plaza which occurs in the subtitles of the dialogue lines in Bosnian language, during the “Old friends” mission. Despite the transcultural nature of this place name, since it is present in many cities of the world, as in (24), the Spanish translator directly translated this toponym while in Italian it is retained in its English international form.

- | | | | |
|--------|--|---|---|
| 3.(24) | Greko, we are taking fire in the United Nations Plaza. | Greko, ci stanno sparando nella United Nations Plaza. | Greko, nos disparan en la Plaza de las Naciones Unidas. |
|--------|--|---|---|

As in example (25), ‘Pirate Town’ is another special example of direct translation in both target languages, i.e. *villaggio pirata* and *Ciudad Pirata* in Italian and Spanish respectively. However, since this is not precisely a proper name but a form used to refer to one of the pirate-plagued Somali towns, which are smaller than cities, the Spanish rendition seems less accurate than the Italian one.

3.(25)	Solid, Dingo. And we'll sneak in and hit the cache. It's smack dab right in the center of Pirate Town .	OK, Dingo. Entriamo e colpiamo. Proprio in mezzo al villaggio pirata .	Recibido, Dingo. Iremos y encontraremos el alijo. Está justo en el centro de Ciudad Pirata .
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As regards the translation of the other geographical references, they are converted into the official counterparts in the target language, into the equivalent forms established by competent authorities, the ones we find on atlases. Accordingly, as explained in Section 2.4.2, since they pose little, if any, challenges to translators, they are not included in the quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, for the purposes of a contrastive approach between Italian and Spanish, it seems interesting to mention that most real-world toponyms represent instances of retention which, especially in Spanish, also includes slight adjustments of orthographic and/or phonetic nature.

Another toponym occurring in the game dialogues analyzed is ‘Langley’, the site of the US Central Intelligence Agency’s headquarters in Virginia but, since it refers to CIA in game texts, this place name is analyzed as a sociopolitical reference in Section 3.4.3.

3.4.2 Ethnic references

The peoples living in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* world belong to real world cultures which either actively take part in the game events such as the American, the Arab, the Pakistani, the Filipino and the Bosnian peoples, or are simply mentioned due to the global scope of the war represented, such as the German, the Russian and the Serb peoples.

Within the dichotomy between source culture (SC) and other cultures, *Medal of Honor Warfighter* is the only title of the corpus in which the SC of the game’s developers (Danger Close) is the same as the game’s protagonists, namely the US culture. MOHW world is indeed a virtual stage where the US military elite soldiers perform and lead their war on terror on a global scale. In this light, it comes as no surprise that in game dialogues most references are made to the USA, as in Table 6 in Appendix A. Similarly, given the America-versus-Islam perspective, substantial references to “the evil” Muslim peoples were to be expected. Most of these occurrences refer to ASG, which is the acronym for the Abu Sayyaf Group, an Islamist separatist group based in the Philippines, while a few references are directly made to the Muslim world cultures, such as the Pakistani one. For example, the single occurrence of ‘Arab’ refers to the Cleric in “an Arab businessman in Dubai named Hassan”, which does not occur in the

corpus. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, it seems worth pointing out that most nationality adjectives and nouns in MOHW database occur in text types other than dialogues, namely descriptions, which illustrate weapons, means of transport, and military groups, especially in the game’s multiplayer mode texts, which are not analyzed.

Going back to the single-player campaign dialogue texts under investigation, and especially to their localization, ethnic references do not pose any transfer problem since they are all directly translated into the target languages’ equivalents, as Figure 9 in Appendix A illustrates. Conversely, the translation of the SC references deserves special attention. ‘American’ is translated into *americano* in both target languages and the latter is also the Italian rendition of most ‘US’ occurrences, as in (26). This adjective is indeed translated into *USA* only once, as in example (27). Although ‘American’ and ‘US’ are synonyms, the Italian translators’ choice may be seen as a sort of generalization, given the existence of the equivalent adjective *statunitense* for ‘US’.

3.(26)	<p>US diplomats declined to appear on our program and claim to have no knowledge of the events, but the American Embassy in Islamabad has issued a recommendation for all non-essential Americans to leave the country...</p>	<p>I diplomatici americani hanno rifiutato di comparire nel nostro programma e sostengono di non sapere alcunché degli avvenimenti in questione, ma l'ambasciata americana di Islamabad raccomanda a tutti gli americani di lasciare, se possibile, il paese...</p>	<p>Los diplomáticos estadounidenses rehusaron aparecer en nuestro programa y afirman no tener noticia de los acontecimientos, pero la embajada americana en Islamabad ha recomendado a todos los americanos cuya función no sea esencial que abandonen el país...</p>
3.(27)	<p>Pakistan has already closed down NATO supply lines into Afghanistan and have once again demanded an end to US drone operations.</p>	<p>Il Pakistan ha già interrotto le linee di rifornimento NATO in Afghanistan e ha nuovamente chiesto agli USA di interrompere le operazioni con i droni.</p>	<p>Pakistán ya ha cerrado las líneas de suministro de la OTAN hacia Afganistán y ha vuelto a exigir el fin de las operaciones de aviones no tripulados de los EE. UU.</p>

In Spanish, as example (27) shows, ‘US’ is mostly expanded into *de los EE. UU.*, being EE. UU. the Spanish plural abbreviation for *Estados Unidos* [United States], and it is directly translated into the equivalent adjective *estadounidense* only once, as in example (26).

As regards the translation of the references to enemy Muslim cultures’ terrorists, the name of the Filipino Islamist separatist group Abu Sayyaf Group, which occurs as the acronym ‘ASG’ in game dialogues, is retained in both target languages, as in example (28). As for the name of the peoples fighting the jihad, which is used in its universally known original form ‘jihadis’, it becomes *jihadisti* in Italian and *yihadistas* in Spanish, the latter showing an orthographic adaptation, as in example (29).

- | | | | |
|--------|--|--|--|
| 3.(28) | Mother, stay on our six!
There’s fucking ASG ’s all
over the place, so be ready
and keep the hostages
down! | Mother, resta a ore sei! È
pieno di ASG , cazzo, tieniti
pronto e fai stare giù gli
ostaggi! | ¡Mother, quédate a nuestras
seis! ¡El ASG está por todas
partes, cuidado y mantén
agachados a los rehenes! |
| 3.(29) | Yeah, he’s an arms dealer.
The jihadis call him
“mohandes” the
“Engineer.” | Già. È un trafficante d’armi.
I jihadisti lo chiamano
“mohandes”, “l’ingegnere”. | Sí, es un traficante de armas.
Los yihadistas le llaman
“mohandes”, el “Ingeniero”. |

Moreover, the representation of other real world cultures in MOHW game world is also linguistic and this produces a foreignizing effect which serves a characterization purpose. Some of the “foreign” characters, i.e. non-American characters, speak their own languages throughout the game and, as mentioned in the closing credits, for the sake of realism, the audio localization of this game involved native speaker dialect coaches to record the related dialogue lines together with native speaker translators to render them into the subtitles of the US English version, which later served as the original for the Italian and Spanish ones. In other words, MOHW players may hear characters speaking Arabic, Bosnian, Somalian, (Pakistani) Urdu, and Filipino Tagalog and read subtitles in US English, Italian and Spanish.

In the four sections of the walkthrough analyzed, characters speaking their own “foreign” language, i.e. languages other than American English, are: a Pakistani soldier (Urdu), the Cleric (Arabic), a Filipino soldier (Tagalog) and Bosnian soldiers (Bosnian). However, while the Tagalog and Bosnian dialogue lines are simple military instructions, the Cleric’s monologue when training Argyrus seems to be a culturally-loaded text deserving special attention. It contains some key words which apparently belong to the typical jihadi verbal repertoire, such as ‘infidels’ and ‘infidel lands’, ‘cause’, ‘worthy’, ‘jihad’ itself, ‘brothers’, and first person plural adjectival and pronominal items such as ‘our’ and ‘us’. This text is too short to lend itself to (critical) discourse analysis, which would be also beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, to look at the big picture of other cultures’ representation in MOHW, especially as regards Muslim cultures, it seemed interesting to briefly discuss an example of how US game developers characterize the enemy linguistically and, one might add, trivialize their way of speaking into an automatous discourse (Schulzke 2013: 209). In this light, the linguistic and cultural representation of the Other in video games may provide ample opportunities for future research also in a translational perspective.

3.4.3 Sociopolitical references

Given the global nature of the real-world war scenario in *Medal of Honor Warfighter*, the institutions mentioned in game dialogues belong to more or less precise existing official functions and organizations. On the one hand, non-specific references such ‘mayor’, ‘authorities’, ‘diplomats’, ‘embassy’, ‘visa’ and ‘security officials’ seem to require a plain direct translation which selects the target languages’ counterparts. Even if they actually refer to specific countries in game texts, these terms relate to institutions which are shared by most communities. For example, ‘Mayor’ has two occurrences, the first referring to the mayor of Isabela City and the other to the mayor of Dubai, but both are correctly translated into *sindaco* and *alcalde* in Italian and Spanish.

On the other hand, as Table 7 in Appendix A shows, sociopolitical references include proper names of international and national institutions, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and, when relating to the USA, the Navy and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Except for ‘US Navy’, which is directly translated into official equivalents, namely *marina* and *Armada* as in example (30), and except for ‘NATO’ whose acronym in Spanish becomes *OTAN* (Organización del Tratado del

Atlántico Norte) as in example (31), all organizations are transferred by means of retention in both Italian and Spanish, as shown in Figure 10 in Appendix A.

3.(30) This is the US **Navy**! Questa è la **marina** americana! ¡Aquí, la **Armada** de los EE. UU!

3.(31) Pakistan has already closed down **NATO** supply lines into Afghanistan and [...] Il Pakistan ha già interrotto le linee di rifornimento **NATO** in Afghanistan e [...] Pakistán ya ha cerrado las líneas de suministro de la **OTAN** hacia Afganistán y [...]

In game dialogues, ‘Capitol’ refers to the Filipino government building whose remarkable number of occurrences is due to the fact that it is used as a geographical point of reference during a mission. The Capitol is a sociopolitical US culture specific name which, with a capital letter, designates the main building of the US Congress or, by extension, without a capital letter, the building which houses any state legislature in the USA. In game dialogues both versions appear, with and without capital letters, but they do not refer to the USA. As in example (32), indeed, in Italian it is correctly translated into *edificio governativo* [government building] which represents an appropriate hypernym, while in Spanish its rendition is the calque *Capitolio* with a capital letter.

3.(32) Stump, Preacher just painted some targets south of the **Capitol** entrance. No friendlies. Light ‘em up. Stump, P ha segnato dei bersagli a sud dell’**edificio governativo**. Nessun alleato. Falli saltare. Stump, Preacher ha marcado objetivos al sur de la entrada del **Capitolio**. No hay aliados. Hazlos estallar.

Between the sociopolitical references to national organizations made in game dialogues, those to the US CIA stand out for the variety of terms used. Indeed, the Central Intelligence Agency is mostly mentioned as ‘OGA’ which, according to a non-dialogue line in the game database, “stands for ‘Other Government Agency’ – sometimes a euphemism for the CIA” in secret operations. This description is confirmed by CIA itself in the “US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Handbook: Strategic Information, Activities and Regulations” (US Central Intelligence Agency 2013: 181). OGAs are indeed those agents which work uncover for CIA, such as Argyrus in *Medal of Honor Warfighter*. Another name used to refer to CIA in game texts is the

metonymy ‘Langley’, which is actually a toponym relating to the site of its headquarters in Virginia (USA). Both references are transferred by means for retention in Italian and Spanish.

3.4.4 Intertextual references

As discussed in the Introduction (3.1), *Medal of Honor Warfighters*’ developers mean to pay tribute, perhaps too rhetorical to some, to the heroism and the sacrifice of the US Special Operation Forces deployed overseas. More relevantly for this study, the consequent mythical representation of MOHW protagonists is also provided through language: in the game texts under investigation, the homage is paid by means of two explicit quotations meaningfully placed at the beginning and at the end of the walkthrough respectively.

The first explicit intertextual reference opens the game with a two-line sentence written in white at the center of a black background, as reported in example (33) and shown in Figure 11 in Appendix A:

3.(33) “A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers.”

- John F. Kennedy

According to the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum website (online), and also to the Miller Center of the University of Virginia (online), the quotation comes from the speech John F. Kennedy gave at Amherst College in Amherst (Massachusetts) on October 26, 1963 upon receiving an Honorary Degree while taking part in a ceremony in honor of the poet Robert Frost who had died in January of that year. While in its original setting it referred to the impact artists like Frost had had on the country’s spirit, conscience, and growth, in the game it seems to contribute to the rhetorical images of sacrifice, heroism, patriotism US warfighters represent.

According to Schulze von Glaßer (2012: 10), the second quotation is instead from Stacey Freiwald at the funeral of her husband, Jason Freiwald, a Navy SEAL killed in action on September 11th, 2008 in Afghanistan during Operation: Enduring Freedom (NavySEAL website: online) and, as such, this quotation aims to pay tribute to soldiers’ families too. Not by chance, the lines as in example (34) follow the touching images of the funeral of one of the game main characters, namely Mother, while being enhanced by the most expressive song of the game soundtrack: “With Honors” by Iranian-German composer Ramin Djawadi. In this

light, according to Robinson (2016: 11), in terms of “gendered militarism”, MOHW centers “on the consequences which military service has for family life in the homeland”, and “sacrifice is given a profoundly personal and gendered perspective”. MOHW “takes the theme of sacrifice into a very personal place, demonstrating the consequences for those left in the homeland of fighting the War on Terror” (Robinson 2016: 11).

3.(34) Real life super heroes exist; they walk among us every day, ready to defend our great nation and its citizens in a moment’s notice. They are husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons capable of staring death in the face, and still come home to rock their newborn infant to sleep in the same day.

This kind of warrior cannot be manufactured or purchased. They are born into this life, blessed with a higher sense of purpose, and the understanding of exactly what their fate may hold. We chose to share this life with them, because we would rather love an extraordinary man for a brief moment, than spend a lifetime with a man far more ordinary. You can never be prepared for certain events in life, they change you, and their consequences turn your world upside down. Meeting your husband’s casket as he makes his final journey home. The prospect of raising your children alone. Living the rest of your days without the one person that loved you unconditionally and never let you down. In truth, these men never let anyone down, which is why they are no longer here today.

These amazing warriors chose to spend their brief but amazing lives with us. We raise their children. We honor and remember them, we live in the present, and we look to the future. They knew we would have the strength to carry on in the face of tragedy, and to become stronger, more amazing versions of ourselves. They knew we would never be defined by their passing, but inspired by their memory to live more fully and to make each moment we are given count.

- Stacey

From a translational perspective, these two quotations seem to require different skills. On the one hand, since J. F. Kennedy is a historical figure whose speeches enjoy worldwide fame, one might speculate that the translator had to do some research in order to transfer the quotation. Moreover, since the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum website (online) provides a multilingual database which contains most of his speeches’ transcriptions, the solution was ready-made: even if they are not the official translations, should an official translation exist, they may be safely borrowed. As regards the speech under discussion, both

Italian and Spanish versions are available and the line quoted recites “Una nazione esprime se stessa non solo attraverso gli uomini che genera, ma anche con gli uomini che onora, con coloro dei quali serba il ricordo” in Italian and “Una nación se revela no solo por los hombres que produce, sino por los hombres a los que rinde homenaje, los hombres que recuerda” in Spanish. On the contrary, as example (35) shows, the MOHW Italian and Spanish translators created personal abridged versions, which are less literal than the one provided by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum website (online). For example, the rhetorical repetition of ‘men’ is omitted and the noun is substituted by demonstrative pronouns.

3.(35)	“A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces \nbut also by the men it honors, the men it remembers.”\n- John F. Kennedy	“Una nazione si vede non solo dagli uomini che forgia,\nma anche da quelli che onora, quelli che ricorda.”\n- John F. Kennedy	“Una nación se caracteriza no solo por los hombres que crea\nsino también por aquellos a los que honra y recuerda.”\n- John F. Kennedy
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For the purposes of intelligibility, it seems necessary to specify that the “\n” symbol preceding ‘but’ and following the closing quotation mark, with no space in between, is a command to the game engine, it is not displayed on the screen. As Bernal Merino explains (2015: 146), “this ‘\n’ command simply tells the game engine to display the subsequent sentence in the line below, and it is important because it controls the position of text on the screen, directing the players’ attention to essential information”. Accordingly, example (35) is a three-line text: the first is “A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces”, the second is “but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers.” and “- John F. Kennedy” the third one, as in Figure 11 in Appendix A.

Going back to *Medal of Honor Warfighter* intertextuality, on the other hand, as regards the second quotation, although Stacey refers to a real-world woman, she is not a “public domain” person and the translation of her speech during her husband’s funeral is known only through the game. This seems to imply that translators are not constrained by a text which has been officially rendered into Italian and Spanish, as opposed to Kennedy’s speech. However, the transfer of this second long quotation, which is quite literal on the whole, seems to require specific skills to translators who must reproduce the same rhetoric as the original to be effective. In more details, some expressions must be read in the light of the mythical representation of US

Navy SEALs and, as such, the US culture values and beliefs related to the military role which are conveyed through the words used to refer to these soldiers must be transferred with the same emphasis. ‘Real life superheroes’, ‘defend’, ‘great nation’, ‘warrior’, ‘blessed with a higher sense of purpose’, ‘fate’, the dichotomy extraordinary-versus-ordinary man, ‘staring death in the face’, ‘final journey’, ‘brief but amazing lives’ are just a few of the loaded words and concepts Stacey uses to commemorate his husband and, with him, the entire US army. The use of this quotation at the end of the game seems to aim at testifying to MOHW developers’ deep reverence to these soldiers through the perspective of their wives, who represent the personal and private side of the tragedy which, needless to say, is related to the whole bereaved family. As the game executive producer Greg Goodrich reveals, MOHW team “had the privilege of spending a lot of time with these guys” and “get a real sense of the types of human beings these people are. They have the same sort of worries as you or me, paying bills, family. But then they flip that switch between who they are as humans and who they are as operators, and these superheroes go and do extraordinary things” (cit. in Campbell 2012: online). Accordingly, in order to reproduce the linguistic tribute, it is possible to speculate that translators had to resort to their rhetorical or literary writing skills, as in example (36). Visually, the player reads this second quotation as it appears in Figure 12 in Appendix A, which exemplifies the first part.

<p>3.(36) Real life super heroes exist; they walk among us every day, ready to defend \nour great nation and its citizens in a moment’s notice. They are husbands, \nfathers, brothers, and sons capable of staring death in the face, and still \ncome home to rock their newborn infant to sleep in the same day.</p>	<p>I supereroi esistono nella vita reale; camminano ogni giorno tra noi, pronti a difendere, da un momento all’altro, la nostra grande nazione e i suoi abitanti. Sono mariti, padri, fratelli e figli che nello stesso giorno sono capaci di fissare la morte negli occhi per poi tornare a casa a cullare il figlio appena nato.</p>	<p>Existen superhéroes en la vida real; todos los días se mueven entre nosotros, listos para defender a nuestra gran nación y a sus ciudadanos al instante. \nSon maridos, padres, hermanos e hijos capaces de mirar a la cara a la \nmuerte y aún así volver el mismo día a acunar a sus bebés recién nacidos hasta que se duermen.</p>
<p>This kind of warrior cannot be manufactured or</p>	<p>Questi guerrieri non possono essere fabbricati o</p>	<p>Esta clase de guerrero no se puede fabricar o comprar.</p>

purchased. They are born
\ninto this life, blessed
with a higher sense of
purpose, and the
understanding \nof exactly
what their fate may hold.
We chose to share this life
with them, \nbecause we
would rather love an
extraordinary man for a
brief moment, \nthan spend
a lifetime with a man far
more ordinary.

You can never be prepared
for certain events in life,
they change you, \nand
their consequences turn
your world upside down.
Meeting your husband's
\ncasket as he makes his
final journey home. The
prospect of raising your
\nchildren alone. Living
the rest of your days
without the one person that
loved \nyou
unconditionally and never
let you down. In truth,
these men never let
\nanyone down, which is
why they are no longer
here today.

acquistati. Vengono al
mondo così, animati da una
motivazione superiore e
dall'esatta comprensione di
ciò che gli riserverà il
destino. Decidiamo di
dividere la nostra vita con
loro, perché preferiamo
amare per breve tempo un
uomo straordinario,
piuttosto che trascorrere la
vita intera con un uomo
comune.

Nella vita non ci si può
preparare a certi eventi. Ci
cambiano e le \nloro
conseguenze mettono a
soqquadro il mondo.
Vedere la bara di nostro
marito \nche compie il suo
ultimo ritorno a casa. La
prospettiva di dover
crescere \nnei figli da sole.
Vivere il resto dei nostri
giorni senza la persona che
ci amava
\nincondizionatamente e
che non ci ha mai deluse. A
dire il vero, questi uomini
non \nhanno mai deluso
nessuno, ed è il motivo per
cui oggi non sono più tra
noi.

Nacen \npara esto, bendecidos
con un sentido más elevado de
su propósito, y el
conocimiento exacto de lo que
les puede deparar el destino.
\nElegimos compartir esta vida
con ellos, \nporque
preferiríamos amar a un
hombre extraordinario durante
\nun breve momento, a pasar
toda una vida con un hombre
mucho más ordinario.

En la vida, nunca puedes
prepararte para ciertos
acontecimientos, te cambian,
\ny sus consecuencias dan la
vuelta a tu mundo. Ver el
féretro de \ntu marido cuando
regresa por fin a su hogar. La
perspectiva de criar sola a
\ntus hijos. Vivir el resto de
tus días sin la única persona
que te amó
\nincondicionalmente. La
verdad es que estos hombres
nunca \nhan defraudado a
nadie, y es por eso por lo que
ya no están aquí hoy.

<p>These amazing warriors chose to spend their brief but amazing lives with us. \nWe raise their children. We honor and remember them, we live in the present, \nand we look to the future. They knew we would have the strength to carry on in \nthe face of tragedy, and to become stronger, more amazing versions of \nourselves. They knew we would never be defined by their passing, but inspired by \ntheir memory to live more fully and to make each moment we are given count. \n \n</p>	<p>Nella vita non ci si può preparare a certi eventi. Ci cambiano e le \nloro conseguenze mettono a soqquadro il mondo. Vedere la bara di nostro marito \nche compie il suo ultimo ritorno a casa. La prospettiva di dover crescere \ndei figli da sole. Vivere il resto dei nostri giorni senza la persona che ci amava \nincondizionatamente e che non ci ha mai deluse. A dire il vero, questi uomini non \nhanno mai deluso nessuno, ed è il motivo per cui oggi non sono più tra noi. \n \n</p>	<p>Estos asombrosos guerreros dedidieron pasar sus breves pero increíbles vidas con nosotros. Criamos a sus hijos. Los honramos y los recordamos, \nvivimos en el presente, y miramos hacia el futuro. Sabían que tendríamos la fuerza para continuar \nante la tragedia, y convertirnos en una versión más fuerte y asombrosa de \nnosotras mismas. Sabían que su fallecimiento nunca nos definiría, sino que inspiradas por su memoria, viviríamos con mayor plenitud y haríamos valer \ncada momento que se nos ha otorgado. \n \n</p>
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-Stacey

-Stacey

- Stacey

Although the ST of this second quotation contains many occurrences of the “\n” command, in both Italian and Spanish there are fewer occurrences, thus determining longer lines when displayed on screen. Moreover, as the example (36) above shows, the Italian version of MOHW does not contain the translation of the final part of the quotation. Thus, only three out of four sections appear on screen and this may be due to a bug or to mistakes made during text editing.

For the purposes of comprehensiveness, it seems worth mentioning that intertextuality in MOHW also concerns sound and, in particular, it includes a song of the game’s soundtrack resulting from the collaboration between Danger Close and the US rock band Linkin Park. As announced by Electronic Arts (2012: online) during marketing campaign, “Castle of Glass” serves as the “warrior-inspired” theme song. “Consistent with the dramatic themes and authentic action within the game”, the song “looks at the life of a soldier” and “elaborates on the many sacrifices they and their families make” (Electronic Arts 2012: online). Moreover,

“Castle of Glass” official video features “a unique mix of live action footage edited with gameplay recordings taken from Medal of Honor Warfighter” (Electronic Arts 2012: online), thus it is “based on a mutual relationship with the game, providing a summary of the story contained within the game” (Robinson 2016: 17). Although no mention is made in game texts, this song clearly exemplifies both a non-verbal intertextual reference to pop culture, namely US pop music, and the use of popular music in video games’ soundtracks.

Chapter 4

Battlefield 4

4.1 Introduction

As presented on Electronic Arts Website (online), *Battlefield 4* (2013) (BF4 hereafter) “is the genre-defining action blockbuster made from moments that blur the line between game and glory” to provide players with “a visceral, dramatic experience” and immerse them “in the glorious chaos of all-out war”. “Conflicts are exciting, tense and [...] diverse”: they include both “breakneck infantry fighting and explosive vehicular warfare”, with a variety of “weapons, gadgets and upgrades tailored to create a wealth of combat roles” (Watters 2013: online). Vehicles range from land to sea and air means, such as tanks, attack boats, fighter jets and helicopters and the weapon roster is very varied and realistic, it includes real assault rifles, carbines, submachine guns, shotguns and sniper rifles.

The BF4 single-player campaign requires players to accomplish seven missions, which are titled after the geographical setting where they take place, namely (1) “Baku” in Azerbaijan, (2) “Shanghai” and (3) “South China Sea” in China, (4) “Singapore” set in the namesake City-State of Singapore, (5) “Kunlun Mountains” in the southern central Asia mountain system of the same name, (6) “Kashgar” in China, and (7) “Suez” in Egypt.

In this light, it comes as no surprise that, as regards realism, the stress is not placed on story or events, as in *Medal of Honor Warfighter*, but on an “unrivaled audio and visual fidelity” which makes the “game more human, dramatic, and believable” (*Electronic Arts Website*: online). “Battlefield 4 has all the necessary components for a good, story-driven shooter campaign” (Gies 2013: online) in a visually and sonically intense first-person shooter (Lahti 2013: online).

As Dyer (2013: online) outlines, BF4 single-player campaign presents the common features of the game genre: tank mission, boat mission, stealth mission, jailbreak, sewers, sudden but inevitable betrayal, evil and cruel Others (Russians and Chinese), defying orders, and, of course, a torture sequence. To some, this may be viewed as a collection of its genre clichés (Gies 2013: online). To others, although “the Battlefield series has built its reputation on memorable moments”, “Battlefield 4 wants you [...] [the player] to experience even more

thrilling, more epic moments than ever before with a beefed-up single-player story” (Hartup 2013: online).

As a representational medium, BF4 theme is an approaching world war the player must prevent. In 2020, six years after the events of *Battlefield 3* (2011), the global military situation is more fragile than ever as the world teeters on the brink of not just another Cold War, but an all-out conflict between the USA and Russia. While tensions run high between the two superpowers, China is thrown into a state of turmoil as power-hungry General Chang ignites a military coup which could see the Chinese government overthrown, and their mighty army standing shoulder to shoulder with Russia in the global conflict. In sum, as Schulzke (2014: online) explains, *Battlefield 4* is an example of those video games which “are not set in or based on real conflicts” but which “tend to create new conflicts that involve real political actors and that mirror existing international tensions” which, one might add, may raise cultural issues.

These and other simulated conflicts reflect and reinforce conceptions of hostility and risk. They participate in the persistent analysis of risk scenarios and of potential future threats, which takes place throughout popular culture, in news media, and in government. Moreover, because video games consistently strive to create more dramatic conflicts, they take part in the construction of risks and threats by intensifying both.

(Schulzke 2014: online)

Players are in the shoes of a US Marine, namely sergeant Daniel “Reck” Recker, leading an elite team of militarily skilled commandos to infiltrate highly sensitive areas throughout the world, secure VIP personnel and vital intelligence, and do whatever it is necessary to stop a global-scale conflict which threatens world stability (Lahti 2013: online, Whitehead 2013: online). In this light, BF4 representation of war may be read as “the same Americans-versus-communists plot [...] we’ve played plenty of in the past few years” (Lahti 2013: online).

In particular, the game’s narrative takes aim at the Chinese communists: as Tassi explains (2013: online), “Battlefield 4’s central plot revolves around a coup in China that throws them and their Russian allies into a war with the US. You, the American hero, fight against [...] the Chinese army itself. The result? A lot of dead Chinese soldiers.” Although “the lone figure meant to be able to work out peace between all sides is also Chinese, and you’re tasked with his protection throughout the game”, China is overwhelmingly “painted as the bad guy” (Tassi

2013: online). This is the reason why the Chinese Ministry of Culture not only banned *Battlefield 4*, a game viewed as a “cultural invasion that smears China’s image” (Tassi 2013: online), but also “issued a notice prohibiting use of all materials pertaining to the game, including game downloads, demos, patches, and news reports. The name of the game itself, ‘ZhanDi4’ in Chinese, has been added to the vast lexicon of censored words on China’s largest social media site, Weibo” (Tassi 2013: online). Although *Battlefield 4* was not officially released in China, such a backlash is an example of the Chinese government control and censorship on gaming (see Wirman 2016: 306), which also includes illegal game copying and downloading.

Such controversies are not really new to DICE’s *Battlefield* series. In 2011, *Battlefield 3* was declared illegal and subsequently banned in Iran due to a fictionalized US assault on Iran’s capital Tehran (Winchester 2011: online). Although the game was never officially released in Iran, shops used to sell pirated copies of the game, thus causing police raiding shops and arresting owners (Winchester 2011: online). An online petition against the title was also presented by a group of “Iranian youths” who believed that the game was “purposely released at a time when the US is pushing the international community into fearing Iran” (Winchester 2011: online).

More relevantly for this study, the above mentioned controversies exemplify the consequences the close relationship between reality and fictionality may lead to or, more specifically, they show how verisimilar representation may be considered offensive even if completely fictional. In terms of “contextual proximity” (Edwards 2012: 29), BF4 story mimics real-world political scenarios which closely approach a plausible war context featuring real-world peoples, places, time and form, thus increasing the potential for cultural sensitivity.

4.2 Synopsis

The following paragraphs summarize the main events of BF4 backstory and story, namely the seven single-player campaign missions, with special attention to the ones played by the gamer during the sections analyzed of the walkthrough selected, in order to briefly outline the game’s narrative.

The game prologue opens in Baku, Azerbaijan, where the four members of the special operations squad call-signed “Tombstone”, namely Staff Sergeant and team leader William Dunn, Staff Sergeant Kimble “Irish” Graves, Sergeant Clayton “Pac” Pakowski and Sergeant

Daniel “Reck” Recker, the latter being the only playable character throughout the game, try to exit the sinking car they are trapped in underwater. In the meanwhile, Bonnie Tyler’s “Total Eclipse of the Heart”, whose intertextual nature will be discussed in Section 4.4.4, plays in the background, as if they were listening to the radio.

In order to make an exit from the submerged car, Dunn orders Recker to shoot the vehicle windshield whose burst unfolds a flashback of the events taking place thirteen minutes and forty seconds earlier, thus the reasons of the accident become clear.

The first mission titled “Baku” begins and Tombstone squad escapes from Baku with intel on Chinese Admiral Chang Wei’s political relations with the Russians. The time setting is twelve days before the outbreak of the war of 2020 between the USA, the People’s Republic of China, and the Russian Federation. This level opens with Recker who makes his way through a safe house while avoiding to be spotted by Russian soldiers. Then, he enters a room where he finally reaches Pac and Dunn who contact Irish via radio and learn he is still being pursued and needs cover fire to retreat. This is the first shooting session of the game. Once Irish has reached them, in order to go to the extraction point, they all fight their way out of the building by finally blowing a dead-end wall. They firefight enemies through an abandoned industrial site, the roof of a building is their extraction point and the Tombstone helicopter, piloted by Hawkins whose call sign is “Firebird 2-1”, is waiting for them while providing air support to their ground warfare. When they enter the factory and go to the roof, a Russian helicopter starts attacking them. Hawkins loses control of her aircraft which crashes to the ground and causes the death of the whole crew aboard. The strike destroys the top floor of the factory which collapses shortly afterwards. The four Tombstone members are buried under the rubble.

Recker awakes to Irish digging him up while Pac tries to get Dunn away from the wreckage but one of his leg is stuck and Dunn orders Recker to amputate it. On board of a civilian’s car, whose radio plays Bonnie Tyler’s “Total Eclipse of the Heart”, they try to drive to the secondary extraction point thanks to the indications provided via radio by Captain Garrison, call-signed “Fortress”. However, Russians continue pursuing them and fire at the car. In order to destroy the enemies, Recker shoots at their helicopter which crashes in front of them thus forcing Tombstone to veer to avoid it and finally fall into the Caspian Sea.

While Tombstone’s car is sinking, a conversation between captain Garrison and “Oracle”, probably his superior’s call sign, can be heard and regards the intelligence recovered by the squad in Baku: The Russians back Admiral Chang Wei military coup in China. This is why the

US Navy assault ship USS Valkyrie steams towards Shanghai, where the second game mission takes place and Recker becomes the leader of the team after Dunn's death.

The game's third mission, titled "South China Sea" requires Tombstone squad members, namely Irish, Pac and Recker, under the command of CIA agent Laszlo Kovic, to go to recover the voyage recorder of the US Navy aircraft carrier USS Titan, which has been heavily attacked and risks sinking. The four soldiers enter the ship through a hole opened by Chinese anti-ship missile and make their way to the damage-control central. While advancing further, they find some survivors stuck under the floor in dangerously rising water but, unfortunately, they cannot rescue them. The team finally reaches the room and Recker retrieves the voyage recorder but Chinese troops patrolling the ship spot Tombstone and engage in intense combat. Shortly after, the USS Titan breaks in half and part of it sinks into the ocean. Tombstone continues combating enemies and once cleared the area, they jump into a boat to come back to the USS Valkyrie, fighting off enemy patrol boats and helicopters along the way. As soon as they enter the cargo bay, they find Chinese soldiers invading the ship thus engaging the team in fierce firefight. They must go to the command bridge to find captain Garrison and the two Chinese VIPs they rescued in Shanghai during the game second mission but the Valkyrie is full of enemies to eliminate. Tombstone and agent Kovic arrive at the medical bay and see Hannah, one of the two Chinese VIPs, in hand-to-hand combat with Chinese soldiers and this makes Irish start doubting her real identity. Once they reach the stern, they find waves of Chinese soldiers ready to defend the area. One of their helicopters strafes agent Kovic and severely injures him. Before he dies, Kovic gives Irish the USS Titan voyage recorder and orders Recker to assume the command. After leaving Kovic behind, Tombstone squad members go to the command bridge, they clear it and free captain Garrison.

After allowing the USS Valkyrie to destroy Singapore's Changi Airport, in order to prevent Admiral Chang's forces from using it to launch air strikes against the remaining US Naval fleet based in the South China Sea, at the end of the fourth game level, Pac, Irish and Recker are captured by Chinese soldiers and an apparently traitorous Hannah.

In the fifth mission of BF4, titled "Kunlun Mountains", Irish and Recker are imprisoned and tortured in the mountainous region of Northern Tibet, and they are interrogated by Admiral Chang and his man Bohai about Tombstone's covert operation in Shanghai.

The next sequence shows Recker locked in a cell and later awakened by his cell mate, Dimitri "Dima" Mayakovsky, a Russian GRU agent who has been imprisoned for six years for

being falsely implicated in the Paris nuclear bombing in *Battlefield 3* (2011). Dima convinces Recker to escape together from the prison. The two climb out up numerous pipes running through the facility and stealthily kill the guards. Then, they reach the guard tower and unlock all cells causing a riot which may allow them to leave the building. As Dima and Recker advance towards the exit, they find Irish being attacked by a guard. Recker shoots at him and frees his teammate who can join the duo's escape. Pac is still missing. The three then make their way through the facility warehouse where they firefight dozens of Chinese guards to finally reach the gate and discover it is closed. Dima goes to the control room to unlock the gate while Recker and Irish cover him from incoming Chinese helicopters' attacks. Once opened the doors, they are met by Hannah and Bohai who capture them.

In the following scene, it seems that the group is about to be executed but suddenly Hannah kills Bohai and reveals she is a Chinese secret service agent in charge of protecting Jin Jié from Admiral Chang. Jin Jié is the other VIP Tombstone rescued in Shanghai under the false identity of Hannah's husband. Actually, he was to be the future leader and voice for peace in China whose supposed assassination allowed Admiral Chang's *coup d'état* which imposed martial law, cancelled the elections and made war escalate. Thanks to Hannah's work, Jin Jié is alive and aboard the USS Valkyrie under the protection of the USA.

Recker, Irish, Hannah and Dima finally exit the prison and engage in intense combat with the Chinese military. They manage to cross a bridge and reach a cable car but enemy helicopters continue attacking them and the car collapses down the mountain causing Dima's death.

In exchange for assisting a U.S military reconnaissance team to blow a dam and flood the area in order to destroy Russian anti-aircraft positions in the Western Chinese city of Kashgar, Tombstone is safely taken back to the USS Valkyrie which is under siege by both Russian and Chinese hostile forces. This is the final mission of the game single-player campaign, titled "Suez", and it involves saving the Valkyrie and destroying Admiral Chang's warship.

Once landed on the deck, Irish, Hannah and Recker start facing resistance and fight swarms of enemies. Then, after clearing the deck, they enter the ship and encounter Pac who leads them to the medical bay to meet captain Garrison and Jin Jié, while killing any hostile forces along the way.

Chinese soldiers push against the medical bay door. Jin Jié convinces captain Garrison and Tombstone to allow them to enter, he thinks that "his brothers" will lay down their arms when they see he is still alive. Recker complies to Jin Jié's wish and opens the door. As the

soldiers get in, the Chinese political leader speaks to them and then reveals his identity, successfully ceasing any hostilities. Suddenly, Admiral Chang's warship launches an attack on the Valkyrie and Tombstone decides to strike it once and for all. Irish and Hannah devise a plan to plant C4 charges on the enemy warship and completely destroy it. Once Garrison has approved their plan, Recker, Irish and Hannah leave the Valkyrie aboard of a patrol boat and head towards Chang's warship in order to plant the charge on the warship blind spot. Unfortunately, the remote detonation does not work thus forcing either Hannah or Irish to sacrifice themselves and manually plant more charges. This decision is up to the player, who can either give the C4 to one of his two teammates, thus destroying Admiral Chang and his warship or refuse to give the charge to Hannah or Irish, thus saving both of them but letting the Valkyrie be wiped out, thus killing Captain Garrison, Jin Jié and Pac.

However, during the credits, a new brief dialogue between Irish and Hannah can be heard, implying that both of them may have survived.

In the walkthrough analyzed, the player has explored the three possible endings: first, he does not give the charge to any of his two teammates; second, he gives it to Irish; finally, he gives it to Hannah. More relevantly, some dialogue lines vary accordingly. In order to show the player's influence on the game storyline, this part of the walkthrough contains the three alternate branching story paths, respectively titled (1) "Valkyries' gone", (2) "Choose Irish", (3) "Choose Hannah" as exemplified in Table 13 in Appendix B.

4.3 Irrealia

Battlefield 4 game world is a fictional world whose relationship with the real world is remarkable, as demonstrated by many game elements such as human characters belonging to existing cultures, real world locations, real world time, the verisimilar, yet clichéd, American-versus-communists war simulated, real world artefacts, etc. Nevertheless, some of BF4 game world elements, yet in the image of the world we know, are essential components of this textual world. In this light, the paragraphs below deal with the translation of BF4 irrealia, such as: individual references concerning characters' names and call signs (4.3.1), collective references to the main squad (4.3.2), artefactual references (4.3.3) and intratextual metaludic references (4.3.4).

4.3.1 Individual references

In order to study the translation of *Battlefield 4* characters' names, under the macro-categories of playable (4.3.1.1) and non-playable characters (4.3.1.2), a simple operative classification has been made according to the role NPCs play, namely helpers, i.e. Tombstone squad members, villains and other characters, the latter include characters who serve the more generic US Armed Forces, other minor characters and the so-called extras whose appellation is not a proper name. Table 8 in Appendix B shows the number of occurrences of each character's name in both the game database source text and the corpus and Figure 13 in Appendix B illustrates the translation strategies used, which are then discussed in the single related paragraphs. For the purposes of this analysis, two clarifications are necessary. On the one hand, out of a total of 26 actors constituting BF4 cast, 21 characters' names occur in the corpus but only 9 of them are explored in more details. Their in-depth discussion is due to the relevance of their narrative roles and/or of their names from a linguistic and translational point of view. On the other hand, it seems worth underlining that the number of occurrences of BF4 characters' names is influenced by the fact that they are used as name labels to identify speakers in subtitles, written in capital letters placed on the same line as the relevant speech, as examples of dialogue strings throughout the following sections demonstrate. Since this is a characteristic of the game's dialogues, which seem to favor comprehension and accessibility for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing players, the occurrences of characters' names used as label have been included in the analysis.

4.3.1.1 Playable character

Daniel "Reck" Recker is the only playable character in the single-player campaign of *Battlefield 4*. He is a United States Marine Corps' special operative, a sergeant of Tombstone squad and its leader after William Dunn's death in the car accident in Baku at the end of the game prologue. Recker is the soldier featured on BF4 box cover and, given the game's first-person perspective, the player never sees how Recker looks like in-game. Similarly, since he never speaks during the campaign, not even during cut-scenes, his voice is unknown. Moreover, quite unexpectedly if we consider Recker's primary part as the player's avatar, he does not play a fundamental role in game dialogues, being addressed or referred to by non-playable characters in only 572 instances in the whole database and 70 in the corpus, out of which 126 and 11 occurrences represent his nickname or, better said, his surname abbreviation 'Reck' in the game database and in the corpus respectively. Indeed, as Table 8 in Appendix B shows, Recker

presents a small number of occurrences as compared to those of other non-playable characters and this seems to depend on the fact that his name is not used as speaker identifier in subtitles, thus unbalancing quantitative results. As regards the transfer of his surname and nickname, retention is the translation strategy in both Italian and Spanish. However, the Italian localization presents two instances of omission as in examples (1) and (2), one instance of abbreviation as in example (3), while in Spanish the possibility of using ‘Recker’ and ‘Reck’ interchangeably turns out to be a tendency to expand the nickname into the surname as in example (4). Moreover, in both TLs, there are three instances of explicitation by means of addition, as in example (5).

4.(1)	KOVIC: Recker , we should go on!	KOVIC: Ø Andiamo avanti!	KOVIC: ¡ Recker , hay que seguir!
4.(2)	GARRISON: Sergeant Recker , I want a debrief in fifteen minutes. Tombstone’s yours.	GARRISON: Sergente Ø, voglio un rapporto tra 15 minuti. Tombstone è tua.	GARRISON: Sargento Recker , quiero un informe en quince minutos. Tombstone es vuestra.
4.(3)	IRISH: Motherfucker! Drive this shit, Recker !	IRISH: Porca troia! Muovi questa merda, Reck !	IRISH: ¡Hijo de perra! ¡Controla esto, joder, Recker !
4.(4)	PAC: You with me Reck . Synchronized attack. Open the door.	PAC: Stai con me, Reck . Attacco sincronizzato. Apriamo la porta.	PAC: Conmigo, Recker . Ataque sincronizado. Abre la puerta.
4.(5)	HANNAH: Ø When the detonator goes green, you push the button!	HANNAH: Recker , quando il detonatore diventa verde, premi il pulsante!	HANNAH: Recker , cuando el detonador se ponga verde, ¡pulsa el botón!

4.3.1.2 Non-playable characters

As already mentioned, most of non-playable characters (NPCs) who play the role of helpers belong to Tombstone Squad which includes permanent members, namely US marines like Irish, Pac and Dunn, and temporary non-US characters like Hannah, Kovic and Dima.

Staff Sergeant Kimble “Irish” Graves is a US Marine Corps’ special operative and a long-time member of Tombstone squad. He is an African American soldier whose nature is harsh and distrustful and whose language is often rude and offensive. However, he is a very emotionally-driven character who always worries about the others, especially his teammates. Irish is, along with Hannah, the character the player can choose for the very last suicide mission, i.e. plant a charge and blow Admiral Chang’s warship. In game dialogues, as testified to by the number of his nickname occurrences in Table 8 of Appendix B, Irish plays a very important role as both speaker and listener, being present and very talkative throughout the campaign.

As compared to the other characters, Irish is the only one whose nickname is not the surname abbreviation and, as such, it seems to have a hidden meaning: they call him Irish because he is lucky, as he reminds Hannah in order to convince her to let him plant the charge and destroy Admiral Chang’s warship at the end of the game, as in example (6). Thus, a popular belief about the legendary luck of Irish people, with national good-luck symbols such as the shamrock or the leprechaun and the traditional saying “the luck of the Irish” meaning “extraordinarily good fortune” (Ammer 2013: 280), provides the basis for this character’s nickname which is retained in both Italian and Spanish. Although a direct translation would be possible, translators maintained ‘Irish’ unaltered in order to be consistent with the game-world terminology in all instances except for one omission in Italian as in example (7) and one explicitation by means of addition in Spanish, as in example (8).

- | | | | |
|-------|---|---|--|
| 4.(6) | IRISH: You are not risking your life, Hannah. I’m Irish , remember?\nThe lucky one. | IRISH: Non rischierai la tua vita, Hannah. Sono Irish , ricordi?\nQuello fortunato. | IRISH: No vas a arriesgar tu vida, Hannah. Soy Irish , ¿recuerdas?\nEl de la suerte. |
| 4.(7) | GARRISON: You can’t be serious, Irish ? | GARRISON: Ma state dicendo sul serio? | GARRISON: No puedes hablar en serio, Irish . |
| 4.(8) | HANNAH: You gonna be okay? | HANNAH: Va tutto bene? | HANNAH: ¿Estás bien, Irish ? |

Sergeant Clayton “Pac” Pakowski is a US Marine Corps’ special operative who serves as member of Tombstone squad. As his surname suggests, he is probably of Polish origins. Pac is the combat lifesaver for the team although, as he explains to Irish when the latter asks his help to reawaken Dunn who fainted after amputation in the game prologue, he only took a three-hour medical course. Pac is, together with Irish, a very important character in game dialogues, as Table 8 in Appendix B clearly shows. In game texts, he is mostly addressed and referred to as ‘Pac’, his surname abbreviation, and this short form is left unaltered in both target languages. His name has no occurrences while his full surname appears only once in both the database and the walkthrough analyzed, when Pac is addressed to as ‘sergeant Pakowski’ by a marine on the USS Valkyrie. As shown in example (9), while ‘Pakowski’ is retained in Spanish, it is inexplicably omitted in Italian and this makes the addressee unclear because most characters present in the scene are sergeants. This military rank is translated into the two target languages’ official equivalents.

4.(9)	MARINE: Sergeant Pakowski . What about the refugees?	MARINE: Sergente Ø, che facciamo coi rifugiati?	MARINE: Sargento Pakowski . ¿Y los refugiados?
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Huang “Hannah” Shuyi is a Chinese secret service agent whose mission is to protect the Chinese pacifist and future political leader Jin Jié, whose safety is threatened by Admiral Chang’s thirst for power. She makes her first in-game appearance in Shanghai at the Zhi Yu Towers, where she plays the role of one of the VIPs Tombstone squad must save, along with her presumed husband Jin Jié. Then, when her real identity is disclosed, she joins Tombstone soldiers and enters the battlefield to eventually go missing in action if the player chooses her to destroy Admiral Chang’s warship. Hannah is an idealist, patriotic and brave woman who feels the burden of saving his country from dictatorship so that her family’s death and her village destruction are not vain.

In game dialogues, Hannah is mostly addressed and referred to by her Western name, which is left unaltered in both Italian and Spanish. There are only two occurrences of her real Chinese name ‘Huang’ in the whole database and only one occurs is in the walkthrough analyzed. As exemplified in (10), it is used by Jin Jié when the two meet again on the USS Valkyrie at the beginning of the game final mission and, as regards its transfer, retention is the strategy used.

4.(10) JIN JIÉ: **Huang.**

JIN JIÉ: **Huang...**

JIN JIÉ: **Huang...**

Laszlo Kovic is a CIA agent who is in charge of protecting Jin Jié together with Hannah until they are all rescued by Tombstone squad in Shanghai. Later, Kovic joins the team and temporarily leads it until he is eventually killed in action while fighting Chinese enemies on the USS Valkyrie. In game dialogues, Kovic is always addressed and referred to by his surname, which is transferred by means of retention in both Italian and Spanish.

As regards this character's surname, it seems worth mentioning a wordplay made by Irish, a joke which also exemplifies the latter's vulgar humor. At the beginning of the "South China Sea" level, Kovic, Irish, Pac and Recker are aboard of a RHIB (Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat) headed towards the USS Titan to recover its voyage recorder. After recapitulating the mission objectives, Kovic says "You're here to do a job and I'm calling the fucking shots. Okay?!". As in example (11), Irish rebelliously replies "Yes, sir Agent Kobitch", the latter is a blend formed by merging the first two letters of Kovic's surname 'Ko' and the offensive expression 'bitch'. Interestingly, in Italian this wordplay is perfectly rendered into *Cogliovic*, which is also a blend merging the first part of the Italian offensive expression *coglione* [asshole] and the final part of 'Kovic'. On the contrary, in Spanish this wordplay is lost because retention does not allow players to understand the joke, thus simply suggesting a misspelling.

4.(11) IRISH: Yes, sir Agent
Kobitch.

IRISH: Sissignore, agente
Cogliovic.

IRISH: Sí, señor,
agente **Kobitch.**

Staff Sergeant William Dunn is a US Marine Corps' special operative and leader of Tombstone team until he sacrifices himself in Baku; he is present only in the game first mission. According to the series' wiki (*Battlefield Wiki*: online), Dunn's appearance and surname, as shown in Figure 14 in Appendix B, are inspired by Michael Dunne, the main character of director and actor Paul Gross' war film "Passchendaele" (2008). Very little is known about this character: Dunn has been serving the military for a long time together with Recker and Irish and, as Dunn himself says when escaping from Azerbaijani forces in Baku, he has a wife. As for most of BF4 characters, Dunn is addressed and referred to by his surname, which is retained in both Italian and Spanish, with only one instance of omission in Spanish, as in example (12).

4.(12) IRISH: Shit! We'll get you out of here, Dunn . You hear me?	IRISH: Cazzo! Ti tireremo fuori, Dunn . Capito?	IRISH: ¡Mierda! Te sacaremos de aquí Ø. ¿Me oyes?
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Dimitri “Dima” Mayakovsky is a Russian GRU agent who has been imprisoned in the same facility as Recker and Irish somewhere in the mountainous region of Northern Tibet, for being falsely implicated in the Paris nuclear bombing of 2014 in *Battlefield 3* (2011). Moreover, as a result of the nuclear explosion, Dima shows the symptoms of radiation poisoning, such as peeling skin. Dima is Recker’s cell mate with whom he escapes from prison during mission “Kunlun Mountains”, at the end of which Dima dies under Chinese fire, thus joining Tombstone squad only temporarily. He is also the only character whose nationality and culture are expressed through language, which will be discussed in Section 4.4.2.

As regards his role in dialogues, Dima is mostly addressed and referred to by his nickname, which is transferred as such in both Italian and Spanish. This character also presents another name which is used with reference to Dima’s Russian nationality, namely ‘Ivan’, with three occurrences in the whole database and one in the walkthrough analyzed. Interestingly, since this is not a proper name belonging to the game-world, translators are not constrained by BF4 terminology. Therefore, they can either retain the name, running the risk of losing the reference since the player may think that Ivan is simply Dima’s second name, or deviate from the source text and substitute it with another name which may sound even more Russian-flavored to the target audience. As shown in example (13), the two possibilities are exemplified by Italian and Spanish translators’ behavior respectively. In particular, the Spanish solution seems to be worth praising: the (beef) stroganoff is one of the most popular Russian dishes and the Stroganoff are a well-known and influential Russian family. Irrespective of which of the two the translator refers to, this name is definitely culture-specific and the creativity in the strategy used, interpreted as an instance of transcreation, successfully renders the humor behind this name. Lastly, for the purposes of comprehensiveness, it seems worth mentioning that the other two occurrences of Ivan, which do not appear in the walkthrough analyzed, are both in the plural and translated into *russi* in Italian and *ruskis* or *rusos* in Spanish.

4.(13) IRISH: Whatever you say, IRISH: Va bene, **Ivan**. IRISH: Tú mandas, **Stroganoff**.
Ivan.

The main non-playable character playing the role of the villain in BF4 single-player campaign is Admiral Chang Wei, the leader of the People’s Liberation Army, who plans to overthrow the current Chinese government and establish a military dictatorship. He is a cruel and very ambitious man whose climb to power must be stopped in order to avert a global war. Despite being mentioned quite often during the campaign, he is only seen twice: during his televised speech about Jin Jié’s assassination, projected on the Zhi Yu Tower TV screen façade in Shanghai, and while interrogating Recker and Irish at the beginning of the fifth mission titled “Kunlun Mountains”.

In game dialogues, he is referred to as ‘Admiral Chang’ or simply ‘Chang’ and while his military rank is directly translated into *ammiraglio* and *almirante* in Italian and Spanish respectively, ‘Chang’ is retained in both target texts. As quantitative results in Table 8 of Appendix B show, the two localizations contain one extra occurrence each of this character’s name. As in example (14), ‘Chang’ appears in a sentence which does not exist in the source text, as if it were added during the localization process without modifying the English version. Indeed, this text string is labelled as “LT modified”, with LT standing for “language text” in the “Status Name” column of the spreadsheet, i.e. the game database. Therefore, it is possible to speculate that translators were told to add a sentence to the string whose original version was not updated.

4.(14) MARINE: Command bridge fell silent ten minutes ago.	MARINE: Il ponte di comando non dà segnali da 10 minuti. Le forze di Chang avranno tagliato le linee.	MARINE: El puente de mando lleva diez minutos en silencio. La gente de Chang habrá cortado los cables.
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The largest group of minor characters whose names occur in BF4 corpus include members of the US Armed Forces who are addressed and referred to by their surnames and call signs: USS Valkyrie captain Roland Garrison, codenamed “Fortress”; three US Marine Corps’ operatives and helicopter pilots of Tombstone squad, namely “Hawkins”, codenamed “Firebird”, “Anvil 2”, and “Bloodhound”; “Gatekeeper” which is the call sign of another character participating in radio conversations; “Oracle” which is the call sign of captain Garrison’s superior.

All the above-mentioned characters' names, be they proper names, codenames or call signs, are transferred by means of retention in both Italian and Spanish. Within the relationship between the real world and the game world, it seems relevant to briefly mention that, according to the series' Wiki (*Battlefield Wiki*: online), captain Garrison's personality and appearance matches his namesake in Ridley Scott's movie "Black Hawk Down" (2001), portrayed by actor Sam Shepard, as shown in Figure 15 in Appendix B.

Another narratively relevant minor character is Jin Jié, the Chinese future democratic leader, member of the People's Republic of China single party. He is a liberalizing and progressive politician who advocates transparency, fairness and freedom of speech and whose charisma makes him widely regarded as the right candidate for leadership. After surviving the assassination attempt made by Admiral Chang, by using a false identity Jin Jié managed to avoid Chinese and Russian forces and was eventually rescued and taken to safety by Tombstone squad on the USS Valkyrie. In game dialogues, he is addressed and referred to by his name and surname, which are retained in both target languages. However, as Table 8 in Appendix B shows, like Chang, the Italian and Spanish localizations contain one extra occurrence each resulting from explicitation. As in example (15), 'everyone' becomes "Jin Jié and the others" in the target texts, thus making clearer Hannah's reference to the people on the USS Valkyrie while providing another example of her devotion to the political leader. Like the string containing 'Chang' extra occurrence, this one is also labelled as "LT modified", which confirms the hypothesis that texts may be edited during localization.

4.(15) HANNAH: Everyone on that ship is dying as we argue. Give me the charge, Recker.	HANNAH: Jin Jié e gli altri a bordo di quella nave stanno morendo mentre noi parliamo. Dammi la carica, Recker.	HANNAH: Jin Jié y los del barco morirán mientras discutimos. Dame el explosivo, Recker.
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In conclusion, as regards individual references, it seems pertinent to mention that throughout the game there some extra characters who play very minor roles and, more importantly, who are not identified by their names, nicknames or call signs. The subtitles of the dialogues they are involved in display their role or function, such as 'marine' (six occurrences as speaker identifier out of a total of fourteen), 'sailor' (seven occurrences), 'doctor' (two occurrences), 'jump master' (six occurrences), 'officer' (two occurrences) and 'driver' (one occurrence). Nothing is known about these extra characters and their identifier is transferred by means of

direct translation in all cases except for ‘marine’, which is properly retained in both target languages and which is discussed as a sociopolitical reference in Section 4.4.3. As regards ‘doctor’, in particular, since this is a female character, it is worth underlining that Spanish translators take into account her gender and translate it into a feminine form while in Italian *dottore* is masculine. Since the feminine counterpart *dottoressa* exists and is regularly used, translators’ choice seems to be unjustified.

4.3.2 Collective references

As already discussed, *Battlefield 4* main actors are US marines who form Tombstone squad, a special operations unit which is tasked with preventing World War Three. In game texts, ‘Tombstone’ refers both to the whole group and to its single soldiers, who use the team call signs in radio conversations, namely ‘Tombstone’ plus a number or the adjective ‘actual’ when leading the squad. In more details, Dunn is ‘Tombstone actual’ in Baku, Recker is ‘Tombstone two’ in Baku and ‘Tombstone actual’ from the second mission on but, since he is never a speaker character in game dialogues, these call signs do not appear in game texts, while Irish and Pac are always ‘Tombstone three’ and ‘Tombstone four’ respectively but, as Table 9 in Appendix B shows, Pac never uses his call sign in the walkthrough analyzed.

Regardless of the reference, either the whole team or one single call sign, the team name ‘Tombstone’ is transferred by means of retention in both target languages in all instances, as in Figure 16 in Appendix B. As regards ‘actual’, in Spanish this adjective, placed after the name, is always translated into *Oficial* [official, officer] with a capital letter and is placed both before and after the name. In Italian, ‘actual’ is rendered into *caposquadra* [squad leader] (five occurrences) whereas it is omitted on two occasions. Since ‘actual’ means “the [Marine] unit commander”, according to the Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH 1996: online), the equivalent term *caposquadra* seems to be a very good solution to allow players to understand the meaning of this call sign in military language. On the contrary, if omitted, the formulaic patterns of radio communication, which require soldiers to identify themselves and their listener immediately, are not reproduced. In example (16), it is Tombstone actual speaking, namely Dunn, and Tombstone three, namely Irish, is the addressee. In example (17), it is Irish replying to Tombstone actual and even if the conversation is clear, the omission of Dunn’s call sign makes the exchange less military-like.

4.(16)	DUNN: I'm breaking radio silence. Tombstone three, Tombstone actual , what's your 20?	DUNN: Rompo il silenzio radio. Tombstone 3, Ø posizione?	DUNN: Voy a encender la radio. Tombstone tres, Tombstone Oficial , ¿dónde estás?
4.(17)	IRISH: Tombstone actual , inbound from the north. Coming in hot!	IRISH: Ø In arrivo da nord. Siamo nella merda!	IRISH: Tombstone Oficial , llegan desde el norte. ¡Son muchos!

Example (16) contains a typical military expression used in radio conversation, namely '20', a brevity code which means 'position' and is discussed in Chapter 6. Finally, as regards Tombstone three, while Spanish translators maintain the number in letters, Italian ones prefer the number, as in examples (16) and (18). The same strategy was applied to the transfer of the task forces' call signs in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* (see Section 3.3.2).

4.(18)	IRISH: Fortress, this is Tombstone three . We're close to our target point. Over.	IRISH: Fortress, qui Tombstone 3. Siamo vicini all'obiettivo. Passo.	IRISH: Fortress, aquí Tombstone tres . Estamos cerca de nuestro objetivo. Cambio.
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4.3.3 Artefactual references

Most artefacts in BF4 world are real world objects which, in game texts, mostly refer to warfare and belong to military language (Chapter 6). However, there is a category of artefactual references, namely vehicles, shown in Table 10 in Appendix B, which distinguishes themselves as *irrealia*, although their design is inspired by real world models. In more details, special attention must be paid to the two fictional ships which play a fundamental role in the game story: the US Navy amphibious assault ship named USS Valkyrie, which serves as a home base for Tombstone squad, and the US Navy aircraft carrier named USS Titan, mostly referred to simply as '(the) Valkyrie' and '(the) Titan'. 'USS' is indeed an acronym standing for United States Ship and it is often omitted.

In terms of design and realism, it is worth mentioning that according to series' Wiki (*Battlefield Wiki*: online), the Valkyrie's appearance and layout are based on the real Wasp-class ship, the USS Essex and they also share the same hull number, LHD-2. Furthermore, the USS Titan's name may be a reference to the airborne carriers featured in *Battlefield 2142* (2006)

or a hint to the Carrier Assault game mode (*Battlefield Wiki*: online) and, since the Titan breaks in half before sinking at the end of the “South China Sea” mission, this could also be a reference to the well-known British cruise ship RMS Titanic, which sank in the North Atlantic Ocean in the early morning of April 15, 1912.

As regards these names, it goes without saying that, *nomen omen*, they perform a suggestive function. ‘Valkyrie’ refers to the Norse myth of beautiful and forceful maidens who serve godly Odin and ride over battlefields to claim the dead heroes and take them to Valhalla, the underworld. ‘Titan’ refers to the Greek mythological sons of Uranus (sky) and Gaea (earth), known for their superhuman size and strength. As part of the world culture heritage, both names have got national versions, presenting orthographic variations, namely *Valchiria* and *Titano* in Italian and *Valquiria* or *Valkiria* and *Titán* in Spanish.

Nevertheless, as illustrated in Figure 17 of Appendix B, translators opted for a foreignizing approach in both target languages and retained the proper names in the source English version, including, when present, the acronym ‘USS’. However, from a contrastive perspective, due to grammatical reasons, the definite article preceding the proper names differs in the two target languages, as well as in prepositions combined with it, since the reference noun ‘ship’ is the feminine noun *nave* in Italian and the masculine noun *barco* in Spanish. Accordingly, ‘the Valkyrie’ and ‘the Titan’ become *la Valkyrie* and *la Titan* in Italian and *el Valkyrie* and *el Titan* in Spanish.

4.3.4 Intratextual metaludic references

In *Battlefield 4* there are two instances of intratextual metaludic references, as defined in Section 2.4.1. They are made at the very beginning of the walkthrough and, as in examples (19) and (20), they occur in the opening dialogue lines uttered by non-playable characters, namely Irish and Dunn, when addressing Recker, i.e. the player.

- 4.(19) IRISH: Hey, Recker. Recker, you conscious? **Get back in the game**, man. Stay with me.
4.(20) DUNN: **Nice play**, Recker. That was some of the finest driving I’ve ever seen.

In the dialogue strings above, the gaming-related expressions ‘get back in the game’ and ‘nice play’ seem to have a twofold meaning since the addressee is exactly Recker, who is both the character in the game world and the player in reality. In (19), Irish encourages Recker to regain

senses and, at the same time, it seems that Irish invites the player to start playing *Battlefield 4* and get back to the game s/he probably quit after completing *Battlefield 3* (2011). In (20), ‘nice play’ refers to the mission in which Recker drives a car to escape from Azerbaijani special forces in Baku, a pursuit taking place before an accident and representing an implicit event which makes clear the cause of their sinking and which is shown only later in the game when, in order to make an exit from the submerged car, Dunn orders Recker to shoot the vehicle windshield. The blast unfolds a flashback of the events taking place thirteen minutes and forty seconds earlier.

The scope of these two metaludic references seem to be intratextual: even if they are idioms in English, the expressions above belong to the language of gaming but, in the texts under analysis, they relate to the player’s action in *Battlefield 3* and *4*, specifically. As regards their transfer, neither ‘get back in the game’ nor ‘nice play’ maintain their intratextual metaludic references. In Italian, they are translated into *tieni duro* [bear up] and *complimenti* [congratulations] and in Spanish they become *despierta* [wake up] and *bien hecho* [well done]. As far as Italian is concerned, while ‘nice play’ might be rendered into *bella prova* hinting at the good driving performance and making a subtle reference to gaming, it seems difficult to find an equivalent solution for ‘get back in the game’.

4.4 Realia

As already discussed, within the realism-fictionalism spectrum of video games the corpus of this study aims to recreate, *Battlefield 4* is positioned centrally upon the axis. Indeed, BF4 game world is definitely fictional, like all video games after all, but its setting is deeply rooted in the real world. The following sections explore the translation of BF4 *realia*, that is to say, the references made in game dialogues to existing entities which have been classified into: geographical references (4.4.1), ethnic references (4.4.2), sociopolitical references (4.4.3), and intertextual references (4.4.4).

4.4.1 Geographical references

Battlefield 4 missions take place in real-world locations even if its story belongs to (political) fiction, revolving around a futuristic war between real-world nations in real-world time: the war of 2020 between the USA, Russia and China. The close geographical relationship between the

game world and the real world is immediately clear in the seven missions' titles which, as already mentioned, are named after the locations where they take place.

Accordingly, it comes as no surprise that most geographical references in game dialogues belong to these areas. In more details, as regards the parts of the walkthrough analyzed, references are made to Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, China, Shanghai, Singapore, Suez and the namesake canal, and Lake Timsah in Egypt. Furthermore, a reference is made to Sweden and also to a generic Carolina in the USA.

In BF4 game dialogues toponyms are translated into their official equivalent forms, and since they present little, if any, issues, their quantitative analysis seems irrelevant for the purposes of this study. The only instance which may have required translators more research is 'Lake Timsah' which occurs only in the Spanish TT where the proper name 'Timsah' is retained and the classifier noun 'lake' is translated into *lago*, as in example (21) and the whole noun phrase is the Spanish official counterpart. Conversely, in Italian 'Lake Timsah' is omitted since translators, when recreating the static effect disturbing a radio communication between Gatekeeper and Garrison, change the order of the information and exclude the geographical reference, as in example (21).

4.(21) GATEKEEPER: (static)— controls—north of Timsah Lake . Do not— canal! I say again, do not—(static).	GATEKEEPER: <i>I cinesi</i> contro- canale nord del- Ø. Non <i>entrate</i> -! Ripeto, non <i>entrate</i> nel ca-.	GATEKEEPER: Los chinos controlan el canal norte del lago Timsah . ¡Que nadie entre en el canal! Repito, que nadie entre en el canal.
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On the contrary, in Spanish, not only is the reference maintained and directly translated as mentioned above, but the sentence is also transferred in its entirety, without reproducing the effect of static. Moreover, as regards this aspect, it seems interesting to note that in Italian translators added two elements with no counterparts in the ST: the subject *i cinesi* [Chinese people] although the ST verb is singular, which might imply a singular subject like Admiral Chang instead, and they also made explicit the verb related to canal, i.e. *entrare* [enter].

Moreover, as regards China, there is an extra occurrence in both target languages due to the fact that, as will be discussed in Section 4.4.2, the reference expressed through the nationality adjective 'Chinese' becomes a reference to the country 'China'.

Between the place names mentioned in BF4, ‘Sweden’ and ‘Carolina’ deserve to be examined from the sidelines because they are references to locations which are not connected to the story but represent, on the one hand, the culture of the game developers and, on the other, a specific aspect of US culture. DICE, *Battlefield 4* developer, is a Swedish company based in Stockholm and this self-reference is playfully used as a guarantee of quality. Indeed, ‘Sweden’ occurs in a dialogue line uttered by the Chinese character Hannah in order to reassure the US marine Irish that the C4 charges they are going to plant on the blind spot of Admiral Chang’s warship are secure, as the exchange in example (22) illustrates.

4.(22)	HANNAH: Don’t worry, they’re pretty secure. IRISH: Yeah, right. HANNAH: They’re made in Sweden .	HANNAH: Stai tranquillo, sono affidabili. IRISH: Sì, certo. HANNAH: Le fanno in Svezia .	HANNAH: Tranquilo, son bastante seguras. IRISH: Sí, claro. HANNAH: Hechas en Suecia .
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As regards ‘Carolina’, this toponym is mentioned by Irish during the conversation with Hannah which can be heard at the very end of the game while closing credits roll on the screen. Irish makes a reference to his uncle Jay and calls him “Carolina boy”, a countryman who knows the back country very well, as opposed to Irish who is a city boy, as in example (23). Therefore, Carolina seems to be a reference to the rural culture of that area of the USA and to the city-country dichotomy.

4.(23)	IRISH: Yeah, I had an uncle - Uncle Jay. He showed me everything there was to know about going into the back country.	IRISH: Già. Avevo uno zio. Zio Jay. Lui mi ha insegnato tutto quello che c’è da sapere sulle aree selvagge.	IRISH: Sí. Mi tío, el tío Jay, me enseñó todo lo que tenía que saber para ir de excursión al campo.
	HANNAH: I thought you were a city boy.	HANNAH: Credevo fossi un tipo di città.	HANNAH: Te tenía por un chico de ciudad.
	IRISH: Hell yeah - through and through. But my uncle, he wasn’t from	IRISH: Certo. Al 100%. Però mio zio non veniva dalla città, lui era della	IRISH: Y lo soy, de cabo a rabo. Pero mi tío no era de

the city. Carolina boy.	Carolina. Se n'è andato	la ciudad. Era de Carolina ,
He got out long ago.	molto tempo fa.	aunque se fue hace mucho.

4.4.2 Ethnic references

The inhabitants of BF4 game world belong to real world cultures connected to the story, such as the Azerbaijanis, the Chinese, the Russians and the Americans, that is to say the peoples fighting the war of 2020, as listed in Table 11 in Appendix B. These references pose little, if any, translation problems, since they usually require a direct translation, as Figure 18 in Appendix B demonstrates, but some of them are used or translated with a loaded meaning. In this light, they deserve special attention. In particular, the items analyzed are mostly nationality adjectives and nouns. Moreover, in order to provide a full picture of the linguistic and textual representation of cultures in the game, in this section it seems worth investigating another type of ethnic *realia*: the use of foreign languages, namely Russian. As already mentioned when exploring MOHW ethnic references, “foreign” must be interpreted as any language other than American English, which is the source language of all games in the corpus and, one might add, of most mainstream video games.

As defined in Section 2.4, the source culture of BF4 playable character and of most people living in this fictional world is the Anglo-American culture. The playable character Recker and his teammates are indeed US Marine Corps special operatives. As regards ‘American’, which is directly translated into *americano* in both target languages, it is interesting to note that, when ironically used by the Russian character Dima when he finds Irish in his way to escape from the Chinese prison, as example (24) demonstrates, in Spanish ‘American’ is substituted and transcreated into *yanqui*, a Latin American colloquial and derogatory expression to name US people (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online). In BF4, it also seems to suggest a racial stereotype since *yanqui* always refers to Irish in the game database (four occurrences), the only Afro-American character, while Recker is addressed by Dima as simply *americano* in both the target languages.

4.(24) DIMA: Another **American**. DIMA: Un altro **americano**. DIMA: Otro **yanqui**.

On the other side of the fence, there are the Others representing enemy cultures, namely the Chinese and the Russians. First, as regards ‘Chinese’ which is directly translated into *chinese*

and *chino/a* when adjective and *cinesi* and *chinos* when noun in Italian and Spanish respectively, it seems worth mentioning that, in both the TTs, there is one instance of omission which depends on the fact that this adjective has been transformed into a reference to the country. As in example (25), both Italian and Spanish translators rendered “a Chinese military coup” into “a military coup in China”. Nevertheless, as already underlined in the previous section, in both Italian and Spanish there is an extra occurrence of the nouns *cinesi* and *chinos* due to the addition made in the dialogue string reported in example (21).

4.(25)	GARRISON: In the event of a Chinese military coup, the Russians would be loyal to Admiral Chang.	GARRISON: In caso di colpo di stato militare in Cina , i russi sarebbero al fianco dell'ammiraglio Chang.	GARRISON: Si hubiera un golpe de estado en China , los rusos apoyarían al almirante Chang.
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Throughout the game, players can hear Chinese characters speaking their language but subtitles are not provided. For example, Hannah and Jin Jié speak Chinese when they finally meet each other on the USS Valkyrie. Similarly, no Chinese words occur in the game texts analyzed, although in the game database there are many references to Chinese food habits in dialogues lines which are not uttered in the walkthrough selected.

‘Russians’, whose culture plays a secondary (enemy) role in BF4, at least as compared to the Chinese, become *russi* in Italian and *rusos* in Spanish when the noun refers to the people. The adjective ‘Russian’ is directly translated into *russo* and *ruso*, but the latter is also used in Spanish to transfer ‘ruski’, an English slang form for ‘Russian’, which seems to derive from the transliteration of the adjective ‘Russian’ in the Russian language and which in game dialogues is used by Irish to address the Russian character Dima. As already said, Spanish translators toned down the register and used a generalization into the neutral *ruso* while in Italian it is substituted and transcreated into *compagno* [comrade], as in example (26), which carries a politically loaded meaning, since it refers to a fellow member of communist or socialist party whose connection to Russia is a common stereotype. On the contrary, in Spanish *ruski* is used to translate ‘Ivan’, which is another appellation used to refer to Dima, but this rendition occurs in dialogue lines which do not appear in the walkthrough analyzed.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 4.(26) IRISH: Okay, ruski . Get that gate open! | IRISH: OK, compagno .
Apri quel cancello! | IRISH: Venga, ruso . ¡Abre esa puerta! |
|--|---|---|

The Russian culture is also represented by means of language and, more precisely, by the Russian expressions uttered by Dima, which seem to be a characterization device. The first expression appears in a dialogue line addressed to Irish when he attacks Hannah for her seeming betrayal, as in example (27), and the second Russian expression occurs shortly afterwards when Dima rebukes Irish and Hannah for fighting, as in example (28). The third instance occurs in another dialogue line uttered by Dima when he finally reaches the cable car which is supposed to take him and Tombstone to safety while escaping from the Chinese prison where Dima has been staying for six years, as in example (29). In all cases, these Russian phrases appear in their Romanized version: they are not in the Cyrillic alphabet but are already transliterated into the Latin one.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 4.(27) DIMA: You want to kill this Kitayetz zhenshchina ? Right after she saved us?! | DIMA: Vuoi uccidere questa zhenshchina Kitayetz?
Dopo che ci ha salvato? | DIMA: ¿Quieres matar a esa Kitayetz zhenshchina?
¿Ahora que nos ha salvado? |
| 4.(28) DIMA: Maltshite , children. Unless you all want to die here. We go now. Grab your guns. | DIMA: Calma , figlioli. O volete morire tutti qui? Meglio andare. Prendete le armi. | DIMA: Callaos , niños. A menos que queráis morir aquí. Nos vamos ya. Coged las armas. |
| 4.(29) DIMA: Freedom. Slava Bogu . | DIMA: Libertà! Slava Bogu . | DIMA: Libertad... Slava Bogu . |

In (27), “Kitayetz zhenshchina” means “Chinese woman” and indeed refers to Hannah. In (28) “maltshite” means “be quiet” and “Slava Bogu” in (29) means “Thank God”. Only the second instance is domesticated, since *calma* [keep calm, calm down] and *callaos* [be quiet] are the two translations in Italian and Spanish. Conversely, the other two Russian expressions are retained in both target languages, although in Italian the noun phrase word order is inverted in (27), and the noun is placed before the adjective. However, even if players can understand their

meaning only if they know Russian or do some research, retention is the suitable strategy to produce the same foreignizing effect of the original.

As in example (30), a single reference is made to the Azerbaijanis when Pac ironically comments on the bellicosity of this people in Baku. The tone of the line is sarcastic and reveals that Tombstone was not ready and able to deal with such a furious enemy. The nationality noun ‘Azerbaijanis’ is translated into the TLs’ standard forms or official equivalent.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 4.(30) PAC: Hey, these
Azerbaijanis are alright,
huh? | PAC: Ehi, gli azerbaijani
sono OK, eh? | PAC: Eh, esos azerbaiyanos
están bien, ¿no? |
|--|--|---|

4.4.3 Sociopolitical references

In *Battlefield 4*, as Table 12 and Figure 19 in Appendix B show, all sociopolitical references are connected to the (political) fiction story this game narrates. In the parts of the walkthrough analyzed, references are made to institutions belonging to the US military or intelligence, namely marine, combat lifesaver and the Central Intelligence Agency.

As already discussed in Section 4.3.1.2, when analyzing the translation of the references to extra characters, in the ST, ‘marine’ is also a speaker character identifier in game subtitles with six occurrences out of fourteen. Nevertheless, more relevantly for this study, it must be read as a sociopolitical reference to a well-known US specific soldier, member of the United States Marine Corps. Like ‘marine’, ‘CIA’ does not need any introduction and the transcultural popularity of these two references is testified to by the translation strategy used in the target texts. Both marine and CIA are retained in Italian and Spanish except for one instance of omission of ‘marine’ in Italian, as in example (31).

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 4.(31) GARRISON: I don’t think
we’ve seen the worst yet so
I’m glad to have you
Marines on board. | GARRISON: E il peggio
deve ancora arrivare,
quindi sono felice di
avervi a bordo Ø. | GARRISON: No nos hemos
visto en otra peor, por eso me
alegra llevaros a bordo,
marines . |
|---|--|--|

In the dialogue string above, which is uttered by Captain Garrison when Tombstone finally manages to reach the command bridge of the USS Valkyrie and saves him, since there are no space nor time constraints, it is difficult to understand the reasons for the omission in Italian.

Moreover, Garrison is glad to have them on board just because they are the ‘marines’ or, as Garrison tells Bloodhound at the end of the game, they are “his marines”.

As regards ‘combat saver’, which occurs in the conversation shown in example (32), according to the US Department of the Army’s “U.S. Army Warrior Ethos and Combat Skills Handbook” (2009: 14), the role of this soldier, resulting from a three-day course, is complementary to the combat medic, he is a nonmedical who provides basic emergency care to the injured members of the squad. Accordingly, since this is a title specific to the US military, its translation may pose a challenge. As shown in example (32), in Italian generalization is used and ‘combat lifesaver’ becomes simply *medico* [medic] while in Spanish it is translated into *médico de combate* which is more specific than the Italian rendition but, since it is the calque of ‘combat medic’ who is the actual medic in a military unit, the Spanish rendition is interpreted as a generalization too. In this light, it seems that neither Italian nor Spanish translators managed to transfer this reference faithfully, which would have required them to do some research. Instead, it seems that they opted for safe and functional solutions which convey the information needed: Pac has some medical knowledge and can help Dunn, who passed out after amputation.

4.(32) PAC: Is he dead?	PAC: È morto?	PAC: ¿Está muerto?
IRISH: He’s not dead, he’s just passed out.	IRISH: Non è morto, è solo svenuto.	IRISH: No está muerto, pero se ha desmayado.
IRISH: You’re the combat lifesaver , man. You should know this, Pac.	IRISH: Qui sei tu il medico , Pac. Dovresti saperlo.	IRISH: Tú eres el médico de combate , tío. Deberías saberlo, Pac.
PAC: It was like a three- hour course!	PAC: Ho fatto solo un corso di tre ore!	PAC: ¡Me dieron un cursillo de tres horas!

4.4.4 Intertextual references

In *Battlefield 4* game dialogues, intertextuality translates into two references made to pieces of music. On the one hand, Bonnie Tyler’s “Total Eclipse of the Heart” (1983) plays in the background during the game’s prologue, and it is linked to BF4 game world through an explicit mention made by one of the characters, namely Pac. While sinking into the Caspian Sea in Baku, he says “Oh, man, I don’t wanna die to this song”, since Tyler’s 1980s biggest career hit is the referent of “this song”. This instance of intertextuality exemplifies both a non-verbal reference to pop culture and the use of popular music in video games’ soundtracks. Its transfer

does not pose any translation issue, since translators only must render a simple common noun in the two TLs.

On the other hand, and more relevantly for the purposes of this study, an intertextual reference to the American culture folk music is made by Dunn when, seriously wounded and with a leg amputated, he escapes from Azerbaijani forces by car with Pac, Irish and Recker, at the end of the “Baku” mission. Dunn is going into shock and pain due to amputation and bleeding causes him auditory hallucination, and says “Anyone else hearing the opening bars of “Dixie”?”, as in the dialogue string contained in example (33). This seems to be a reference to the US composer Daniel Decatur Emmett’s song “Dixie”, which was written in 1859 and became the marching song and *de facto* national anthem of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War (1861–65) and of the South thereafter (Wright 2013: 175-176). Indeed, “Dixie” refers to the Southern US States according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (online). No background sound can be heard when this line is uttered, the opening bars of “Dixie” are playing only in Dunn’s mind but the intertextual reference to this song suggests that he is being delirious and that death is approaching.

4.(33)	DUNN: Anyone else hearing the opening bars of “ Dixie ”?	DUNN: Qualcun altro sente il pezzo di apertura di “ Dixie ”?	DUNN: ¿Alguien más oye los primeros compases de “ Dixie ”?
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‘Dixie’ is transferred by means of retention in both target texts, as in example (33), and since no explanation is provided, players may not understand the referent, whose cultural specificity makes it difficult to be recognized. Probably, players can only deduce it is a piece of music thanks to the verb ‘hear’ and the noun phrase ‘opening bars’. However, while the direct translation of ‘opening bars’ into *primeros compases* makes it clearer in Spanish, in Italian’s *pezzo di apertura*, *pezzo* [piece] is a less intelligible generalization. Conversely, *battute* [bars] would have been the right counterpart, but also a hyponym used as a synecdoche such as *note* [notes] would have allowed players to identify Dixie’s musical nature.

Chapter 5

Mass Effect 3

5.1 Introduction

As the game's publisher suggests for marketing purposes (*Electronic Arts Website*: online), "Mass Effect 3 plunges you into an all-out galactic war to take Earth back from a nearly unstoppable foe [...]. You are Commander Shepard, the only one who can save Earth from annihilation" together with "a team of elite, battle-hardened soldiers ready for your command". Moreover, "how you fight that war is entirely up to you. Groundbreaking interactive storytelling drives the heart-pounding action in which each decision you make could have devastating and deadly consequences" (*Electronic Arts Website*: online). Indeed, gamers can play their way and choose either "a fast-paced cinematic experience or delve into a deeper, more choice-driven narrative", but "either way, intense combat propels the action as you fight to unite a war-torn galaxy against a common enemy" (*Electronic Arts Website*: online). In compliance with its gameplay and narrative genres (Bateman 2006: xxvi), *Mass Effect 3* offers a "rich, branching story": "interactive storytelling delivers an experience unlike any other, with multiple outcomes determined by your choices" (*Electronic Arts Website*: online) but, at the same time, narrative combines with "adrenaline-pumping gameplay" of "an intense and pulse-pounding action-shooter game" (*Electronic Arts Website*: online).

Accordingly, as Patterson (2015) explains, *Mass Effect 3* (2012) (ME3 hereafter) can be considered a "mixed genre game" (Scholand 2012) which combines the typical elements of role-playing with those of shooters in a third-person perspective. This seems to reduce the scope of the implications the different subgenre of the games composing the corpus has on this study, despite the remarkable difference in playtime and number of words.

As a representational medium, the *Mass Effect* (ME hereafter) series has drawn scholarly attention from different viewpoints and many focus on the meanings ME world contents convey. According to Shaw and Sharp (2013), for example, its form of storytelling may be defined as "social irrealism":

Questions over the future of humanity and its existential place in the world are told through imaginary landscapes and alien tropes that refract and reshape the real. Although it is true

that video games usually produce fictional spaces, they do not produce entirely *unreal* spaces. Instead, they are much more like virtual laboratories for probing, playing and experimenting with reality.

(Shaw and Sharp 2013: 343, original emphasis)

In brief, “reality can be understood through the impossible and the imagined”, “the human confrontation with the unfamiliar and the hybrid, which are hallmarks of ‘irreal’ literature, coincide with a political framework for understanding social existence beyond its actualities towards its possible futures” (Shaw and Sharp 2013: 345), and this type of social irrealism is typical of science-fiction which may be considered as a “privileged site for critical thought” based on “a gap: between science and fiction, between the reader’s reality and the world of fiction, between the possible and the impossible” (Kneale and Kitchin 2002: 3-4).

Mass Effect titles “allow players to engage with issues of contemporary importance” which “reveal what *might* come to exist in the near and far future, and therefore the politics located within these games are more of a possibility than a probability; more of an ambiguity than an actuality – that nonetheless speaks to our present condition without being reducible to it” (Shaw and Sharp 2013: 346, original emphasis). One particular aspect of the future that is explored in ME series “is the nature of life as synthetic intelligence”: “alien technologies have allowed humans to make contact with other species in far flung corners of the galaxy”, politics is raised “to a galactic scale and the game’s ambition sees it drawing on the themes of control over alien scientific advancement in the context of intergalactic power-struggles, biowarfare, and a threat that goes beyond human perception of space and time” (Shaw and Sharp 2013: 349).

In this light, Shaw and Sharp (2013: 354, original emphasis) consider ME games as an example of “politico-aesthetic technologies”: “they are socially irreal and embody political content through fantastical and futuristic worlds. But they also mobilize, beyond the obviously thinking-political, a *feeling-political*” by means of player’s agency in the interactive gaming experience. The politico-aesthetic importance of video games lies “in their ability to imagine possible geographies and intervene in the anticipation and practice of futures, whether this is the battle over the role of genetic engineering, the failure of utopian visions, or critiques aimed at corporations, imperialism, and genocide” which may create “a socially irreal landscape for creative engagement” (Shaw and Sharp 2013: 355).

Ward (2008), among others, has focused on the implications the relationship between the real world and ME game world may have on players' experience since these games play "heavily on the 'what ifs' of our society (Ward 2008: 291).

What if there really is life out there? What if we stumbled upon some sort of technology that sped our development as a species that we had never before conceived of as possible? What if we were faced with the potential end of life in our entire galaxy? To what end would we go to prevent total annihilation and would we try even if we were told it was unlikely we would succeed? The Mass Effect series, promised by BioWare, offers one take on answering these questions.

(Ward 2008: 291)

As many other role-playing games, ME titles have been the topic of meaningful research on issues concerning power relations, cultural representation and gender.

As regards power relations, scholars' viewpoints are manifold. For example, *Mass Effect* games have been analyzed as a vehicle of philosophical and sociopolitical ideology (Aristidou and Basallo 2014). In short, since ME franchise give players the opportunity to decide the fate of the galaxy in its diegetic world, they can "can make decisions, especially in politics, which include or exclude the other alien races, which is analogous to racism in human history" (Aristidou and Basallo 2014: 175). Furthermore, ME titles have been defined as systems which "invoke multiculturalist values and teach liberal tolerance" since they require the player to assume "the neutral position of a 'multiculturalist umpire'" (Patterson 2015: 207), but the latter ultimately expresses "meanings that value American multiculturalism as exceptional, thus permitting forms of patriarchal and imperial violence to continue unabated" (Patterson 2015: 207). The multicultural idea of the distant future and the harmony of different races exhibited in ME games, are based on "a particular system of divided labor": "each race yields specialized talents, and even the all-inclusive and pan-ethnic government, The Citadel, divides labor by its respective races" (Patterson 2015: 209).

Humans, like "Whites" in Western multicultural imaginaries, are relegated to being "Jack-of-all-trades" who can perform any specialization or a mix of specializations. As a human, the player takes on a "neutral" role that determines and manages the specializations of their ethnicized teammates. While appreciating cultural difference,

the player is also positioned toward ethnicized others as a “multicultural umpire” as one who sets the rules and ethics from a neutral (and thus universal) position.

(Patterson 2015: 209)

This finally sets the player as the one who “casts monocultural others as villains” (Patterson 2015: 209). The enemies in *Mass Effect* games (the geth, the collectors, and the Reapers) “have their own reasons for war, yet their reasons cannot compare to the sanctity of diversity and tolerance represented through the player’s squad and the multicultural federation that they fight to protect” (Patterson 2015: 213). From this perspective, ME titles may produce what Bogost (2007: ix) calls “procedural rhetoric”, meaning that “through rule-based representations and interactions rather than the spoken word, writing, images, or moving pictures”, video games may “have a unique persuasive power” (Bogost 2007: 43). As a science fiction series, *Mass Effect* may easily appear apolitical. Conversely, according to Patterson (2015), the dynamics and mechanics of its fictional multiracial military gameplay may be even perceived as imperial, thus making this series to be looked at as a form of neo-racism.

As regards gender representation, researchers like Schalleger (2014) and Lavigne (2015), amongst others, have investigated the depiction of gender and sexuality in ME series. Gender-related issues in video games, especially if they are gender-customizable like ME titles, are many and diverse but, given the scope of this topic, which has been on the media radar for decades as also Pettini (forthcoming) argues, and given the male playable character of the walkthrough selected, their analysis is beyond the reach of this study. It seems more workable to deal with gender issues throughout the chapter when relevant for the linguistic and translational analysis.

More importantly for the purposes of this research, as regards cultural representation and specificity, an interesting contribution has been provided by Kuling (2014) who has found out “instances of Canadian national performances occurring in the international video gaming phenomenon known as BioWare’s *Mass Effect* trilogy” (Kuling 2014: 43).

According to Kuling (2014: 44), “the *Mass Effect* series, developed by BioWare in Edmonton, Alberta, does not disguise its clear Canadian identity connections” and the player “interacts with Canadian characters, settings, and histories throughout *Mass Effect* 3. The result is a variety of choice-based one-on-one performance scenarios that parallel Canadian histories of intolerance, genocide, and war”; in other words, “the *Mass Effect* trilogy creates an alternate digital space for a compassionate Canadian nationalism to exist and thrive, [...] BioWare uses

Canadianness not only as a model for compassion, tolerance, and duty but also as a stand-in for cosmopolitan, [...] identity formation” (Kuling 2014: 44). In more details, it seems interesting to mention that, as Kuling remarks (2014: 44), “the first two instalments of Mass Effect have little nationalized content in their narratives, opting instead to focus on outer space sequences and denationalized characters”. Significantly, Canadian identities “start to emerge only as this series has achieved wider global popularity. This popularity allows it to ‘come out’ in two ways: both as a cosmopolitan entity and as something that links that cosmopolitan openness to a Canadian ethos” (Kuling 2014: 44).

First, Canadianness is expressed vocally by the protagonist’s male and female voice actors, namely Mark Meer and Jennifer Hale. “While Shepard never verbally identifies as Canadian in this game, his/her accent strongly suggests a Canadian national background” (Kuling 2014: 45). On the contrary, non-playable characters’ performers are American in ME3.

Second, Canadianness reveals itself in geography: “characters discuss Vancouver rather than New York or Los Angeles, which are typical city settings for North American movies and games. Interestingly, no American place names or identity elements are ever brought up in the Mass Effect series”, thus “unapologetically pushing American identities to the margins” (Kuling 2014: 45). Moreover, the game “opens with Cmdr. Shepard returning to a futuristic Vancouver – the capital city of the United North American States – to address members of the Earth Alliance on the situation concerning the Reapers”. As also Melanson (2012: online) notes, futuristic Vancouver becomes a site for utopian international (and interstellar) cooperation. In order to escape the Reapers, “Shepard runs across Vancouver’s rooftops with iconic Stanley Park, Canada Place, and Vancouver Harbor visible in the background. None of the urban Vancouver landmarks in this sequence are named, but Canadian gamers who recognize the city experience an extra layer of meaning” (Kuling 2014: 45). Moreover, according to Kuling (2014: 45), since the Reapers aim at wiping out all organic intelligent life and since Canada is the first country the Reapers attack, “Mass Effect 3 may be implying that Canadians effectively represent an evolved cosmopolitan identity of the future” (2014: 45). For Kuling (2014: 45-46), other instances of Canadian identity concern history: Shepard’s starship “Normandy” refers to the 1944 invasion of Normandy, which “looms large in Canadian military memory”; the final battle for Earth in Reaper-besieged London evokes “an image of what Canadians and other Allied forces would have encountered if London had fallen to Nazi Germany”. In conclusion, Canadianness becomes a model for cosmopolitan world-views in

video games that are generally overtly American and BioWare “uses Mass Effect to willfully demonstrate the positive impact of Canadian values to the world” (Kuling 2014: 47).

5.2 Synopsis

Before outlining ME3 backstory and story main events, with special attention to the walkthrough selected, a brief digression about what this paragraph deals with is worthy.

On the one hand, it must be said that among the numerous possibilities the player is offered to customize his/her ME3 character-driven experience, the walkthrough selected includes: male Shepard in terms of gender, “story” as regards gameplay mode, “default” physical appearance, “soldier” as for military class, “earthborn” in terms of pre-service history, amongst others. These customization levels will be further discussed in Section 5.3.1.1.

On the other hand, it seems important to explain that the narrative of role-playing games (RPGs) like ME3 is less “linear” than the narrative of shooters like *Medal of Honor Warfighter* and *Battlefield 4*. Indeed, the role of the player as storyteller is greater and relies on an apparent narrative device called “dialogue tree” which consists “of a list of all dialogue options which branch off into further options” (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 144). In other words, s/he can choose between multiple questions and responses to interact with non-playable characters (NPCs), thus his/her choices determine the following dialogue lines and influence the storytelling process. Table 20 in Appendix C exemplifies a conversation between the protagonist Commander Shepard and the NPC Admiral Hackett, containing dialogue tree-branching options.

Although ME3 is a mixed genre game (Scholand 2002) between RPG and shooter, the characteristics and the scope of its narrative level (Fulco 2004) are typical of the RPG genre. This does not mean that RPGs players do not have missions to carry out, including both main and side missions; in fact, missions must be completed before the next becomes available and this is at the base of plot progression, as happens in most video games. Nevertheless, as opposed to those of shooters, in RPGs missions are more numerous, longer and much more complex. *Mass Effect 3*, for example, presents 15 priority or main plot missions, titled after the locations where they take place, and 62 side missions, the latter being “sorted according to the priority mission after which they become available” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) and, as their name suggests, they are minor missions including tasks such as planet scanning, conversations, or finding an item, among others. More importantly, missions in role-playing titles do not beat the

game's storyline time as clearly as missions in shooters do. This inevitably affects their analysis since giving a comprehensive synopsis of ME3 events would mean summarizing dozens of hours of playtime for a just single walkthrough. This would provide interesting background information concerning ME3 fictional world but it might turn to be superfluous for the main objectives of this study. Accordingly, this section gives only a brief overview of the main events of ME3 and, especially, of the four parts of the walkthrough analyzed, while other contextual information will be provided throughout the analysis when relevant for the discussion. Nevertheless, since missions are the means by which the game narrative unfolds thanks to players' active role, these levels are adopted as the point of reference or, one might say, the unit of measurement to summarize ME3 plot. This parameter seems to be the suitable viewpoint to investigate video games as narratives on their own right, thus avoiding to simply narrate their stories as if they were non-interactive artefacts such films.

After allowing the player to customize his/her character, the game opens with a prologue displaying a series of cutscenes and dialogues which provide the framework of the episode events: in 2187 the future of the whole galaxy is threatened by the invasion of the Reapers, an incomprehensively powerful sentient race of machines dedicated to cyclically wiping out all organic life. The only (human) soldier who can stop them is Commander Shepard, the fate of the galaxy depends on him but cooperation among races is essential in the war.

The first mission titled "Earth" requires Commander Shepard and human Admiral Anderson to fight their way against the Reapers in order to escape besieged Earth, board on the starship Normandy and, once reached the Citadel, assemble all galaxy leaders to plan a joint defensive. While Admiral Anderson stays on Earth to lead resistance, Shepard and the Normandy crew fly to Mars, under the command of human Admiral Hackett, in order to find new Prothean data about a device that could help defeat the Reapers. This is the second priority mission, titled "Mars". Once there, Shepard and his team fight countless of enemy Cerberus operatives to finally enter the facility where the data are supposed to be. Asari scientist Liara T'Soni enters the game at this point and she will serve as a potential squadmate for the rest of the walkthrough. Combat against *en masse* enemies continues but Shepard and his soldiers manage to reach the Prothean Archives. Suddenly, however, a hologram terminal activates nearby, and the enemy organization Cerberus' leader the (human) Illusive Man appears and one of his moles, doctor Eva Core, steals the data. A chase begins but Eva jumps into a shuttle and tries to escape. Shepard's squad member James Vega crashes his shuttle straight into hers but

the whole crew is severely injured, especially Ashley Williams, the latter being Shepard's romance partner in the walkthrough analyzed. On the contrary, doctor Eva Core survives the explosion and Shepard is forced to chase and finally shoot her. Her body will be brought on board the Normandy and the Enhanced Defense Intelligence character will take control of it.

The third mission, titled "The Citadel I", requires Shepard to inform the Citadel Council of the Reaper threat and of the Prothean device that may be able to stop the Reapers, in order to rally all the other sentient races of the galaxy to the cause. Indeed, in the fourth priority mission titled "Palaven" Shepard must go to the turian race's homeworld and rescue Primarch Fedorian who was caught in the Reaper attack on Palaven. When Shepard lands on this planet, after fighting against countless of husks, brutes, and cannibals, he learns from turian General Corinthus that Fedorian is dead and that the new Primarch is general Adrien Victus. Waves of husks and brutes continue attacking Shepard, his teammates and the turian army on Palaven where another important squadmate, turian Garrus Vakarian, makes his first appearance. The battle continues and Shepard opposes Reaper forces to finally find general Victus and bring him to the Citadel aboard the Normandy.

In exchange for krogans' military support in the war against the Reapers, Udnot clan leader Wreav, on behalf of his krogan race, participates in the war summit and demands a cure for the genophage, the biological weapon and sterility plague infecting his species. This is the reason why Commander Shepard is tasked with the fifth priority mission, titled "Sur'Kesh", which means going to the salarian homeworld in order to extract the only remaining survivor krogan female, named Eve, bring her on the Normandy and allow salarian scientist Mordin Solus to carry out experiments on her to treat the genophage. Once the cure is synthesized, the sixth priority mission titled "Tuchanka" begins and Eve must be escorted to the krogan homeworld Tuchanka and the cure must be made available to all krogans.

The seventh priority mission, titled "The Citadel II", requires Shepard to save the Council from a Cerberus coup attempt through human councilor Udina. Cerberus forces have attacked and partially taken over the Citadel and the Commander must battle against them in order to clear the space station.

In order to construct the superweapon against the Reapers known as Crucible, Shepard needs the support of the quarian race. Thus, Admiral Hackett orders Shepard to meet with quarian Migrant Fleet's admirals in the Far Rim territory. This is the eighth main mission and is titled "Perseus Veil". Once there, Shepard learns that the quarians have begun an open war

with the geth race synthetics which were given upgrades by the Reapers and that quarians need the Normandy's assistance in disabling a geth dreadnought. Shepard's quarian squadmate Tali'Zorah makes her first appearance and thanks to her knowledge about the geth, her contribution proves to be essential.

The ninth priority mission titled "Geth Dreadnought" begins and Shepard must oppose waves of geth synthetics in order to help Tali infiltrate and destroy a geth dreadnought before the quarian Migrant Fleet is wiped out.

In terms of relation with reality, although they do not occur in the corpus, three references seem worth mentioning. First, when approaching the geth dreadnought, ME3 pilot Jeff Joker Moreau "states that with the stealth systems engaged, the only way the geth will detect them is if the Normandy's crew starts singing the Russian national anthem" (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). This is a reference to director John McTiernan 1990 American espionage thriller film *The Hunt for Red October*, where an astute American sonar operator briefly detects the Soviet submarine *Red October*, which is equipped with an advanced stealth system, due to the singing of the Soviet national anthem (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Second, "while exiting the geth dreadnought, Joker makes an offhand comment about the team 'wagging their wings' to let them know which geth fighter is theirs" (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) and this is a reference to Colonel Gail Seymour Halvorsen, a retired US Air Force command pilot, also known as the "Berlin Candy Bomber" or "Uncle Wiggly Wings" because he dropped candy to children during the Berlin airlift (1948-1949), and used to wiggle the wings of his plane in order to allow children to recognize the aircraft. Lastly, Shepard's spacewalk sequence is designed after the hallway sequence in director Christopher Nolan 2010 sci-fi film *Inception*, as BioWare designer Jos Hendriks explains in a Tweet (Hendriks 2013: online).

Once located the Reaper base controlling the geth, in the tenth priority mission titled "Rannoch", while fighting against countless geth forces, Shepard must designate the target and allow the Normandy to bomb it down. Suddenly, a huge Reaper climbs out of the hole produced by the explosion and, after engaging Shepard in intense combat, speaks to Shepard about a higher power orchestrating the entire process of extinction cycles.

In the eleventh mission titled "The Citadel III", Shepard must return to the Citadel in order to meet with the asari councilor and learn a vital information regarding the Catalyst, the essential component for the Crucible to work. Consequently, the twelfth mission titled "Thessia" follows. The asari, because of the Reapers' continuous attacks against their

homeworld, decide to join the other races in the ongoing war and reveal that a Prothean artifact has been found on Thessia, and this might prove to be key to find the Catalyst. In his way to find the artifact, Shepard and his team including the asari Liara T'Soni, fight against many brutes, husks, cannibals, and harvesters, but finally find the ancient piece of Prothean technology, more specifically a Prothean virtual intelligence, they were looking for. Unexpectedly, a hologram of the Illusive Man appears and discloses his plan to control the Reapers.

This is the reason why Shepard must go to the human colony Horizon in order to investigate Cerberus' real connection to a refugee center which might be used as a cover for secret activity. This is the main objective of the thirteenth mission titled "Horizon".

The fourteenth mission titled "Cerberus Headquarters" begins and requires Shepard to destroy this terrorist organization facility. All races must commit themselves to the final fight against the Reapers. Shepard manages to find the Prothean virtual intelligence from which he learns that the Catalyst is actually the Citadel which is under the Reapers' control.

At this point, the fifteenth and last game mission titled "Earth" begins and implies the final battle for Earth: the System Alliance forces against all types of Reaper enemies. It is imperative for Shepard and his squad to survive the all-out war approach of their enemies in order to reach the Conduit and, through it, go back into the Citadel. Admiral Anderson has been indoctrinated and held hostage by the Illusive Man, who is waiting for his final encounter with Shepard. After a brief dispute between the two, Shepard manages to kill Cerberus' leader and takes control of the Citadel. Unfortunately, however, Anderson's conditions are critical, and he dies after congratulating the Commander. Suddenly, the Catalyst, which is the Prothean virtual intelligence which reveals itself in the form of a human child, approaches Shepard when he is trying to (unsuccessfully) activate the Crucible and explains the purpose of the Reapers, their origin, as well as the ways in which Shepard can use the Crucible to stop them: Destruction, Control, or Synthesis. The latter three options are indeed ME3 possible endings. The "Destroy" (red) option results in the destruction of all synthetic life in the galaxy. The "Control" option (blue) means that Shepard sacrifices himself, becomes the commander of the Reaper fleet and leaves Earth. The "Synthesis" option (green) means that the energy emitted by the Crucible creates a new synthesized DNA and alters all denizens of the galaxy at the genetic level.

In the selected walkthrough, the player chooses to unfold two endings: first, "Control" and then "Destroy". An extract of the final conversation between Shepard and the child

personifying the Catalyst in Appendix C (Table 21) shows the consequent text variation including three different dialogue lines which are triggered by the selection of a paraphrase string in the dialogue tree. The game ends with a cutscene featuring an old man who narrates Commander Shepard's adventures to a young child, while the two dreamily gaze into Space.

5.3 Irrealia

Mass Effect 3 game world is a sci-fi imaginary world whose relationship with the real world is considerable, as demonstrated by many game elements such as human and humanoid characters, some real-world locations, real-world time, etc. which will be discussed as *realia* in Section 5.4. Nevertheless, most of ME3 game world components, yet in the image of the world we know, are fundamental constituents of this textual realm and, consequently, fall into the category of *irrealia*. In this light, the paragraphs below deal with the translation of individual references concerning characters' names (5.3.1); collective references regarding both special forces units and race-specific mercenary groups (5.3.2); geographical references regarding ME3 universe locations (5.3.3); ethnic references to fictional species (5.3.4); sociopolitical references including fictional government and social institutions (5.3.5); artefactual references concerning fictional objects, items, etc. (5.3.6); and intratextual metaludic references (5.3.7).

5.3.1 Individual references

Under the macro categories of playable (5.3.1.1) and non-playable characters (5.3.1.2), the following paragraphs investigate the translation of *Mass Effect 3* characters' names. According to the role non-playable characters play in the game narrative, they have been divided into helpers, who belong to Commander Shepard's squad and represent the primary allies the player can select in his/her war against the Reapers, villains and other characters. Table 14 in Appendix C shows the number of occurrences of each character's name in both the game database source text and ME3 corpus together with the translation strategies used, which are then discussed in the single related parts and graphically shown in Figure 20 in Appendix C. For the purposes of completeness, it seems worth mentioning that the total number of ME3 characters exceeds 500 in the database and amounts to 62 in the walkthrough but, in order to make a balanced comparison with *Medal of Honor Warfighter* and *Battlefield 4* characters, only the principal ones in terms of occurrences, namely 32 of them, have been included in the analysis and only 15 of the latter group are discussed in more details. This decision is based on two main reasons:

first, an exhaustive description of all 32 characters would be beyond the scope of this study, and background facts may be fascinating but are not always essential; second, since the selection criterion takes into account both the number of occurrences in the whole database and characters' role in the walkthrough selected, which translates into the number of occurrences in ME3 corpus, given the remarkable total number of ME3 actors, additional screening was considered necessary in order to avoid tilting the balance of discussion away from the linguistic and translational aspects.

5.3.1.1 Playable character

Commander Shepard is the human protagonist of *Mass Effect 3*, and also of the whole game trilogy. Born on April 11, 2154 (Norman 2010: online), Shepard is a graduate of the interplanetary Systems Alliance N7 special forces program, later assigned to the starship SSV Normandy in 2183 as executive officer, whose mission is to save the Galaxy from the Reapers. Shepard is also the character featured on ME3 box art.

As discussed in the Introduction (5.1), players can either select a default character or customize their Shepard, in terms of gender (male or female), appearance (facial structure, skin color, head, eyes, jaw, mouth, nose, hair, scarring, make-up if female or beard if male), psychological profile (Sole Survivor, War Hero, or Ruthless), pre-service history, and class, among others, and all these features have some sort of impact on the story. As regards pre-service history, for example, Shepard may be (1) a Spacer, who spent his/her childhood on ships and stations in order to follow his/her parents working in the Alliance military; (2) an Earthborn, who raised as an orphan on the streets of the great metropolises on Earth and lived among petty crime and underworld gangs; (3) a Colonist, who was born and raised on a world outside the Citadel-controlled space to finally be saved from slavers by a passing Alliance patrol. Class means military specialization and determines a set of talents and skills, such as weapon proficiency and biotic and tech powers. Even Shepard's first name is customizable, it is indeed never stated in-game, being John or Jane the preset ones for a male or a female character respectively.

More relevantly, as regards the protagonist's relationship with the real world, Shepard makes two types of reference to reality. On the one hand, the US astronaut Alan Shepard was the source of inspiration for *Mass Effect* protagonist, as testified to by his/her surname. Commenting on this in an interview (Hudson cit. in Hanson 2011: online), ME3 project director Casey Hudson explained that developers wanted to give the character a last name which could

sound “all-American, not too specific but quite common” and could also refer to one of NASA Mercury Seven astronauts. Ultimately, Alan Shepard was chosen because he perfectly represents the idea of BioWare’s Shepard, being “very tough and very respected”. Likewise, as Alan Shepard was the first American in space (on May 5, 1961), Shepard the character was the first human ever to achieve the elite status of Spectre, a great accomplishment for him/her and the whole human species. Moreover, according to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), Commander Shepard’s birthday (April 11) is a reference to the day when the American attempted manned moon landing mission Apollo 13 was launched (April 11, 1970) and which was originally supposed to be commanded by Alan Shepard. On the other hand, a reference to the real world is made visually and concerns Shepard’s appearance: the default male face is evidently based on that of the Dutch model Mark Vanderloo (Prell 2011: online, Miles Cheong 2012: online), as shown in Figure 21 in Appendix C.

As mentioned in the Introduction (5.1), male Shepard is characterized by a slight Canadian accent due to the nationality of his voice actor Mark Meer. After all, Canada is BioWare’s homeland and, if developers are considered as the point of reference to determine cultural specificity, the Anglo-Canadian culture is the SC of *Mass Effect 3* game world. In localizations, while ME3 was only partially localized into Spanish, i.e. no Spanish voice-over is available, the Italian full localization casts actor Claudio Moneta as Commander Shepard’s male voice.

In ME3 dialogues, Shepard is almost always addressed by his/her surname which is retained in both target texts, with only 7 instances of omission in Italian, as in example (1). Shepard is also addressed and referred to as both ‘Commander Shepard’ (22 occurrences in ME3 corpus), ‘Shepard-Commander’ (11 occurrences in ME3 corpus) or simply ‘Commander’ (2 occurrences in ME3 corpus) but the transfer of this military title will be discussed in Chapter 6. Retention seems to be the most appropriate translation strategy for the protagonist’s name, not only for the purposes of terminological consistency within the series, but also in order to keep the reference to astronaut Alan Shepard intact, as envisioned by developers, across different locales.

5.(1)	Shepard , to what do I owe the pleasure?	Ø A cosa devo il piacere?	Shepard , ¿a qué debo este placer?
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5.3.1.2 Non-playable characters

Mass Effect 3 characters who play the role of helpers are, as already mentioned, Commander Shepard's multicultural squad members: Tali'Zorah, EDI, Liara T'Soni, Ashley Williams, Garrus Vakarian, and James Vega. As Table 14 in Appendix C shows, the number of their names' occurrences testify to their primary role in the game.

Tali'Zorah is the quarian female member of Commander Shepard's squad. Since the quarians are a nomadic species living aboard the Migrant Fleet, Tali was born aboard the liveship "Rayya" and once reached maturity, she departed on her pilgrimage, a typically quarian rite of passage towards adulthood. After travelling for a while, she reached the Citadel, met Shepard and joined his/her team. Tali is also a potential romance option for male Shepard in ME3. As regards her design, like all quarians, she by necessity dress in a highly-sophisticated environmental suit, which protects her from disease or infection which would be lethal to her weak immune system. However, for the first time in the whole series, in ME3 she removes her suit and her face is finally revealed to players.

As regards her name, it is interesting to mention that, as all quarian names, it is made of four parts (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online): the given name and clan name separated by an apostrophe, the title, namely 'nar' meaning "child of" or 'vas' meaning "crew of", the latter being adopted after the pilgrimage, and the name of the vessel the quarian belongs to. For example, 'Tali' is the given name, 'Zorah' is the clan's name, and before the pilgrimage she is 'Tali'Zorah nar Rayya' which refers to the vessel she was born on, after the pilgrimage she becomes 'Tali'Zorah vas Neema' which means that she joined the 'Neema' ship. This naming mechanism allows Shepard to affectionately address Tali as 'Tali'Zorah vas Normandy', as in example (2), in order to express his/her appreciation of Tali's contribution in the war against the Reapers.

5.(2)	It's been an honor, Tali'Zorah vas Normandy.	È stato un onore, Tali'Zorah vas Normandy.	Ha sido un honor, Tali'Zorah vas Normandía.
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In ME3 corpus dialogues, this character is mostly addressed and referred to as simply 'Tali' (13 instances out of 16), only twice as 'Tali'Zorah' and as regards localizations, this character's name is retained in both target languages, as in examples (3) and (4).

- | | | | |
|-------|---|---|--|
| 5.(3) | Tali said you had the largest fleet in the galaxy. | Tali dice che avete la flotta più grossa della galassia... | Tali dijo que tenías la flota más numerosa de la galaxia. |
| 5.(4) | And what of Shepard?
And Tali’Zorah ? | E che mi dice di Shepard?
E di Tali’Zorah ? | ¿Y qué pasa con Shepard?
¿Y con Tali’Zorah ? |

“The Enhanced Defense Intelligence, or EDI (pronounced ‘Eee-Dee’ [i:di:]), is an AI [artificial intelligence] created by Cerberus and installed aboard the Normandy. She is represented visually by a holographic blue sphere and aurally with a feminine voice” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Her main function is to provide information to the Normandy crew at various terminals throughout the ship. However, in ME3 EDI’s role becomes more prominent and actively takes part in combat. Indeed, she seizes control of Cerberus synthetic agent Eva Core’s body and even falls in love with the human pilot Joker. According to Marshall (2012), as explained in *The Art of the Mass Effect Universe*, “EDI’s body needed to be sexy, chrome and robotic, the *Mass Effect* version of Maria from *Metropolis*”. The concept of EDI is therefore inspired by the fictional machine-human character in Fritz Lang’s 1927 silent film *Metropolis*, starring German actress Brigitte Helm in this dual role.

As mentioned, ‘EDI’ is an acronym although pronunciation deviates from standard articulation [i:di:ai] and makes it a distinct proper name. However, its meaning is the base for translators’ renditions, namely *IDA* in Italian, which is also a female proper name, and *SID* in Spanish, as in example (5). These two versions are indeed acronyms resulting from the direct translation of the full form ‘Enhanced Defense Intelligence’, which never occurs in ME3 corpus but, according to ME3 database, becomes *Intelligenza Difensiva Avanzata* in Italian and *Sistema de Inteligencia Defensiva* in Spanish which, as opposed to Italian, presents the addition of the noun *sistema* [system] and the omission of the adjective ‘enhanced’.

- 5.(5) **EDI**, can you clean this up? Puoi migliorare il segnale, **IDA**? **SID**, ¿puedes limpiar esto?

Doctor Liara T’Soni is an archeologist and the asari member of Shepard’s squad, a formidable ally for her biotic skills in combat, and also a potential romance interest for either male or female Shepard. Although mono-gender as all asari people, Liara is distinctly feminine in her human-like appearance: blue complexion, freckled face, semi-flexible and cartilage-based hair-

tentacles, breasts and female voice. According to the series' Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), physically, the US actress Jillian Leigh Murray is Liara's body model, as Figure 22 in Appendix C shows.

In dialogues, this asari character is almost always addressed and referred to as 'Liara', her surname only occurs once and in ME3 localizations, and retention is the strategy used in both TLs as in examples (6) - (8). Interestingly in (8), the transfer of 'Liara T'Soni' in Italian is *la dottoressa T'Soni* [doctor T'Soni] in Italian and this explains the instance of omission.

5.(6)	We'll stop them, Liara . <i>Together.</i>	Li fermeremo, Liara . Insieme.	Los detendremos, Liara . [<i>{M}Juntos.</i>][<i>{F}Juntas.</i>]
5.(7)	Liara believes it can work, and so do I.	Liara ne è convinta, quindi lo sono anch'io.	Liara cree que puede funcionar, y yo también.
5.(8)	{STATIC}been researching the Prothean Archives wit... {STATIC}... Liara T'Soni.	...tiamo cercando negli archivi ... con la dottoressa T'Soni.	... investigando los archivos proteanos co... Liara T'Soni.

As regards example (6), the translation of 'together' in Spanish is gender-tagged because the adverb equivalent *junto* must agree with Commander Shepard's gender. Consequently, the Spanish dialogue line will be "Los detendremos, Liara. Juntos." if Shepard is male and "Los detendremos, Liara. Juntas." if Shepard is female since both characters, namely Shepard and Liara, are women. On the contrary, *insieme* is an invariable adverb in Italian and tags are not necessary.

Ashley Williams is a human System Alliance soldier who serves as one of the human members of Commander Shepard's squad and is also his romance partner in the walkthrough analyzed. Moreover, given her primary role between NPCs, she is one of the poster characters for *Mass Effect 3* and usually appears on the promotional art along with turian Garrus Vakarian. Though she is tough and aggressive on the battlefield, Ashley does have a very sensitive side: she often enjoys talking about her family, especially about her beloved father and sisters, she has strong religious beliefs, she loves poetry and since she is not one for words, poems help her to say what she feels. As regards the latter, through this character four intertextual references are made in game dialogues and will be discussed in Section 5.4.3.

Before analyzing the transfer of this character's name, it seems worth mentioning that she presents different appellations in game dialogues: 'Ashley' (9 occurrences), the abbreviation 'Ash' (10 occurrences) used familiarly by Shepard, and her military context-related names 'Lieutenant-Commander Williams' (5 occurrences) and 'Commander Williams' (1 occurrence), or simply 'Lieutenant-Commander' (4 occurrences) and 'Williams' (1 occurrence) but Table 14 in Appendix C does not include the occurrences containing the military title only. As in examples (9) - (11), as regards translation, the strategy used to transfer both 'Ashley', its abbreviation 'Ash' and her surname 'Williams' is quite expectedly retention while military titles are directly translated but this category will be discussed in more details in Chapter 6.

5.(9)	Come on, Shepard. Ashley's headed to the Normandy. [...]	Forza, Shepard... Ashley è diretta alla Normandy. [...]	Vamos, Shepard. Ashley se dirige a la Normandía. [...]
5.(10)	I shouldn't have to explain myself to you, Ash .	Non dovrei giustificarmi con te, Ash .	No debería tener que darte explicaciones, Ash .
5.(11)	As you were, Williams .	Riposo, Williams .	Descansa, Williams .

Garrus Vakarian is the turian member of Commander Shepard's squad who works as C-Sec officer. As most turians, given his high-level military training, also testified to by his heavy armor default outfit, he is regarded as an invaluable resource against Reaper forces. In ME3, Garrus is also a potential romance for female Shepard and, along with Ashley Williams, he is one of the poster characters for the title, who appears on most of the promotional art and demo footage. In game dialogues, Garrus is addressed by his first name, his surname occurs only once in example (12) which, as regards translation, also shows that this turian character's name is retained in both target texts.

5.(12)	We're a team, Garrus . There's no Shepard without Vakarian , so you better remember to duck.	Siamo una squadra, Garrus . Non c'è Shepard senza Vakarian , per cui cerca di fare attenzione.	Somos un equipo, Garrus . No hay Shepard sin Vakarian , así que mejor que te acuerdes de agacharte.
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Lieutenant James Vega is a human Systems Alliance Marine and, along with Ashley Williams, another human member of Commander Shepard’s squad in ME3. He is a new character in the series who “was created to appeal to new players entering the franchise with Mass Effect 3” (*IGN Wikis* 2011: online) who, one might guess, are Hispanic Americans. Vega is a brave and loyal soldier, a good-looking and imposing man whose way of speaking is ironic or even sarcastic. As his surname suggests, he is of Spanish origin. Indeed, Vega is often peppering his speech with Spanish words and idioms, and this contributes to characterize his persona. For example, Vega addresses and refers to Steve Cortez as “Esteban” which is just Spanish for “Steve”, he nicknames male Shepard as “Loco” and female Shepard as “Lola” but they do not occur in ME3 corpus. Instead, in the dialogues analyzed, an instance of this Latino talk can be found in the way he defines Shepard’s decision to go to Mars, as ordered by Admiral Hackett, as “loco” [crazy], as in example (13). This is the only occurrence in the corpus but in the game database, dialogue lines uttered by Vega are full of Spanish language items, thus opening up new directions for future research as regards the linguistic representation of minorities in video games.

5.(13)	Joker. Set a course for the Mars Archives. Mars? Roger that. This is loco !	Joker, imposta la rotta per gli archivi di Marte. Marte? Ricevuto. Tutto questo è assurdo !	Joker. Prepara un rumbo hacia los archivos de Marte. ¿Marte? Recibido. ¡Esto es de locos !
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As (13) illustrates, ‘loco’ has been translated into *assurdo* [absurd] in Italian and *de locos* [of crazy people] in Spanish, thus losing the foreignizing effect in both languages for different reasons. In Italian, ‘loco’ is neutralized into a local equivalent, even if the Spanish word is likely to be familiar to Italian players. Conversely, in Spanish, the Spanish borrowing in ME3 source text is inevitably domesticated, even when retained, unless translators decide to reproduce the foreignizing effect through different linguistic resources such as, for example, Spanish regional varieties or special idiolects. Going back to his names, James (7 occurrences) is the main way other characters address and refer to him and, in localizations, both his first name and ‘Vega’ (2 occurrences) are retained in TTs, as in examples (14) and (15).

5.(14)	James? You read me?	James? Mi ricevi?	¿ James? ¿Me recibes?
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- 5.(15) **Vega** said he had “just the thing” to take my mind off stuff. **Vega** diceva di avere “la cosa giusta” per farmi rilassare. **Vega** dijo que tenía “lo mejor” para desconectar.

The second category of non-playable characters is that of villains. As already discussed, the Reapers are Shepard’s main enemies in *Mass Effect 3* but references to these horrific machines are discussed in Section 5.3.4 because they represent a race in ME universe. More relevantly, the antagonists whose names as individual references occur in ME3 corpus are related to the terrorist organization named Cerberus, namely the Illusive Man and Kai Leng.

The Illusive Man is the elusive, secretive, and well informed leader of Cerberus. He has close-cropped silver-grey hair with ‘steely blue’ eyes which appear to be prosthetic. The Illusive Man’s real name and his life before Cerberus are both long forgotten by most. For years, the Illusive Man has been using Cerberus and his immense network of contacts to achieve his goal - that of making humanity ascendant above all other races. He is described as having the best and worst traits of humanity rolled into one man.

(Mass Effect Wiki: online)

According to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki: online*), “the Illusive Man was a normal civilian with a job and a family until the discovery of alien life” which felt as a threat to human race’s supremacy in the galaxy. His nickname was chosen by the Systems Alliance intelligence to refer to the untraceable author of an e-mail which was circulating across the galaxy and which called for humanity to assert its power to its new alien contacts (*Mass Effect Wiki: online*). “In terms of appearance, the Illusive Man is dressed in an impeccable futuristic-style suit, combined with the casual swagger of a charming billionaire; he also seems to possess unique patterns on his irises” (*Mass Effect Wiki: online*). In ME3 events, the Illusive Man plans to employ the Crucible to dominate the Reapers and use their advanced technology for humanity’s benefit and for this purpose, any kind of methods is licit: he orders direct attacks on the other factions in the galaxy, attempts to stop Shepard from recovering the fertile krogan female on Sur’Kesh, he tries to instigate war between the turians and krogan by detonating a bomb on Tuchanka, orders an attack on the Citadel to assist Councilor Udina in taking control over the Council, among others (*Mass Effect Wiki: online*).

Moreover, “the Illusive Man may be inspired by the Cigarette Smoking Man from the television series *The X-Files*. Like the Illusive Man, the Smoking Man is a member of a shadowy organization (The Syndicate) who alternately aids and opposes the protagonists of the series in their endeavors” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As for his name, *Mass Effect* executive producer Casey Hudson (cit. in OXM Staff 2014: online) explains that “Illusive Man” came from an idea he had to name one of BioWare’s “early graphics engines - Illusive, a bit of a play on words” and since this character is the head of a private intelligence group, a master of manipulating information who works in total secrecy, “the Illusive name came up again”.

In ME3 localizations, as in example (16), this enemy character’s name is directly translated in both TLs but, while *ilusorio* seems to be the *prima facie* equivalent of ‘illusive’ in Spanish, *misterioso* [mysterious] does not seem to convey the same meaning because in Italian, when qualifying people, refers to being surrounded by mystery, to being enigmatic, cryptic, evasive (*Treccani Dictionary of Italian language* 2016: online). In English, ‘illusive’ means illusory, not real although seeming to be, produced by illusion, thus deceptive and unreal (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online). In this light, although *Uomo Misterioso* is a good solution, more emphasis on this character’s illusive nature – after all he always appears as a hologram and his actual existence might be doubtful to say the least –, would have been more faithful and, one might add, enjoyable.

5.(16)	The Illusive Man implied as much.	L’ Uomo Misterioso ha lasciato molti sottintesi.	Eso mismo pareció querer decir el Hombre Ilusorio .
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The second enemy character whose name occurs in ME3 corpus is Kai Leng, “an assassin working for the human-survivalist organization Cerberus. Leng was formerly a lieutenant and N7 marine in the Systems Alliance known for having anti-alien attitudes. He is described as being an Earthborn with features that show his dominant Chinese heritage” although the weapon he wields is based “on a Japanese ‘ninjatō’, a straight (and often shorter) variant of the samurai’s katana” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). It was exactly Leng’s xenophobic nature what drew the attention of the Illusive Man who made Leng become his most trusted agent, working as an infiltrator and assassin (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In ME3, Leng often appears among the forces Cerberus sends against Commander Shepard. As regards his name, according to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), in Chinese “Leng” means “cold” and might be

interpreted as “isolated” or “merciless” in Kai Leng’s case. This character’s name is transferred by means of retention in both target texts, as in example (17).

5.(17)	Oh, and Shepard -- I meant what I said earlier about Kai Leng .	E... Shepard. Ero serio quando parlavo di Kai Leng .	Ah, y Shepard... No olvides lo que te dije de Kai Leng .
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As regards the third category of NPCs, other characters include the most relevant non-playable characters in ME3 who are neither Shepard’s squad members nor antagonists and whose selection depends on the significance of their names’ in cultural, linguistic and translational terms with respect to the relationship between the real world and ME3 world. However, for practical purposes, as in Table 14 in Appendix C, a simple subclassification has been made on the basis of the races they belong to, namely human, asari, salarian, krogan, quarian and turian characters.

Among all human characters featured in ME3, for the purposes of this study, those deserving more attention are Miranda Lawson, Jeff “Joker” Moreau, David Anderson, Steven Hackett, Steve Cortez and Samantha Traynor, the latter two representing potential homosexual romance options for Shepard.

Miranda Lawson is a human who has been one of the best Cerberus officers in *Mass Effect* (2007) and *Mass Effect 2* (2010) to finally escape from the Illusive Man and join Commander Shepard’s war against the Reapers in *Mass Effect 3*. Miranda is also a potential romantic interest for male Shepard. This character’s design, especially her face, is modeled after Yvonne Strahovski, Miranda’s voice actress (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), as Figure 23 in Appendix C shows.

Interestingly, the character’s original Norwegian surname “Solheim” was changed into “Lawson” in order to match with Yvonne Strahovski’s Australian accent (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Moreover, “Solheim” seems to mean “sun home” in Norwegian language, and refers to the fact that Miranda is one of the few characters born on Earth (representing the solar system) while, as regards her first name, “Miranda” means “to be wondered at” from the verb *miror* [wonder, admire] in Latin and refers to her engineering perfect nature (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In ME3 corpus, Miranda Lawson is always addressed and referred to by her first name which is retained in both target texts, as in (18).

5.(18) **Miranda**, what's going on? Che succede, **Miranda**? **Miranda**, ¿qué sucede?

Flight Lieutenant Jeff “Joker” Moreau is the human pilot of the SSV Normandy. Joker is an excellent pilot and confident to the point of arrogance, often pointing out his prowess to others while specifying that his many accomplishments and commendations were all earned, and not due to charity for his medical problems. Indeed, according to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), Joker has the Vrolik syndrome, also known as “Osteogenesis imperfecta”, a real congenital bone disorder which causes extreme brittleness in the bones. He was born with severe fractures to his legs and even with modern medicine he finds walking nearly impossible, relying on crutches and leg braces. Accordingly, he rarely leaves the Normandy’s bridge. Joker’s main storyline in *Mass Effect 3* centers around his relationship with the artificial intelligence that controls the Normandy, EDI.

Even if, like some other characters in the *Mass Effect* series, Joker bears a marked physical resemblance to the actor who provides his voice, namely Seth Benjamin Green, as Figure 24 in Appendix C demonstrates, the game executive producer Casey Hudson tweeted that “Joker’s face was modeled from an applicant in a BioWare Edmonton casting call” (Hudson 2011: online).

More relevantly, according to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), in ME universe Joker got his nickname from his flight school instructor, due to his wisecracking character which provides the whole crew comic relief. Indeed, throughout the game, especially in conversations with Shepard, Joker constantly makes wisecracks with references to popular culture movies: *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (Jay Roach 1999), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick 1968), *The Matrix* (Lana and Andy Wachowski 1999), and *Aliens* (James Cameron 1986), amongst others, but these intertextual references are not made in the parts of the walkthrough analyzed. His name might be itself a reference to pop culture, Joker is the fictional supervillain of the American *Batman* transmedia franchise or, put it simply, *nomen omen*, the sense of this character’s nickname lies in the English word origin, namely the verb “joke” plus the agent suffix “-er”, meaning “a person who jokes, esp in an obnoxious manner” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online).

In ME3 corpus, this character is addressed and referred to by his nickname almost always, his surname presents no occurrences while ‘Jeff’ occurs only once in a dialogue line uttered by

Joker's partner EDI, as in (19) and (20) and these examples also show that the translation strategy is retention for both the nickname and the first name.

- | | | | |
|--------|---|--|---|
| 5.(19) | Get us to the Citadel,
Joker . | Portaci alla Cittadella,
Joker . | Llévanos a la Ciudadela,
Joker . |
| 5.(20) | [...] Jeff was the one who
allowed me to think for
myself. | [...] Poi Jeff mi fece dono
del libero arbitrio. | [...] Jeff fue quien me hizo
pensar por mí misma. |

Admiral David Anderson is a human war hero, the original captain of the SSV Normandy and one of the System Alliance's most decorated special forces operatives. As he tells Shepard in a conversation, Anderson was born in London, being the only human whose real-world origin is specified in game dialogues. In the walkthrough analyzed, Anderson fights along with Shepard against the Reapers since the very beginning but, after he decides to remain on Earth to lead the resistance, he only appears from time to time in game dialogues via holo-conferences, periodically updating Shepard on the state of Earth and occasionally giving the Commander pieces of advice. At the end of the walkthrough, he enters the battlefield again to help Shepard to fight the Illusive Man who finally shoots Anderson to death.

Given the military setting, it comes as no surprise that this character is always addressed and referred to by his surname which is occasionally preceded by the title: out of a total of 23 occurrences, 'Anderson' and 'Admiral Anderson' present 19 and 4 occurrences respectively in ME3 corpus while 'Admiral', when referring to Anderson, presents 3 occurrences but they are not included in Table 14 in Appendix C. While his military title is directly translated, but this will be further discussed in Chapter 6, this character's surname is transferred by means of retention in both target texts, as in (21) and (22).

- | | | | |
|--------|--|---|--|
| 5.(21) | Commander, Admiral
Anderson is available on
vid comm. | Comandante, l' ammiraglio
Anderson è in contatto
video. | Comandante, el almirante
Anderson está por
videoconferencia. |
| 5.(22) | Anderson wants us to go
to the Citadel; get help for
the fight. | Anderson ci vuole alla
Cittadella, a cercare nuovi
alleati. | Anderson quiere que
vayamos a la Ciudadela, a
conseguir ayuda. |

Admiral Steven Hackett is a human top-ranking official of the Systems Alliance Navy and commanding officer of the human Fifth Fleet, who was born in Buenos Aires, although no explicit reference is made in ME3 corpus, and after high-level military training, Hackett enlisted in the Alliance military forces (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Since he is based at Arcturus Station, the game scenes featuring him are mainly dialogues via video communications or holo-conferences in which he debriefs Shepard after a mission. Along with Admiral Anderson, given the military nature of his relationship with Commander Shepard, Hackett is mostly referred to by his surname (12 occurrences), often preceded by his military title (9 occurrences) but he is also addressed to as simply ‘Admiral’ (4 occurrences). While the latter, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, is directly translated, ‘Hackett’ is retained in both target languages, as in (23) and (24).

- | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|
| 5.(23) | <i>Admiral</i> Hackett ’s mobilizing the fleets. | <i>L’ammiraglio</i> Hackett sta mobilitando le flotte. | El <i>almirante</i> Hackett está movilizando a las flotas. |
| 5.(24) | Hackett didn’t mention in his report... | Non c’è nel rapporto di Hackett ... | Hackett no mencionó en su informe... |

Moreover, together with 2 instances of omission, in Italian there is an extra occurrence concerning this character. As in example (25), the source text ‘the Admiral’ in a military formulaic expression belonging to radio conversation procedures, presents the addition of this character’s surname, thus explicating that Hackett is the speaker character.

- | | | | |
|--------|--|---|---|
| 5.(25) | All ships. This is the Admiral . The Crucible is on the move. [...] | A tutte le navi, qui è l’ ammiraglio Hackett . Il Crucibolo è in marcia. [...] | A todas las naves, al habla el almirante . El Crisol está en movimiento. [...] |
|--------|--|---|---|

In ME3, “Lieutenant Steve Cortez is an Alliance pilot aboard the Normandy” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Given his homosexuality, Cortez is a potential romance option for male Commander Shepard and, from the perspective of gender representation, this character deserves a brief discussion. When not engaged in combat, Cortez is often depicted as a mourning man who spends his time by thinking of his husband Robert, who died in ME2 events, and listening to

the audio recording of his last call. Before dying, Robert called Steve to warn him against alien invasion and asked him to escape from the remote station he was staying at. Steve begged Robert to escape with him, but Robert knew it was too late and asked Steve not to come after him, but to let him go and move on. “Moving on” is exactly what Cortez is not able to do yet. In this light, the representation of the ME3 male gay character seems to become a point of debate. As Parlock (2016: online) complains, Cortez represents the “tragically gay” stereotype because “most of his story arc revolves around him coming to terms with the death of his husband” and “his unresolved grief results in him committing reckless actions that cause his own death”. In Parlock’s opinion (2016: online), “gayness is used as decoration to show how cruel and unforgiving the world is” and gay tragedy becomes “a quick shorthand to make the world seem just that bit grimmer”. From a wider perspective, however, as Tassi (2016: online) suggests, Cortez is one of the best gay characters in mainstream video games and the potential romance with male Shepard a “good move forward for the series, and the industry as a whole” despite of the infamous gay sex scene between the two which caused a severe backlash by anti-gay conservatives (see Eadicicco 2012 and Yalburgi 2012).

In ME3 corpus, this character’s first name ‘Steve’ occurs only once in the string containing the audio recording of Robert’s last call, as in example (26). As regards his surname (4 occurrences), which may be preceded by titles like “shuttle pilot” and “lieutenant”, ‘Cortez’ is the appellation by which he is always addressed and referred to and in localizations it is retained in both target languages, as in example (27).

5.(26)	I love you, but I know you. Don’t make me an anchor. Promise me, Steve .	Ti amo, ma ti conosco bene. Non voglio diventare il tuo fardello. Promettimelo, Steve .	Te amo, pero sé cómo eres. Debes seguir adelante. Prométemelo, Steve .
5.(27)	Commander, you may want to check in on shuttle pilot Cortez down in the armory.	Comandante, dovresti andare a parlare con il pilota Cortez , giù nell’armeria.	Comandante, deberías ir a ver al piloto de lanzaderas Cortez al arsenal.

Samantha Traynor is the Communication Specialist aboard the Normandy in ME3, a new character in the whole series. Her family is from London although she was born on a human

colony and, since she attended Oxford University, she has a strong British received pronunciation accent. She is a potential romance option for female Shepard and, with respect to gay representation, Samantha Traynor is the (only) openly lesbian character in *Mass Effect* universe. In the character's writer Patrick Weekes' words (cit. in Narcisse 2012: online), Samantha was envisioned as "a mostly lighthearted fish out of water, a very smart lab tech trying to adjust to life on the front lines, with her identity as a lesbian present but not shouted from the rooftops". In ME3 corpus dialogues, Samantha is always addressed and referred to as 'Traynor' which is retained in both localizations, as in example (28).

5.(28) Good work, **Traynor**. Ben fatto, **Traynor**. Buen trabajo, **Traynor**.

Other human characters whose primary narrative role determines a high number of occurrences in ME3 database are ambassador Donnel Udina; the Citadel Security Services officer Armando Owen Bailey; one of the Grissom Academy professors Kahlee Sanders; one of the Grissom Academy students Jason Prangle, and the Systems Alliance News Network war correspondent Diana Allers. All these human characters' names are retained in both target languages.

Aria T'Loak, the *de facto* ruler of Omega, the space station which is described as the Terminus Systems' dark, twisted counterpart to the Citadel (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), and Jona Sederis, the commando who founded and leads the asari mercenary organization known as "Eclipse" (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), are the two primary asari characters in ME3. Their names are retained in both target languages.

Given the salarian culture inclination for science and research, as explored in Section 5.3.4, it comes as no surprise that the two salarian characters whose names occur in ME3 corpus are scientists: Mordin Solus and Maelon Heplorn. They are two geneticists whose contribution to the modification of the biological weapon of mass destruction known as "genophage" was fundamental (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Their names are transferred by means of retention in both localizations.

The two krogan characters performing a primary role in ME3 events are Wreav, the leader of the krogan clan Urdnot on Tuchanka, and Eve, a female krogan shaman, the only survivor of salarian scientist Maelon's experiments to cure the genophage (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In ME3 dialogues, these two names present different translation strategies: retention for Wreav,

as in example (29) and direct translation for ‘Eve’, as in (30) supposedly due to the biblical reference Mordin Solus made when he chose her name (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online).

5.(29)	He worries me. Wreav has the makings of a tyrant.	Mi preoccupa. Wreav ha il potenziale per essere un tiranno.	Me preocupa. Wreav tiene las maneras de un tirano.
5.(30)	Eve isn’t around to tell me what to do anymore.	Eva non è più qui a darmi ordini.	Eva ya no está para decirme lo que debo hacer.

The four quarian characters whose names occur in ME3 corpus are all members of the quarian Admiralty Board, the military institution which oversees the quarian civilian government known as Conclave. They all appear during the ninth and the tenth priority missions in which Shepard fights along with the quarians against the geth and the Reapers to save Rannoch, the quarian homeworld. In ME3, they are always addressed and referred to by their surnames, namely Xen, Koris, Raan and Gerrel often preceded by the military title ‘Admiral’. As regards translation, while the title is directly translated, all proper names are transferred by means of retention.

Lastly, Lieutenant Tarquin Victus and General Adrien Victus, the former being the latter’s son, are the two turian characters featured in the ME3 walkthrough selected. In the corpus, Tarquin Victus is more present than his father, as testified to by the higher number of references but their names are both retained in localizations.

5.3.2 Collective references

As Table 15 in Appendix C illustrates, in *Mass Effect 3*, collective references include names of the human Systems Alliance special forces units, especially artillery companies, such as ‘Able’, ‘Bravo’, ‘Charlie’, ‘Delta’, ‘Echo’, ‘Foxtrot’, ‘Golf’ and ‘Hammer’, ‘India’, ‘Kilo’, ‘November’, and ‘Sword’, names of race-specific gangs like the krogan ‘Blood Pack’, of race-specific mercenary groups like the asari ‘Eclipse’, of race-specific clans like the krogan ‘Urdnot’ and ‘Weyloc’, or names of multiracial mercenary legions like the ‘Blue Suns’. Figure 25 shows the strategies translators used to deal with these names.

As regards the first group, human special forces squads deployed against the Reapers are mostly named after the military phonetic alphabet letters and, although they refer to fictional

military units, given the specialization of these terms, their transfer will be analyzed and discussed in more details in Chapter 6. The only exceptions in the group of human special forces are the squads named ‘Hammer’ and ‘Sword’ which represent the war assets of all allied fleets, starships, and ground forces available to Commander Shepard during the game final mission to save Earth. As in examples (31) and (32), these two companies’ codenames are retained in Italian and directly translated in Spanish.

- | | | | |
|--------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 5.(31) | Hammer squads, go, go, go! | Squadre Hammer! Via libera! | ¡Pelotones de Martillo!
¡Adelante, adelante! |
| 5.(32) | Normandy’s rejoining
Sword. | La Normandy torna con Sword. | La Normandía se reúne con Espada. |

As regards the second group of collective references, race-specific or multiracial gangs and mercenary groups present names which seem to require a translation strategy able to disclose their meaning, if any. For example, the ‘Blue Suns’ are named after the “tattoo of a blue sun somewhere on their body” which, during high-risk jobs, can be temporarily removed with an acid wash to prevent them being identified (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Similarly, it is possible to speculate that ‘Blood Pack’ refers to the aggressive and cruel nature of these mercenaries who resemble wolves. As in example (33), these two proper names are indeed directly translated into *Sole Blu* and *Soles Azules* as regards the former, and *Branco Sanguinario* and *Manada Sangrienta* as for the latter in Italian and Spanish respectively. On the contrary, the asari mercenary legion known as ‘Eclipse’, whose name apparently refers to an astronomical event, is retained in both target languages, as in (33).

- | | | | |
|--------|--|---|---|
| 5.(33) | On Omega, I kept the Blood Pack, Blue Suns, and Eclipse somewhat in check. [...] | Su Omega, riuscivo in qualche modo a controllare Branco Sanguinario, Sole Blu ed Eclipse. [...] | En Omega, tenía en el bolsillo más o menos a la Manada Sangrienta, los Soles Azules y Eclipse. [...] |
|--------|--|---|---|

Finally, as regards the proper names of the two krogan clans mentioned in ME3 corpus, namely ‘Urdnot’ and ‘Weyloc’, they are both transferred by means of retention in both TLs, as in examples (34) and (35).

5.(34)	[...] it will force the other clans to accept Urdnnot rule as supreme.	[...] Costringerà gli altri clan ad accettare il governo degli Urdnnot .	[...] Obligarà a los demás clanes a aceptar la supremacía de los Urdnnot .
5.(35)	[...] We heard Maelon was trying to cure the genophage for Clan Weyrloc .	[...] Dicevano che Maelon stesse cercando di curare la genofagia per il clan Weyrloc .	[...] Habíamos oído que Maelon estaba intentando curar la genofagia para el clan Weyrloc .

5.3.3 Geographical references

As discussed in the Introduction (5.1), the setting of *Mass Effect 3* events is the real-world Milky Way galaxy, the large spiral system consisting of several billion stars which, in ME3 universe, is navigable through the Galaxy Map on the Normandy, as shown in Figure 27 of Appendix C. The game’s galaxy is made of several clusters, which are large areas that are linked together by the mass relay network and contain one or more star systems, the latter including numerous planets, moons, asteroids, space stations, starships, and mass relays. Each geographical location in ME3 universe has a very precise position in the galaxy, and in terms of world-building, it presents distinctive characteristics in terms of length, width, weight, orbital distance, pressure, temperature, layout, population, history, etc.

As regards the realism-fictionality relationship, as Mitchell (2012: online) remarks, “the geography of Mass Effect is an interesting mix of realism and fiction. Some of the places that you can zoom through or visit are real astronomical objects (like the Horsehead Nebula, Eagle Nebula, and Hourglass Nebula). Many others appear to be made up entirely”. As regards the latter in particular, “the astronomical imagery in the Mass Effect video games [...] has an impressive level of realism. You can explore nebulae and star systems, collect data about exoplanets... and so much of the imagery looks like something straight from a NASA press release” (Mitchell 2012: online). Moreover, as Hudson explains (cit. in Mitchell 2012: online), the design of the countless fictional exoplanets in ME universe, i.e. planets orbiting stars besides real Sun, was based on some basic astronomical and mathematical principles that provided reasonably believable results. Conversely, but more relevantly for this study purposes, the naming process was completely random and meant the concatenation of several lists of word segments which created strange names which “worked surprisingly well” (Hudson cit. in

Mitchell 2012: online). Table 16 in Appendix C lists the fictional geographical references which occur in ME3 corpus while translation tendencies are illustrated in Figure 26 in Appendix C.

Given the multiracial extent of the war against the Reapers in ME3, it comes as no surprise that the most frequently occurring place name, between those belonging to the category of *irrealia*, is the Citadel. “Supposedly constructed by the long-extinct Protheans”, and first discovered by the asari race, the Citadel is a “colossal deep-space station” which “serves as the capital of the Citadel Council” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), the latter may be defined as the galaxy governing body. Moreover, since it is “strategically located at the junction of a number of mass relays leading to various parts of the galaxy, the Citadel quickly became a hub of activity” and “the political and cultural heart of Citadel space, the unofficial name given to all systems that fall under the Citadel species’ control” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) and that basically encompass most of the galaxy. The Citadel is one of the most iconic features of ME franchise universe and, according to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect*: online), it seems to pay homage to the fictional space station “Babylon 5” of the namesake television series. The Citadel’s inner space is home to the Presidium, the Wards, and numerous spaceports. “The Presidium is a massive, park-like complex” which contains “the offices of the various branches of the galactic government, as well as the embassies of all the races represented in the Citadel. There are also shops, restaurants and recreational facilities” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) such as the dance club and bar named “Purgatory” and the “Huerta Memorial Hospital”. The Wards “constitute the residential and commercial sectors of the station. Densely populated, housing millions of residents from many galactic species, the Wards are akin to Earth cities such as Hong Kong and Singapore” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The popular night club named “Flux” is also located in the Wards.

As regards the translation of these geographical references, different strategies may be observed. First, ‘Citadel’ is directly translated into *Cittadella* and *Ciudadela* in Italian and Spanish respectively and the original meaning of “stronghold” and “little city” English language has borrowed from Old French [*citadelle*] and Old Italian [*cittadella*] is maintained (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online), as example (36) shows. Direct translation is also used to transfer ‘Wards’ into *Distritos* [districts] in Spanish, while the Italian translator focused on the residential nature and adopted a specification, namely *agglomerati* [built-up areas, conurbations], as in (37). Partial retention is used in Spanish to render ‘Huerta Memorial Hospital’ – which may also occur in the abbreviated form, as in (38) –, since the noun ‘Hospital’

becomes *hospital* and is placed before ‘Huerta Memorial’, while in Italian the whole proper name is retained, as in (39). Similarly, ‘Purgatory’, ‘Presidium’ and ‘Flux’ are retained in both TLs, as in examples (37), (40) and (41) respectively.

5.(36)	Get us to the Citadel , Joker.	Portaci alla Cittadella , Joker.	Llévanos a la Ciudadela , Joker.
5.(37)	Now arriving at Wards level, Purgatory .	Arrivo al livello agglomerati, Purgatory .	Llegando a los Distritos , Purgatory .
5.(38)	Listen! I am a surgeon at Huerta Memorial on the Citadel! [...]	Mi ascolti! Sono un chirurgo dell’ Huerta Memorial , sulla Cittadella! [...]	¡Escuche! ¡Soy cirujana del Huerta Memorial , de la Ciudadela! [...]
5.(39)	Now arriving at Huerta Memorial Hospital .	Arrivo all’ Huerta Memorial Hospital .	Llegando al hospital Huerta Memorial .
5.(40)	I need a cab to the Presidium .	Mi serve un taxi per il Presidium .	Necesito un taxi que me lleve al Presidium .
5.(41)	[...] I found them drinking in Flux but they won’t even look me in the eye.	[...] Li ho trovati a bere a Flux , ma non sono neppure riusciti a guardarmi negli occhi.	[...] Me los he encontrado bebiendo en el Flux , pero ni tan siquiera me han mirado a la cara.

As regards the Huerta Memoria Hospital, it seems worth mentioning that this name is a metaludic reference to President Christopher Huerta of the United North American States (UNAS) on Earth which, in *Mass Effect* futuristic universe, is a confederacy of nations (Canada, Mexico and the USA) created in the late 21st century. As regards the quality of the renditions above, it is important to specify that the preposition before the night club Flux should be articulated and the correct translation should be *al Flux*, since the definite article is necessary, as happens in Spanish.

Another substantial group of fictional geographical references is that of planets or, better said, other races’ homeworlds. In order of number of occurrences, they are: Tuchanka, the krogan homeworld; Palaven, the turian homeworld; Thessia, the asari homeworld; Rannoch, the former quarian homeworld which in quarian language means “walled garden” and which is

now largely inhabited (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online); Sur’Kesh, the salarian homeworld; Benning, a former human colony; Kahje, the hanar homeworld; Haestrom, a former quarian colony; Taetrus, a turian colony; and Ferris Fields, a human colony. Between these planets, special attention must be paid to Thessia, known for its vast reserves of element zero, a (fictional) material which, thanks to the dark energy it releases, can produce mass effect fields and allow faster-than-light space travel without causing time dilation. Moreover, this planet’s name seems to refer to the Greek region of Thessaly (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Other fictional geographical references in ME3 corpus include: two space stations, namely Omega and Arcturus Station; a huge nebula known as the Perseus Veil; a small moon named Torfan, and a place for the afterlife in krogan culture called “the Void”. As regards the transfer of these proper names, two main tendencies may be observed and they fall under the labels of retention and direct translation.

On the one hand, all planets’ names are kept unaltered in localizations. Retention is also used for ‘Omega’ and ‘Torfan’. On the other hand, as in examples (42) and (43), the nebula ‘Perseus Veil’ and krogans’ afterlife destination, namely ‘the Void’, are transferred by means of direct translation, as happens for the rendition of ‘Arcturus Station’ in Spanish. On the contrary, in Italian only the noun ‘Station’ is substituted by its equivalent *stazione* without capital letter since the proper name ‘Arcturus’ is maintained in its original form, although a local version, namely *Arturo*, would be workable. In this light, given the consequent expansion of the whole noun phrase, the Italian translator’s choice is considered as an instance of direct translation.

5.(42)	[...] The majority of geth behind the Perseus Veil wished to study organic life-forms, [...].	[...] Quasi tutti i Geth oltre il Velo di Perseo vogliono studiare la vita organica, [...].	[...] La mayoría de los geth tras el Velo de Perseo deseaban estudiar las formas de vida orgánicas, [...].
5.(43)	But she knew she would enter the Void free of this curse – [...]	Ma lei sapeva che sarebbe ascesa al Vuoto libera da questa maledizione... [...]	Pero ella sabía que entraría en el Vacío libre de su maldición... [...]

5.3.4 Ethnic references

Mass Effect universe is populated with dozens of different (fictional) species which, together with real-world humans, work to build a better galactic community and, specifically in ME3,

cooperate to stop the Reapers' invasion. All species in the game have their own unique features, with specific biological, cultural, economic, government and military traits. Exploring their characteristics in details would be fascinating and would help to better understand how accurately developed is ME galaxy-size world but, for the purposes of this study, only the most relevant aspects of the imaginary races which appear in the walkthrough selected will be discussed, especially when related to interesting linguistic and translational phenomena, in order to provide the background to the variety of ME3 ethnic references which fall into the category of *irrealia*.

As Table 17 and Figure 28 in Appendix C clearly illustrate, the transfer of irreal ethnic references in ME3 corpus seems to show a general tendency towards retention in both TLs. However, while the Italian translator retained alien species' names and, above all, capitalized them when they serve as a noun referring to the whole race, even if standard Italian does not capitalize either adjectives or nouns denoting nationality or affiliation with a place, in Spanish most of names are retained but slightly adapted into a local version made of the species' name consonant-ending root plus the suffixes -o and -a. For example, 'quarian', 'turian', 'batarian' become *quariano/a*, *turiano/a*, *batariano/a* respectively. Moreover, findings demonstrate the Italian use of another tendency, namely transcreation, thus pointing at translators' willingness to harness their writing skills to make names sound more enjoyable to target players. Given this study focus on cultural specificity, each race deserves a brief explanation, which is provided in the following part of this section.

Expectedly enough, the most frequent fictional ethnic reference in ME3 corpus, and also in the whole ME3 database, is to Shepard's enemies *par excellence*: the Reapers. They are "a highly-advanced machine race of synthetic-organic starships", which "reside in dark space: the vast, mostly starless space between galaxies. They hibernate there, dormant for fifty thousand years at a time, before returning to the galaxy" in order to commit their cyclical galactic genocide (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The Reapers are the original creators of the Citadel and of the mass relay network which they have been using to harvest the galaxy's sentient species for countless millennia. "A Reaper is essentially billions of organic minds, uploaded and conjoined within immortal machine bodies" (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) and physically they resemble to "cuttlefish or squid, with a bulky semi-cylindrical body, a tapering plate over the rear and five tentacle-like 'legs' or arms extending from its front end, in addition to six jointed legs extending from its body. [...] Colossal in size, Reapers are known to range from 160 meters to over 2

kilometers in length” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). There are five Reaper subtypes, “which vary significantly in size, purpose and firepower” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). “Harvesters”, “husks” and the “Harbinger” are the most relevant here, the latter is the first Reaper ever created and the largest and most powerful capital ship, thus it will be discussed in Section 5.3.6. Going back to the species, Reapers’ major weapons is a type of permanent mental manipulation called “indoctrination”: “any organic being who is in close proximity to a Reaper or certain Reaper artifacts for too long comes to believe the Reapers are correct in their goals, and will do anything to serve them. Gradually, the mind is eroded until the individual becomes a mindless slave no longer capable of independent thought” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As the series’ Wiki suggests (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), it is possible to speculate that the Reapers’ source of inspiration has literary origin: “the idea of a terrifying and incomprehensible alien intelligence waiting in the depths of space is a feature of Lovecraftian horror” and an implicit reference is made to American author Howard Phillips Lovecraft’s philosophy on Cosmicism, since the Reapers “are portrayed as incomprehensible with reasoning and long-term goals that are made out to be impossible for organics to ever understand. They also claim to be the pinnacle of existence and that organic beings could never obtain this level of meaning on their own” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As regards their appellation, it seems worth underlining that in ME3 universe “Reapers” was a name bestowed by the Protheans, while the geth refer to them as the “Old Machines”. From a linguistic and translational perspective, ‘Reaper’ as a name turns out to be an interesting phenomenon. In English, it is an agentive noun made of the verb “reap” and the suffix “-er”. “Reap” is an agriculture-related verb which means “to cut or harvest (a crop), esp corn, from (a field or tract of land)” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online) and, consequently, a reaper is the farmer who (or the farm machine which) cuts and gather crops. Its use in *Mass Effect* textual world seems to underline exactly this race’s mission to cyclically reap all organic life in the galaxy; after all, the word “reaper” presents a steady figurative use, especially in literary works, which refers to war, famine, epidemic and death. As regards the latter, “the Grim Reaper” is indeed “an imaginary character who represents death. He looks like a skeleton, wears a long, black cloak with a hood, and carries a scythe” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online). In this light, this race name perfectly serves its evocative function in the ST. In localizations, the relationship between the agricultural image of reaping and the ideas of death and devastation is successfully transferred but translators seem to use different strategies. As in example (44), while in Spanish ‘Reapers’ is directly translated into *segadores*

with lower case letter, the Italian translator transcreated the name into *Razziatori* [raiders], an agentive noun deriving from the verb *razziare* [raid]. A direct translation in Italian would have been *mietitori* since the equivalent of the verb ‘reap’ is *mietere* but *Razziatori*, possibly thanks to double-zed sound, seems to sound more frightening. Moreover, from a contrastive perspective, it seems useful to mention that while in Italian ‘Reaper’ as adjective is translated into *dei Razziatori* [of the Reapers], in Spanish the grammatical category is maintained, as in (45).

- | | | | |
|--------|---|---|--|
| 5.(44) | The Reapers are more advanced than we are. [...] | I Razziatori sono più avanzati di noi. [...] | Los segadores son más avanzados que nosotros. [...] |
| 5.(45) | Not sure. One minute we were getting reports of the Reaper invasion... | Non saprei. Un attimo prima stavamo ricevendo rapporti sull'invasione dei Razziatori ... | No lo sé. Estábamos recibiendo informes de la invasión segadora ... |

As already mentioned, the Reapers are also referred to as ‘Old Machines’ by the geth and this appellation has been directly translated in both target languages, i.e. *Antiche Macchine* and *Viejas Máquinas* in Italian and Spanish respectively, as in example (46). The difference seems to lie in register and style, since *antico* in Italian sounds more elegant than *vecchio* when rendering ‘old’, and its position before the noun produces a marked effect.

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|--------|---|---|--|
| 5.(46) | We can confirm that the geth are no longer being directed by the Old Machines . We are free. | Confermiamo che i Geth non sono più controllati dalle Antiche Macchine . Siamo liberi. | Podemos confirmar que las Viejas Máquinas ya no dirigen a los geth. Somos libres. |
|--------|---|---|--|

As regards the translation of ‘Harvester’, one of the Reapers’ subtypes, as in example (47), it is worth noting that it becomes *Mietitori* in Italian, with capital letter, and *cosechadores* in Spanish. Similar to ‘Reaper’, ‘harvester’ is an agentive noun deriving from the verb “harvest” which might be interpreted as a synonym of “reap” or maybe as a hyponym in the light of these creatures’ function, since they harvest other species and Reapers gather them, but in translation, this subtype has not been transferred with the same creativity.

5.(47)	It appears that they survived the crash and then a Harvester exploded the pod..	Sembra che siano sopravvissuti all’impatto e che un Mietitore abbia distrutto la capsula.	Parece que sobrevivieron al choque y luego un cosechador reventó la cápsula...
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The geth are “a race of networked artificial intelligences that [...] were created by the quarians as laborers and tools of war” but, when they became sentient, they began to question the nature of their existence and challenged their quarian masters who, in order to prevent a revolution, ordered the genocide of all geth. A war between the two races begun but quarians had underestimated the power of their creations and while billions of quarians died, the survivors were ultimately reduced to nomads and the geth allied with the Reapers (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The war ending served as a warning to all other species since it showed “the potential dangers of artificial intelligence” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) while the overall “created vs creator” war seems to be an intertextual reference to the American science-fiction *Battlestar Galactica* franchise. Geth are synthetic creatures without any internal organs or nervous system. They are made up of hundreds of programs equivalent to virtual intelligences, all operating in parallel with one another to form each geth’s consciousness, which are also networked to those of the whole species. Indeed, they may communicate their exact thoughts and ideas at the speed of light and without any fear of misinterpretation. As regards the translation of this species’ name which, according to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) means “servant of the people” in Khelish, i.e. quarians’ language, it is retained in both localizations although in Italian it is capitalized when referring to the whole species, as in examples (48).

5.(48)	Commander, the quarians just fought a devastating war with the geth . [...]	Comandante, i Quarian sono reduci da una guerra contro i Geth . [...]	Comandante, los quarianos acaban de librar una guerra devastadora contra los geth , [...].
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Krogans “are a species of large reptilian bipeds native to the planet Tuchanka, a world known for its harsh environments, scarce resources, and overabundance of vicious predators” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Due to these extreme conditions and natural selection, the krogan had to develop more rapidly than other races and their weaponry became so advanced that krogans destroyed their homeworld and turned out to be a threat to the galaxy, forcing salarians to develop the genophage, a biological weapon which, by means of genetic mutation, can sterilize

every krogan females and limit krogans’ swelling birth rate. This is the reason why krogans are currently primitive warring clans whose extinction seems inevitable. Physically, they are based on animals like insects and bats (Rhodes 2011a: online), they have 360-degree vision which enhance their predator skills, and their skin is highly resistant to environmental hazards, including toxins, radiation, and extreme heat and cold. Moreover, a typical krogan stands over 7 feet and weighs at least 150 kilos but the most distinctive physiological feature of this race is multiple major organs which serve as backups for the primary ones (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Remarkably, this influences their language, especially slang and swearing when related to genitals, for example, but no related instances are found in the corpus. Given their physical strength and hardness, krogans can live for centuries, if a treatment for the genophage is created. This is exactly what happens in ME3: the krogan agree upon helping Shepard against the Reapers in exchange for a cure, which is being tested by the salarian geneticist Mordin Solus on the last fertile female krogan named Eve. From a cultural perspective, their physical toughness is reflected in krogans’ unsympathetic and aggressive nature and their fear for extinction makes them very fatalist and short-sighted (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Moreover, their tradition is full of rituals which take place depending on age and most of which are related to their social units, basically clans. This also affects krogans’ names which are made of two parts: the clan name and a given name. For example, among the krogans appearing in the ME3 walkthrough selected, the character named Wreav is actually Urdnot Wreav, being ‘Urdnot’ his clan name, as discussed in Section 5.3.2.

As in Table 17 in Appendix C, ‘krogan’ as both adjective and noun is transferred by means of retention in both TLs with the Italian capitalization of the noun when it refers to the species, as in example (49).

5.(49)	In ancient times, the krogan were once a mighty race, [...].	In passato, i Krogan erano una specie possente. [...]	En la antigüedad, los krogan fuimos una raza poderosa, [...].
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The turians are known for their militaristic and disciplined culture which, thanks to their contributions of soldiers and starships, often turned their military role into a key asset for the galaxy stability (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). This is the reason why turians are very respected but also seen as rigid and culturally imperialist by other races. From a physical and biological perspective, turians “are avian, making them resemble humanoid birds or raptors” although,

unlike most real-world avian creatures, “turians are viviparous” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Other turian typical features are “their metallic carapace, which contains trace amounts of thulium”, a trait they evolved “as a defense against the greater levels of solar radiation that penetrate their homeworld’s weak magnetic field”, and their voices with “a distinctive flanging effect” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Physically, “turians exhibit the characteristics of predators”: “forward-facing alert eyes”, “their teeth and jaws mimic the structures possessed by apex predators such as crocodiles or ancient, carnivorous dinosaurs”, and “their talons on both their feet and hands seem capable of ripping flesh” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As a culture, turians are considered to be a people with a strong sense of community and public service, “turian society is highly regimented and very organized, and the species is known for its strict discipline and work ethic” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Moreover, as already mentioned, “the turian military is the center of their society. It is not just an armed force”, it is an all-encompassing public organization” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). According to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), the name “turian” is based on the Roman army’s “centurion” and turian culture and military doctrine, especially for their emphasis on colonization, as well as single turians’ names mirror those of the Roman Empire. As regards the translation of ‘turian’, it is completely retained in Italian, with capital letter when the noun refers to the species, while retention in Spanish includes a slight adaptation, as in examples (50).

5.(50)	You seriously think I’ll assassinate a turian general?	Credi davvero che ucciderò un generale turian ?	¿Crees en serio que voy a asesinar a un general turiano ?
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According to the ME series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), the asari “are often considered the most influential and respected sentient species in the galaxy, [...] known for their elegance, diplomacy, and biotic aptitude”. Physically, according to Marshall (2012: 17), “to add a familiar element of science-fiction fantasy”, BioWare decided that “one of the main species of *Mass Effect* would be a race of beautiful, blue alien girls”. Indeed, a typical asari is a woman with blue complexion sometimes with “facial markings, which are unique colored patterns that vary for every asari” and “in the place of head hair, asari possess semi-flexible, cartilage based scalp crests that grow into shape” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). However, asari resemble humans in terms of basic skeletal structure with five fingers on each hand and legs that are relatively straight. Remarkably, as already mentioned, asari are “a mono-gender race, [...] distinctly

feminine in appearance” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) with breasts and voices that sound female, but with no cultural concept of gender differences. However, from a linguistic perspective, asari are always referred to using feminine pronouns like “she” and “her” instead of gender-neutral pronouns like “they” and “them”, they bear feminine titles like “maiden”, “matron” “huntress” and “matriarch” and asari offspring are usually referred to as “daughters”. Asari culture is that of a people with “a conservative yet convivial attitude toward other races” aimed to maintain stable balances of economic, political, and military power and, thanks to their unique millennium-long lifespan, asari are known for their philosophical long view. As regards translation, this race’s name is retained in both target versions but, while in Spanish the original lower case letter is kept intact as both noun and adjective, in Italian ‘asari’ is capitalized when referring to the whole species, as in examples (51).

5.(51) [...], but with a few alterations, they should work for the asari as well.	[...], ma con qualche modifica funzioneranno anche con le Asari .	[...] pero, con algunos cambios, también valdrán para las asari .
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The Protheans “are an ancient alien race which vanished over 50,000 years ago” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) after being wiped out by the Reapers. Protheans “arose from a single planet and developed an immense galaxy-wide empire encompassing many other spacefaring species. Not much is known about them, but many of their artifacts, ruins and technology have apparently survived the ages” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online).

The Protheans have been credited with creating the Citadel and the mass relays, feats of engineering that have never been equaled and whose core *mass effect* field technology forms the basis of contemporary civilization. Prothean artifacts, therefore, have immense scientific value and are seen as belonging to the entire galactic community.

(Mass Effect Wiki: online, my emphasis)

In this light, the Protheans must be considered the founding fathers of the *Mass Effect* universe. Since Protheans are only referred to in ME3 corpus’ dialogues, no Prothean character is engaged in conversations, and their physical and biological description seems unnecessary. On the contrary, it seems worth underlining the above-mentioned scientific and technological skills of this race, since most of this species’ name occurrences are adjectives for nouns such as

“archives”, “device”, and “blueprint”. In particular, the Prothean created the Crucible, the highly complex superweapon against the Reapers which was never implemented before Protheans’ extinction and, more importantly, whose design was recovered by Commander Shepard in ME3, thus representing the galaxy’s last hope. As regards this species’ name, according to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), “Prothean” may derive from Greek words like “protero” or “proto”, meaning “earlier”, “former”, “primary” and “first”, and “theos” meaning “God”. Accordingly, the word “Prothean” may mean “someone who existed before Gods” or “the first or former God”. Alternatively, a reference seems to be made to the mythological Titan Prometheus, who gave mortals the gift of fire and enabled them to learn the arts of civilization. Similarly, the Protheans, with a similar name, helped primitive species, such as humans, the asari, the quarian, the salarian, etc., to develop. It is not by chance that the hanar refer to the Prothean as the ‘Enkindlers’ (6 occurrences in ME3 corpus), which is transcreated into *Illuminati* [the enlightened] in Italian and *dómines* [schoolmasters] in Spanish. “Enkindle” seems to be an obsolete version of “kindle” which is related to fire, burning, and metaphorically light and knowledge. In this sense, the “enkindlers” are those who enlighten the others with their wisdom. In localizations, the Italian translator successfully transferred the image of light which is behind the name and serves as a symbol of knowledge: although *Illuminati* does not imply the transfer of knowledge, this creative solution perfectly renders the Protheans’ enlightenment while the Spanish rendition, although it focuses on teaching and loses the metaphor, creatively interprets the meaning related to the Protheans’ authority over the hanar race. Going back to ‘Prothean’, interestingly enough, this is the only ethnic reference which is capitalized in ME3 English source texts, and in localizations, it is completely retained in Italian, with capital letter only when it is a noun referring to the whole race and slightly adapted in Spanish, as in examples (52) and (53).

5.(52)	Maybe. I’ve discovered plans for a Prothean device . One that could wipe out the Reapers.	Forse. Ho scoperto dei piani per un <i>congegno prothean</i> . Potrebbe annientare i Razziatori.	Quizá. He descubierto los planos de un <i>dispositivo proteano</i> que podría acabar con los segadores.
5.(53)	Councilors... we have that <i>plan</i> . A <i>blueprint</i> . Created by the Protheans	Consiglieri... noi abbiamo un <i>piano</i> . Un <i>progetto</i> . Creato dai Prothean	Consejeros... tenemos ese <i>plan</i> . Es un <i>diseño</i> . Creado por los proteanos

during their war with the Reapers.	durante la loro guerra contro i Razziatori.	durante su guerra contra los segadores.
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As already mentioned, the quarians are a nomadic species of humanoid aliens who, due to the exile they were forced into by the geth, live aboard the Migrant Fleet also known as the Flotilla, a huge collection of starships which travel as a single fleet. This race is known for their skills with technology, testified to by the development of the geth species, and synthetic intelligence (*Mass Effect Wiki: online*). Quarians' physical structure makes them the most similar to humans: they have an endoskeleton, lips, teeth, two eyes, two arms with three-fingered hands, two legs, a similar lifespan, etc. Nevertheless, "the most distinguishing feature of quarian biology is their weak immune system", due to the sterile environments they have been living for centuries (*Mass Effect Wiki: online*). As a result, all quarians must dress in highly sophisticated environmental suits which protect them from disease or infection. This makes survival the top priority of the quarian species; consequently, from a cultural point of view, they developed a high sense of community (*Mass Effect Wiki: online*). More relevantly for the purposes of this study, since quarians are a small and insular population, they have created a common language named "Khelish". The most important quarian character in the ME3 walkthrough selected is Tali'Zorah and some Khelish words occur in her dialogue lines. For example, the expression "Keelah se'lai" (1 occurrence), as in example (54), means "by the homeworld I hope to see someday", as Tali explains, and its abbreviation "keelah" (3 occurrences), as in (55), may be translated simply into "by the homeworld", while "bosh'tet" (1 occurrence) is an insult which means "son of a bitch" or "bastard", as in (56). As already mentioned, "geth" is also a Khelish word meaning "servant of the people" as well as the name of quarians' homeland "Rannoch", which means "walled garden".

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|--|--|---|
| 5.(54) You've heard me say,
"Keelah se'lai"? The best
translation I can come up
with is, "By the homeworld
I hope to see someday." | Mi hai mai sentita dire
"Keelah se'lai"? Più o
meno, si traduce con: "Per
il pianeta natale, che spero
un giorno di rivedere". | ¿Me has oído decir " Keelah
se'lai "? La mejor traducción
que se me ocurre sería "Por
el mundo de origen que
espero ver algún día". |
| 5.(55) Keelah , it's huge! | Keelah , è enorme! | ¡ Keelah , es enorme! |
| 5.(56) Bosh'tet . | Bosh'tet... | Bosh'tet . |

As examples (54) – (56) show, Khelish occurrences are retained in both target versions and this contributes to the overall depiction of the quarian characters who express feelings such as shock, surprise, anger, fear, etc. in their own (foreign) language. Going back to the translation of this species’ name, ‘quarian’ as both adjective and noun is completely retained in Italian, with capital letter if noun, and slightly adapted in Spanish, as in example (57).

5.(57)	We need help, Shepard. We need a fleet. And the quarians have the biggest one out there.	Ci serve aiuto, Shepard... Ci serve una flotta. E i Quarian hanno la più grande in circolazione.	Necesitamos ayuda, Shepard. Necesitamos una flota. Y los quarianos tienen la mayor de todas.
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As Table 17 in Appendix C shows, moreover, it seems worth mentioning that the quarians are referred to as ‘the creators’ by the geth and this appellation is directly translated in both target languages, namely *creatori* and *creadores*.

Salarians are warm-blooded and bipedal amphibians which possess a hyperactive metabolism, which allow them to think fast, talk fast, and move fast and function on just one hour of sleep a day but which also leaves them with a relatively short lifespan of around 40 human years (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). This species is known for their observational capability, photographic memory and non-linear thinking, which turns out to be an aptitude for research and espionage. Salarians are indeed seen as the premier intelligence and information-gathering arm of the Council (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Moreover, they are constantly experimenting and inventing; for example, they developed a biological weapon named “genophage” which, by means of genetic mutation, can sterilize every race in the galaxy. According to *Mass Effect* associate art director Matt Rhodes (2011b: online), salarians were the answer to the clichéd grey alien of sci-fi stories and conspiracy theories, including the eye shape, the overall head structure along with their fairly long, slim limbs and equally slim torso. In ME3 corpus, this race’s name is completely retained in Italian as it is when adjective and capitalized when it is a noun referring to the species, while it is slightly adapted in Spanish, as in example (58).

5.(58) Nothing’s okay when Niente è a posto quando Siempre pasa algo cuando
salarians are involved. sono coinvolti i **Salarian**. hay **salarianos** de por medio.

As regards the translation of this species’ name, although this study focuses on Italian and Spanish, it seems worth mentioning that, as testified to in ME glossary, in French it has been transcreated into *galarien* because, as a French player explains in a discussion about salarians (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), the names resulting from retention or direct translation [salarien], when pronounced, would have sound “sale arien” meaning “dirty Aryan” or “sale-à-rien” meaning “dirty-for-nothing”, like “bon à rien” [good-for-nothing], which would be an undesirably “biased” kind of name for an alien species.

The rachni are a (supposedly) extinct insect-like species which, in ME3, fight against Shepard under the control of the Reapers. Physically, “they resemble several insectoid alien races found in various science fiction series, but most closely resemble the Arachnids from Robert A. Heinlein’s [sci-fi novel] *Starship Troopers*” and the name “rachni” even forms part of the name “Arachnids” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As a culture, the rachni are a very territorial race, which wants to live isolated from the rest of the galaxy. Although they are animals, the rachni are an extremely intelligent sentient species which, interestingly enough, regards “speech and thought as forms of music”, and refer to communication as “singing” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) but, in ME3 corpus, there are no instances of rachni speech. As regards the transfer of this species’ name, it is retained in both Italian and Spanish, but in Italian the capital letter is used when ‘rachni’ refers to the whole race.

Husks “are synthetic-organic zombies created from the bodies of organic beings” which are used as ground troops by the Reapers (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As regards the name of this species, it seems worth discussing that “husk” in English means “1. the external green or membranous covering of certain fruits and seeds; 2. any worthless outer covering” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online) but in translation, ‘husks’ has been successfully transcreated into *mutante* [mutants] in Italian, since a direct equivalent like *buccia*, *guscio*, *pula* does not seem to be appropriate rendition for cruel alien enemies, and directly translated into *cascaión* [eggshell] in Spanish, as in example (59).

5.(59) More incoming **husks**! Arrivano altri **mutanti**! ¡Aquí vienen más **cascaiones**!

The batarians are “a race of four-eyed bipeds” which “chose to isolate itself from the rest of the galaxy” and mostly include, on the one hand, “shrewd businessmen and merchants” and, on the other hand, criminal organizations devoted to slavery and biotic drug dealing (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As a culture, batarians “place an extremely high value on social caste and appearance”, slavery is an integral part of their social system and their government is autocratic and totalitarian (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In the localization into the two Romance languages under investigation, this race’s name is completely retained in Italian and capitalized when the noun refers to the entire species, while it is slightly adapted in Spanish, as in example (60).

5.(60)	The batarians had Reaper technology?	I Batarian avevano tecnologia dei Razziatori?	¿Los batarianos tenían tecnología segadora?
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Interestingly, as testified to in ME3 glossary, like ‘salarian’, in the French localization, batarians were named *butariens* due to the original’s phonetic similarity to the French swear word “bâtard” [bastard], pronounced “batar”.

According to the *Mass Effect* series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), the collectors “are an enigmatic race [of aliens]” which are most well-known for their odd trade requests which usually involve living beings and which seem to be due to collectors’ strange fetishes or gruesome culinary tastes, or also to the genetic experiments they might perform on these subjects. In exchange, the collectors offer very valuable technology. Physically and biologically, according to BioWare’s art director Derek Watts (cit. in Reeves 2010: online), they are based on insects and crabs. Moreover, “their vocal communication mostly consists of insectoid chirps and trills, although they are capable of speaking in languages other species comprehend should the need arise” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In *Mass Effect 3*, the collectors are an enemy race and, from a cultural perspective, according to scientist Mordin Solus’ findings, they are mindless drones which, since culture is impossible without intelligence, lack any form of culture, art or creativity. From a linguistic perspective, a “collector” is a person or thing that collects or amasses objects (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online) and its calque is exactly the strategy used in both target languages. ‘Collectors’, which mostly occurs as a noun with capital letter (4 out of 5 occurrences in ME3 corpus), is indeed directly translated into *Collettori* in Italian and *recolectores* without capital letter in Spanish.

The hanar species, as the series' Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) illustrates, is a non-bipedal invertebrate water-native race resembling real-world jellyfish for their long tentacles, which is “known for their intense politeness when speaking, and their strong religious beliefs regarding the Protheans, whom they refer to as the Enkindlers” since the latter “uplifted and civilized them by teaching them language”. Language is indeed one of the unique features of hanar race. According to the series' Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), they communicate using sophisticated patterns of bioluminescence, which other species need to translate, and speak with scrupulous precision, considerable formality and exquisite poise. As regards individual hanars' appellations, they have two names: a “face name” and a “soul name”. The former is used as a public label and, accordingly, becomes *manifesto* [manifest] and *público* [public] in Italian and Spanish. Conversely, a “soul name” is used only by close friends and tends to be poetic. In localizations, it is defined as *spirituale* and *espiritual* [both, spiritual]. For example, as in example (61) which contains a brief exchange between Shepard and the salarian Jondum Bau, hanar Zymandis' soul name is “Regards the Works of the Enkindlers in Despair”, and is capitalized as if it were a title. More importantly, it seems that to transfer its evocative nuance, translators safely took this poetic nature into account and levelled up the register: the verb ‘regard’ becomes *ammirare* [admire] and *contemplar* [contemplate], although in Italian the third person singular ‘regards’ is unfaithfully transferred as an imperative second person plural; ‘works’ becomes *opere* and *obras* implying a reference to artwork; ‘Enkindlers’ has been discussed when dealing with the Protheans, and ‘in Despair’ becomes *affranti* [heartbroken] and *con desespo* [in despair].

5.(61) [...] Zymandis. Soul name: Regards the Works of the Enkindlers in Despair.	[...] Zymandis. Nome spirituale: “Ammirate le opere degli Illuminati affranti”.	[...] Zymandis. Nombre espiritual: Contempla las Obras de los Dómines con Desespero.
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As far as language is concerned, it is interesting to note that hanars never refer to themselves in the first person with someone they are not familiar with; instead, they use “this one”, or the impersonal “it”. As in example (62), which shows a dialogue line uttered by the only hanar character in the ME3 walkthrough selected, namely the above-mentioned Zymandis, ‘this one’ has been literally rendered into the formulaic Italian expression *il sottoscritto* [the undersigned],

used to refer to oneself in the third person singular, and *este* [this one] in Spanish, thus faithfully conveying hanar linguistic style.

5.(62)	This one follows the will of the Enkindlers.	Il sottoscritto esegue la volontà degli Illuminati.	Este sigue la voluntad de los dómines.
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Going back to this race name, ‘hanar’ is transferred by means of retention in both localizations but, in Italian it is capitalized when it is a noun referring to the whole species.

Thresher maws “are subterranean carnivores that spend their entire lives eating or searching for something to eat. They are enormous, violent creatures that burst up from the ground without warning when disturbed” and since they are very robust and solitary, they can “survive prolonged periods in deep space” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The concept of this race seems to have several sources of inspiration, both fictional and nonfictional: according to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), first, thresher maws appear to be inspired by the giant sandworms of Frank Herbert’s sci-fi television miniseries *Dune*; second, thresher maws “may also be inspired by the Sarlacc, a creature present in the *Star Wars* universe”; ultimately, in terms of physical appearance and predatory traits, they seem to make reference to the real-world “ocean-dwelling species of Polychaeta marine worms known as the Bobbit Worm”. Linguistically, “thresher maw” is a noun phrase resulting from the process of compounding and, like the Reapers and harvesters, relates to agriculture. “Thresher” is “1. a person who threshes; 2. short for threshing machine” while “maw” is “the mouth, throat, crop, or stomach of an animal, esp of a voracious animal” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online). In ME3 target versions, as in example (63), only in Spanish the link to agriculture is kept by means of a direct translation into *fauces trilladoras*; conversely, in Italian the reference to farming is lost and translators transcreated the name into *divoratore* [devourer], an agentive noun which conveys the ideas of eating up greedily, the latter being often associated to predators and, by extension, of tearing into pieces and destroying.

5.(63)	They would wander off into the wastelands, hoping a thresher maw would kill them and end their torment.	Vagavano per le distese aride, nella speranza che un divoratore le uccidesse e ponesse fine al loro tormento.	Se adentraban en los yermos, con la esperanza de que unas fauces trilladoras las mataran y acabarían con su tormento.
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Lastly, another alien race in ME3 are the brutes: synthetic-organic creatures derived from krogan and turians and mutated by Reaper technology, and it is exactly the fusion of turian military skill and krogan blood rage what makes the brute such a formidable enemy (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). “Brute” is a word of Latin origin and basically means “without reason or intelligence”, thus distinguishing animal from man, and by extension wildness and cruelty (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online). In ME3 source text this species’ name seems to suggest exactly these creatures’ brutal nature and in localizations, it is directly translated in both target languages: *Bruti* with capital letter in Italian and *brutos* in Spanish.

5.3.5 Sociopolitical references

The galactic community of ME3 universe is portrayed as an ensemble of species whose equilibrium is based on more or less harmonious interplanetary relationships aimed at peacekeeping efforts, which obviously requires them to join a system of interspecies organizations, and also whose single societies present steady forms of government with specific institutions. Dozens of fictional sociopolitical entities constitute ME universe and each has its unique history and structure but, for the purposes of this study, only the most frequently occurring will be discussed and background information will include only the most relevant characteristics, in order to provide the reader with a general picture of ME3 sociopolitical framework. Table 18 and Figure 29 in Appendix C illustrate the institutions under investigation and the strategies translators used in both TLs.

As happens in fictional ethnic references (Section 5.3.4), the most frequently occurring sociopolitical reference which fall under the category of *irrealia* is to the enemy organization named “Cerberus”, “a paramilitary group led by the enigmatic Illusive Man” whose core belief is that humans deserve a greater role in the galactic community (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Cerberus supports the principle that any methods of advancing humanity’s ascension are entirely justified, including illegal, dangerous or brutal experimentation, sabotage, media manipulation, espionage and assassination (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). This is the reason why both the Systems Alliance, which will be explored shortly, has declared Cerberus to be a terrorist organization and prosecutes Cerberus agents (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In ME3 Cerberus seeks to take control of the Reapers by means of the Prothean superweapon named Crucible in order to make humanity the dominant force in the galaxy (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online)

but Commander Shepard manages to defeat them. As regards the name, Cerberus clearly refers to the well-known three-headed dog which guards the gates of Hades in Greek mythology and this imaginary monster was the source of inspiration for ME3 game designers: this name comes from the Illusive Man’s manifesto detailing the need for humanity to have a Cerberus to guard it from the aliens beyond the Charon Relay (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), the latter being “the point of access between Earth, the cultural and economic heart of human civilization, and the rest of the galaxy”. In this light, it is not by chance that this relay’s name refers exactly to the ferryman who brings the dead across the rivers Styx or Acheron to Hades. Given the world popularity of Greek mythological characters, especially if we consider Dante Alighieri’s borrowings in the *Divine Comedy*, it comes as no surprise that this sociopolitical reference has been retained in both target versions, as in example (64a). Although both Italian and Spanish possess a local form, namely *Cerbero* in both TLs, the Latin version seems to be more engaging. As regards the number of Cerberus’ instances, it is interesting to note that, as shown in example (64b), both translators omitted the reference in the same dialogue line. This does not pose any comprehension or identification issue because in Italian and Spanish, as opposed to the ST, that string is an answer with the same subject as the question and ‘Cerberus’ may be omitted. However, in Italian the transfer seems to result from a sort of generalization too: *quella gente* [those people], which sounds quite disparaging, may be considered as a reference to the whole organization.

5.(64a)	Do we know what Cerberus is up to?	Quale potrebbe essere il fine di Cerberus ?	¿Sabemos qué trama Cerberus ?
5.(64b)	No, but we do know that Cerberus doesn’t act without a plan.	Non lo sappiamo, ma <i>quella</i> è <i>gente</i> che non agisce senza un piano.	No, pero sabemos que Ø no actúa sin tener un plan.

The Alliance, whose full name is “Systems Alliance” but it never occurs in ME3 corpus, is “the representative body of Earth and all human colonies in Citadel space. Backed by Earth’s most powerful nations, the Alliance has become humanity’s military, exploratory, and economic spearhead” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The story of the Alliance establishment is long and hurdled but, although the Alliance is relatively new to the galactic community, it has already made a name for itself, gaining humans an embassy on the Presidium. In political terms, its government is a supranational parliamentary system headquartered at Arcturus Station, which

also serves as the Alliance’s capital given its strategical position, which contains several primary mass relays that link to major human colonies, and the secondary mass relay that leads to Sol and the human homeworld of Earth (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online).

The Alliance military is very respected by the other Citadel races for its novel tactics and technology, such as VIs, drones, artillery, and electronic warfare (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Between its military corps, the Alliance Navy is particularly valuable, recognized as one of the greater naval forces in Citadel space. It consists of several thousand ships “ranging from small hundred-meter frigates to imposing kilometer-long dreadnoughts and carriers” and operating in eight different fleets (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). More interestingly for this study, the Alliance Navy possess a specialized branch of operatives known as Alliance Marines which represents a borderline case of reference between realism and fictionality, since they are named after a well-known and culture-specific real-word sociopolitical entity. Naming for Alliance ship types is very specific: dreadnoughts are named after Earth mounts, such as Everest and Kilimanjaro; cruisers are named after Earth cities, such as Budapest, Cape Town and Geneva; frigates are named after great battles in human history, such as Normandy (see Section 5.3.6) and Trafalgar; and carriers are named after great leaders, artists, and intellectuals in human history, such as Einstein, but unfortunately there are no occurrences in ME3 corpus, except for the Normandy.

The Systems Alliance has got even its own “galactic news broadcasting network”, known as the “Alliance News Network” (ANN) which, “with a focus on galaxy-wide reporting”, has opened “bureaus on planets across known space, winning a few awards for excellence and earning a multi-species audience” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Anchorwoman Diana Allers’ “Battlespace”, which is discussed as a fictional artefactual reference (Section 5.3.6), is among ANN’s highest rated programs, known for her particularly gritty and realistic way of reporting.

As shown in examples (65) - (67), the transfer of these sociopolitical references is by means of direct translation in both target languages.

5.(65)	[...] Is that the best we can expect from the Alliance ?	[...] È forse questo che dobbiamo aspettarci dall' Alleanza ?	[...] ¿Es eso lo mejor que cabe esperar de la Alianza ?
5.(66)	This is Commander Shepard, Alliance Navy . Do you read?	Comandante Shepard, Marina dell'Alleanza . Mi ricevi?	Aquí [[M]el]l[[F]la] comandante Shepard, de la Marina de la Alianza . ¿Me recibes?

5.(67) Commander. Just who I was looking for. Diana Allers, Alliance News Network . [...]	Comandante. Cercavo proprio te. Diana Allers, Rete informativa dell'Alleanza . [...]	Comandante. Te estaba buscando. Soy Diana Allers, de la red de noticias de la Alianza . [...]
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The Spanish TT in example (66) exemplifies the use of gender tags, depending on the gender customization of Commander Shepard, and also one of the reasons for the Spanish higher number of grammatical gender-specific strings in ME3 localization, as Pettini (forthcoming) demonstrates. As compared to the Italian omission, the Spanish translator rendered the radio communication procedure introducing the speaker's name into *aquí* [this is] plus the gender-marked definite article *el* or *la* preceding *comandante Shepard* [Commander Shepard].

Another important example of sociopolitical *irrealia* is the Council, which is the abbreviation of "Citadel Council": the governing body of the Citadel (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online).

Convening in the impressive Citadel Tower, the Council is the ultimate authority in Citadel space, passing judgement for violations of Council law, settling disputes between governments, and maintaining law and order, often through the use of its own covert intelligence service, the Spectres. The Council is an executive committee composed of one representative each from the member species. Though they have no official power over the independent governments of other species, the Council's decisions carry great weight throughout the galaxy. No single Council race is strong enough to defy the others, and all have a vested interest in compromise and cooperation. [...] Any species granted an embassy on the Citadel is considered an associate member, bound by the accords of the Citadel Conventions. Associate members may bring issues to the attention of the Council, though they have no impact on their final decision.

(Mass Effect Wiki: online)

In this light, it seems to be a fictional and galactic-size copy of real-world international organizations such as the European Union and the United Nations Organization, amongst others. As regards the Council's military, the most important peacekeeping force is the so-called Citadel Fleet, whose flagship is an asari dreadnought (see Section 5.3.6). The administrative structure of the Council includes departments, committees, and agencies, such as the "defense committee" and the "Citadel Security Services", the latter also known as "C-Sec". The species' representatives at the Council are called, quite expectedly, "Councilors". As in examples (68)

– (70), ‘Council’, ‘councilor’ and ‘defense committee’, the latter is also capitalized in Italian, required a simple direct translation in both Italian and Spanish. ‘C-Sec’ will be discussed shortly in this paragraph.

5.(68)	We need to go to the Citadel. Talk to the Council .	Dobbiamo raggiungere la Cittadella... Parlare con il Consiglio .	Debemos ir a la Ciudadela y hablar con el Consejo .
5.(69)	Sheerk, get me the asari councilor .	Sheerk, passami <i>il</i> consigliere asari.	Sheerk, ponme con <i>la</i> consejera asari.
5.(70)	[...] The defense committee wants to see you.	[...] Il Comitato di Difesa vuole vederti.	[...] El comité de defensa quiere verte.

Apart from the straightforward rendition of the sociopolitical references above, as regards ‘councilor’ especially, it seems worth discussing a gender issue exemplified in (69), since it represents a biased approach to gender-specific language in Italian. Since the councilor mentioned in (69) is asari and the latter is a (feminine) monogender race, the Spanish translator correctly used the definite article *la* and the feminine form *consejera* to render the reference. On the contrary, in Italian, *il consigliere* refers to male councilor, since the exact feminine form would be *la consigliera* (*Treccani Dictionary of Italian language* 2016: online). In standard Italian language, the sexism behind the use of masculine forms to refer to both genders is a moot point inside and outside academia. However, over the last decades, especially thanks to the increasing number of women in politics, feminine forms of originally masculine titles have emerged and *consigliera*, often associated to female political representatives, is one of them. Since ME3 translators can access background information such as speaker’s and listener’s gender directly through the spreadsheet they work on, the Italian rendition seems to be inadequate and gender-unfair and provides another example of the scant attention Italian localizers paid to linguistic and cultural gender-equality, at least as opposed to their Spanish colleagues (Pettini forthcoming).

As mentioned above, the Spectres represent the Council’s intelligence, “they are agents entrusted with extraordinary authority [...], including the power of life and death over the inhabitants of the galaxy. They form an elite group selected from a number of different species,

and their primary responsibility is to preserve galactic stability by whatever means necessary” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). “Spectre candidates typically have years of military or law enforcement experience” and the rigorous selection process includes “background checks, psychological evaluations, and a long period of field training under an experienced mentor” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). For example, as already mentioned, Commander Shepard was the first human Spectre ever but in ME3 his teammate Ashley Williams gains Spectre status too.

At the linguistic level, it seems worth highlighting that in ME universe “Spectre” is a name which derives from “a creative means of word-formation” (Peresich 2015), namely the blending of the following words: Special Tactics and Reconnaissance, but this full form never occurs in ME3 corpus. As a single word in English, “spectre” is 1. a ghost; phantom; apparition; 2. a mental image of something unpleasant or menacing (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online). Interestingly, as in examples (71) and (72) the English name is directly translated into both target languages as if it were not a blend, that is to say as if it were a common English word. In localizations, ‘Spectre’ becomes *Spettro* in Italian and *espectro*, with lower case letter, in Spanish. On the contrary, the equivalent forms for ‘Special Tactics and Reconnaissance’ are *Specialisti Tattica e Ricognizione* in Italian and *Tácticas Especiales y Reconocimiento* in Spanish (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) which would allow for potentially equivalent blends such as *Spectri* and *Tactre*, for example, but they do not mean anything in standard Italian and Spanish.

5.(71)	You ready for the responsibilities of a Spectre ?	Sei <i>pronta</i> ad assumerti le responsabilità di <i>uno</i> Spettro ?	¿Estás lista para las responsabilidades que supone ser <i>una</i> espectro ?
5.(72)	Nope. Hell, I still remember the day they made you the first human Spectre .	No. Wow, ricordo bene il giorno in cui sei <small>[[M]diventato][F]diventata]</small> <i>il primo</i> Spettro umano.	No. Diablos, aún recuerdo el día en que te convirtieron en <small>[[M]el primer [F]la primera</small> espectro humano <small>]</small> .

Like ‘councilor’, ‘Spectre’ offers an insight into linguistic gender-unfairness in Italian and, to a lesser extent, Spanish localizations. On the one hand, it seems worth underlining that ‘Spectre’ is translated into masculine equivalents in both target languages. In other words, although this is a fictional title referring to a fictional sociopolitical institution, with no constraints to reality,

which implies ample room for deviations from the source text, and although both Romance languages' grammars allow language professionals to be gender-fair by simply changing the word ending vowel from "o" into "a", both translators chose a masculine equivalent. On the other hand, it seems worth appreciating the Spanish use of (at least) gender-specific satellite elements like articles and adjectives. Conversely, in Italian, apart from the verbal forms, all items are masculine. In more details, in (71), Shepard asks Ashley Williams whether she is ready for the responsibilities of a Spectre and, while 'ready' is correctly translated into *pronta*, the translation of 'a Spectre' does not take Ashley's gender into account. Similarly, in (72), James Vega is the speaker character and Commander Shepard is the listener and, once again, while the gender variable is used to tag *diventato* if male or *diventata* if female, 'the first human Spectre' only refers to male and, since there is no tag, that version will be read and heard by both male and female players.

As in Table 18 in Appendix C, another sociopolitical reference in ME3 corpus is made to "the standard galactic currency" within the Citadel Council space (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), namely 'credit' which is directly translated in both target languages: *credito* in Italian and *crédito* in Spanish.

The C-Sec, the abbreviation for "Citadel Security Services" is an interspecies volunteer police force which handles law enforcement on the Citadel and answers to the Citadel Council. According to the series' Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), the abbreviation is based on Canadian government's national cryptologic agency, formerly called Communications Security Establishment Canada (CSEC) and, since ME3 game developer is Canadian, this might be interpreted as example of the Canadianness the game pays homage to (Kuling 2014). In ME3 corpus, the full name of this police service never occurs. As in example (73), its abbreviation 'C-Sec' becomes the initialism *SSC* in Italian, which stands for "Servizio di Sicurezza della Cittadella" (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), while in Spanish the original form is retained but the components derive from a direct translation: 'C-Sec' becomes *Seg-C* which means "Seguridad de la Ciudadela" (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In this light, transcreation seems the strategy used in Italian: a creative and appropriate solution to refer to an institution by means of a new initialism.

5.(73)	Commander Bailey is the C-Sec officer on duty. [...]	Il comandante Bailey è l'ufficiale SSC di turno. [...]	El comandante Bailey es el oficial de Seg-C de guardia. [...]
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5.3.6 Artefactual references

ME3 universe, which perfectly mirrors the typical setting of most visual science fiction products, such as laboratories, starships, space installations and military bases, is full of fictional artefacts. If examined as a whole in terms of realism-fictionality relationship, it becomes apparent that artefactual references include both neologisms for unreal signified, and known signifiers for new signified. Most artefacts in ME universe are related to science and technology; indeed, they frequently refer to more or less tangible - but accurately described - scientific and technological entities which have been created by the galaxy races. Details allowed developers to create a fictional consistent universe in which everything works, makes sense and is based on something real, as explained by ME executive producer Casey Hudson (cit. in Mitchell 2012: online). For these purposes, writers “are very interested and knowledgeable in science and astronomy, and they are constantly consuming new information about technology and space. They bring that knowledge to their work on the Mass Effect series” (Hudson cit. in Mitchell 2012: online).

The underlying idea was that real-life scientific discoveries consistently create imagery and concepts that blow away previous notions of what is possible, from the surprising effects of dark matter on the universe, to the thick veils of purple atmosphere around Titan. If real-life astronomy can reveal such stunning ideas and imagery, that gives us a certain creative license to suggest that reality will continue to be stranger than fiction. [...] The universe’s expansion, [...] apparently due to the effect of dark energy/matter, [...] is an incredibly exciting story that [...] for us [BioWare] [...] opened up amazing possibilities for fictional storytelling. In particular, it gave us a basis for much of the technology in the Mass Effect universe. If we could eventually understand and manipulate dark energy the way we have mastered electromagnetism, what technologies might result? The Mass Effect universe is our answer to that question, [...].

(Casey Hudson cit. in Mitchell 2012: online)

The series' title "Mass Effect" itself is a reference to (fictional) astrophysics. "The dark energy mass effect created through the use of 'element zero' can increase or decrease the mass content of space-time when subjected to an electrical current via dark energy. With a positive current, mass is increased. With a negative current, mass is decreased" (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In real-world astrophysics, element zero exists and refers to neutronium, i.e. matter composed purely of neutrons, and zero is the atomic number. In (fictional) space, mass effect fields allow faster-than-light (FTL) travel, inexpensive surface-to-orbit transit, the creation of artificial gravity, shields to protect against enemy fire on the ground and to protect starships in planetary orbit or during space battles (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). While 'Mass Effect' as the series' title is retained in both localizations, in ME3 corpus 'mass effect' occurs in the noun phrase 'mass effect field', as in example (74). In Italian and Spanish, it has been translated into *campo di forza* and *campo de efecto de masa*, the latter being definitely more literal than the Italian solution. Similarly, 'mass effect relay', more often abbreviated into 'mass relay' is directly translated into *relé de efecto de masa* in Spanish while in Italian it becomes *portale galattico*, [galactic portal] as in example (75). In ME universe, mass effect relays are "mass transit devices scattered throughout the galaxy" which "form an enormous network allowing interstellar travel", they "can transport starships instantaneously to another relay within the network, allowing for journeys that would otherwise take years or even centuries with only FTL drives" (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In English, a relay is basically an electronic device that receives and transmits signals and in ME universe, signals are those produced by the mass effect. In this light, the Italian translator seems to deviate from the source text and focus on the property of mass transit relays have: *portale galattico* [galactic portal] seems to suggest a gateway to space travel destinations.

5.(74)	It only climbs because of its stupid, vertically aligned mass effect fields . [...]	Solo per via di quegli stupidi campi di forza allineati verticalmente. [...]	Solo trepa por la estúpida alineación vertical de sus campos de efecto de masa . [...]
5.(75)	When humanity discovered the mass relays ... [...]	Dopo la scoperta dei portali galattici ... [...]	Cuando la humanidad descubrió los relés de masa ... [...]

An interesting group of artefacts in ME3 is that of fictional offensive and defensive abilities in warfare, such as (kinetic) ‘barrier’, ‘blast shield’, ‘magnetic lock’, ‘multicore shield’, ‘orbital strike’, and ‘singularity’, which may be defined as sci-fi military terms. As regards their translation, no special phenomena emerge and direct translation is the main strategy used: *barriera* and *barrera*, *scudo corazzato* and *escudo de descarga*, *blocco magnetico* and *cierre magnético*, *scudo multinucleo* and *escudo multinúcleo*, *attacco orbitale* and *ataque orbital*, *singularità* and *singularidad* in Italian and Spanish respectively.

Table 19 in Appendix C is a list of the most relevant fictional artefacts in ME3 corpus which, for practical purposes, have been divided into three categories: “vehicles”, “weapons” and “equipment”, all including the names of the entities they refer to. These categories have been created in order to make a comparison with artefactual references occurring in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* corpus and *Battlefield 4* corpus which belong to military language and terminology and are investigated in Chapter 6. Figure 30 in Appendix C shows the translation strategies used to deal with artefactual references in ME3.

5.3.6.1 Vehicles

The first group of fictional artefacts this study focuses on is that of vehicles and, quite expectedly, the most occurring reference is to the SSV (Systems Alliance Space Vehicle) Normandy, almost always abbreviated into “Normandy”, the human massive and highly technological starship, more precisely a frigate, which “acts as the mobile command center of Commander Shepard’s efforts to unite the galaxy against the Reapers” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). With its five decks, the Normandy internal layout is very crew-comfortable and include: cabins, conference rooms, laboratories, the medical bay, shuttle bays, crew sleeping quarters, observation decks, offices, server rooms, cargo rooms, lounges, a kitchen, bathrooms, and even a memorial wall. The Normandy’s functions, especially in combat, are coordinated by the artificial intelligence character named EDI (Enhanced Defense Intelligence). As mentioned when discussing the Systems Alliance (Section 5.3.5), the Navy’s frigates are named after great battles in human history. The Normandy is no exception and refers to the Allied operation aimed at invading German-occupied Western Europe during World War II in 1944, apart from actually being also a geographical reference to the country where the Allies’ operation took place. As in example (76), this starship name is retained in Italian and directly translated in Spanish.

5.(76)	I heard you escaped Earth in the Normandy , [...].	Ho sentito che siete fuggiti dalla Terra con la Normandy , [...].	He oído que la Normandía escapó de la Tierra, [...].
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Drones “are small, lightly-armed combat robots equipped with very small mass effect fields that allow them to levitate. They are also equipped with basic VI programming allowing them to adapt to changing situations on the battlefield” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As shown in Table 19 in Appendix C, drones’ occurrences in the whole database are remarkable; conversely, due to the minor role they play in the walkthrough selected, in ME3 corpus ‘drone’ occurs only once. This exemplifies how, also at the textual level, a single player’s experience is only one possible way ME3 may unfold. More importantly, drones are one of those ME3 vehicles which, although with a signifier whose signified exists in reality, refer to game-world specific entities. In localizations, ‘drone’ is directly translated in both target languages, namely *drone* in Italian and *dron* in Spanish, and this probably help players to immediately understand the referent despite the latter’s futuristic nature.

Shuttle is the name ME3 characters colloquially use to refer to the X3M, which is “a contragravity speeder designed for transporting individuals in metropolises and space stations” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Like drones, the vehicle they refer to in ME textual world is fictional but shuttles do exist in reality and are indeed directly translated into *navetta* in Italian and *lanzadera* in Spanish. It seems interesting to mention that in standard Italian ‘shuttle’ is used as a synonym of *navetta* but translators preferred the national version maybe because ‘shuttle’ is first and foremost a space-related term which refers to a specific and internationally known NASA spacecraft.

Dreadnoughts “are kilometer-long capital ships mounting heavy, long-range firepower” whose kinetic energy is “about two and a half times the energy released by the fission weapon that destroyed Hiroshima” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). This is the reason why “they are only deployed for the most vital missions” and “the [fictional] Treaty of Farixen stipulates the (maximum) amount of dreadnoughts a navy may own” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In real world, dreadnoughts exist and are very large and powerful battleships. Accordingly, dreadnoughts are another ME3 vehicle whose linguistic nature is borderline in terms of realism or fictionality. In more details, dreadnoughts are a special type of battleships of British origin, whose name is borrowed in Italian naval language (*Treccani Dictionary of Italian language* 2016: online). In localizations, ‘dreadnought’ is directly translated into both Italian and Spanish

into *corazzata* and *acorazado* respectively. As a brief yet interesting digression, if this vehicle belonged to *realia* or, better said, the translation strategy used might be interpreted as an instance of generalization in both languages.

Sovereign “is the flagship of the rogue [turian] Spectre Saren Arterius”, a gigantic starship of almost unimaginable power and sophistication, crewed with both geth and krogan (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Actually, Sovereign is a Reaper, “a fully sentient and extremely powerful AI” whose name is Nazara, which seems to mean “the one who sees/observes” in old Turkish, possibly alluding to Sovereign’s role as a monitor of organic civilization (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Graphically, according to Marshall (2012: 158), Sovereign’s silhouette is that of a leaf insect nymph. Despite its Reaper nature, however, Sovereign is a spaceship and this is also testified to by the gender of the articles preceding the proper name in Italian and Spanish, namely *la* and *el*, which is due to the implied category nouns *nave* (feminine) and *buque* or *barco* (masculine) in the two languages respectively. This is the reason why its analysis is included in this paragraph and not in Section 5.3.4. As regards the translation of this proper name, ‘Sovereign’ is retained in Italian and directly translated into *Soberano* in Spanish, as in (77).

5.(77)	We stopped Sovereign and the geth. [...]	Abbiamo fermato la Sovereign e i Geth. [...]	Hemos detenido al Soberano y a los geth. [...].
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Cruisers are “middle-weight combatants, faster than dreadnoughts, and more heavily-armed than frigates”, mainly used as “the standard patrol unit” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Like dreadnoughts and drones, from a linguistic perspective, cruiser is between realism and fictionality and its equivalent nouns, namely *incrociatore* in Italian and *crucero* in Spanish, are used by translators to render this artefactual reference. These renditions are indeed the respective names in TLs military naval languages to translate ‘cruiser’ when it refers to a warship.

A frigate is a light escort and scouting vessel, whose most important role in warfare is reconnaissance: they scan for enemy ships and transmit warnings to the main fleet (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Moreover, in combat, their performance includes faster-than-light speed and great maneuverability (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The signifier ‘frigate’ too, like cruiser, dreadnought, shuttle and drone, has got a real-world signified in naval warfare and its

translation in ME3 Italian and Spanish versions relies on TLs' equivalents, namely *fregata* and *fragata*.

Liveships are the heart of the Migrant Fleet, the latter being “the massive collection of starships that became home to the quarians after they were driven from their homeworld by the geth” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Liveships are three “enormous vessels which” represent “incredible feats of aerospace and agricultural engineering”, since they “provide much of the food for the quarian Migrant Fleet” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Given their vital role for quarians' subsistence, liveships “are positioned in the center of the Migrant Fleet and heavily defended by the quarian navy” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). From a linguistic perspective, ‘liveship’ is an example of those neologisms which “are paramount in the vocabulary of science fiction” and, particularly, it is an adjective-noun compound (Wozniak 2014: online). Moreover, ‘liveship’ is not new in the realm of fictional worlds and, although speculating some sort of intertextuality has no foundation, a brief mention is worthy in order to compare approaches to the translation of fictional worlds: the US writer Robin Hobb used this word in her fantasy fiction trilogy “Ship of Magic. The Liveship Traders” and in the Italian and Spanish versions of the novels, ‘liveship’ was directly translated into *nave vivente* and *barco viviente* respectively. Going back to the ME universe, both translators deviated from the ST adjective meaning and focused on the vehicle's main function: as in example (78), ‘liveship’ becomes *nave-serra* [greenhouse ship] in Italian and *econave* [ecoship] in Spanish, and both are compounds. In Italian, the rendition is linked to cultivation: greenhouses' main function is that of growing plants. In Spanish, the prefix “eco-” is added to the noun and describes it as being related to ecology. Both solutions seem to perfectly transfer the essence of this fictional artefactual reference, thanks to translators' mind imaginative skills.

5.(78) While liveships have firepower comparable to a dreadnought, their primary purpose is food cultivation.	Sebbene le navi-serra abbiano una potenza di fuoco paragonabile a quella delle corazzate, il loro scopo primario è la coltivazione di cibo.	Aunque las econaves tienen una potencia de fuego comparable a la de un acorazado, su objetivo principal es el cultivo de alimentos.
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The Harbinger is the oldest and largest Reaper subtype, “who resides in dark space with the rest of the Reaper fleet” and also serves as “the mastermind behind the Collectors, controlling them by possessing the Collector General” or “any individual Collector” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online)

by means of indoctrination. In ME3, the Harbinger leads the attack on Earth and appears during the final battle in London to finally be destroyed when Shepard activates the Crucible. Despite its Reaper origin, like the Sovereign, the Harbinger is a vehicle and specifically the most powerful Capital Ship known. This is the reason why its analysis has been included in this paragraph and not in Section 5.3.4. In English, “harbinger” means “1. a person or thing that announces or indicates the approach of something; forerunner. 2. *obsolete* a person sent in advance of a royal party or army to obtain lodgings for them” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online). In ME3 universe, the Harbinger carries out exactly this function: he speaks through the Collector he possesses, commands troops and delivers threatening messages to Shepard. In this light, the strategy of directly translating ‘harbinger’ into high-register and literary equivalents such as *Araldo* and *Heraldo* [both herald] seems to be effective, as shown in example (79). Other equivalent words like *messaggero* and *mensajero* [messenger], *annunciatore* (or more literarily *annunziatore*) and *anunciador* [announcer], for example, would have been correct but they do not convey that subtle mysterious and ancient air ME3 Harbinger has.

5.(79) **Harbinger** speaks of you. L’**Araldo** ha parlato di te. Tu El **Heraldo** habla de ti. Te
 You resist. But you will fail. resisti. Ma alla fine cederai. resistes. Pero fracasará.

Flagship is a naval language term, resulting from the process of compounding, which refers to the main ship in a fleet. In ME3 universe, each race has got a flagship but the only instance of found in ME3 corpus specifically refers to the geth dreadnought. Like frigate, cruiser, dreadnought, shuttle and drone, ‘flagship’ is a name between realism and fictionality. In ME3 textual world, it relates to a vehicle which in real world has got the same signifier and similar signified. Indeed, it is directly translated into *ammiraglia*, which implies *nave* [ship], and *nave insignia* into Italian and Spanish respectively, although there are other possible renditions such as the Italian *nave di bandiera* and the Spanish *buque insignia* or *nave capitana*.

The M-44 Hammerhead, the M-29 Grizzly and the M-35 Mako are a series of infantry fighting vehicles named after sharks (“hammerhead”, “grizzly” and “mako”) (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As in example (80), the three names occur in a conversation between two Systems Alliance marines: pilot Steve Cortez and lieutenant James Vega. As the dialogue lines below show, retention is the strategy used to transfer these names although in Spanish the translator also abbreviated the appellation by transferring only the code *M-44* for ‘M-44 Hammerhead’,

the code number 35 for ‘Mako’, or inverting the order of the items, as in *Grizzly M-29* for ‘M-29 Grizzly’ and *mako M-35* for ‘M-35 Mako’. Since there are no space or time constraints on translators’ decisions, it is difficult to explain the reasons for such a partial transfer.

5.(80) I’ve always loved the M-35 Mako . It’s got heart, y’know?	Mi è sempre piaciuto l’ M-35 Mako . Ha un suo fascino.	Siempre me ha encantando el mako M-35 . Tiene corazón, ¿sabes?
Oh, come on. The M-44 Hammerhead is a vastly superior.	Ma fammi il piacere. L’ M-44 Hammerhead è nettamente superiore.	Oh, venga. El M-44 es muchísimo mejor.
C’mon, that thing is made of tissue paper. At least the Mako can take a few hits.	Bah, sembra fatto di carta velina. Almeno il Mako può incassare qualche colpo.	Vamos, ese trasto está hecho de papel higiénico. Al menos el 35 puede aguantar unos cuantos tiros.
[...]	[...]	[...]
If you want that, why don’t you just stick with the old M-29 Grizzly ?	Allora perché non ti accontenti del vecchio M-29 Grizzly ?	Si lo que quieres son cañones, ¿por qué no te quedas con el viejo Grizzly M-29 ?
Hey, I love that tank.	Ehi, adoro quel veicolo.	Eh, adoro ese tanque.
<i>Ha, you would be one to love grizzly bears, Mr. Vega.</i>	<i>Non sapevo ti piacessero grossi e pelosi, signor Vega.</i>	<i>Ja, tenías que ser tú el que adorara los osos peludos, Sr. Vega.</i>
What’s so funny?	Cosa c’è da ridere?	¿Qué tiene eso de gracioso?

As regards the conversation above, it seems interesting to briefly discuss the transfer of the irony behind Steve Cortez’ final line: “Ha, you would be one to love grizzly bears, Mr. Vega.” Cortez is an overtly gay character and he likes Vega very much, while the latter is bisexual, as testified to by his role as a possible romance for both male and female Commander Shepard. Accordingly, the utterance above seems to be Cortez’ malicious effort at flirtation with Vega, made by using a sexual innuendo wordplay based on the vehicle’s name ‘Grizzly’ and grizzly bears. Translators recognized the original ambiguity and transferred it accordingly: in Italian and Spanish, Cortez’ utterance becomes “I did not know you loved big and hairy ones, Mr.

Vega” and “Ha, you should be the one who loves shaggy bears, Mr. Vega” respectively. Thus, while in Spanish the reference to bears is transferred and the sexual innuendo seems to be subtler, in Italian *grossi and pelosi* [big and hairy] makes a quite direct and smutty allusion to male sex organ.

Lastly, within the first group of artefactual references, namely vehicles, the Konesh is a quarian Migrant Fleet ship which, in ME3 corpus, is mentioned as an identifier of its captain Admiral Shala’Raan vas Tonbay in a distress call, as in (81), due to geth attacks. In localizations, this vehicle’s proper name is retained in both target languages.

5.(81)	{Static} This is the Konesh . We’re taking heavy damage.	Qui è la Konesh . Siamo subendo gravi danni.	Aquí la Konesh . Estamos sufriendo grandes daños.
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5.3.6.2 Weapons

The second group of fictional artefactual references this study focuses on is that of weapons which, in ME3 corpus, range from game-world specific weapons like the Crucible and the genophage to types of grenades, missiles and cannons which are between realism and fictionality. The latter are, for example, the “flashbang grenade” which “launches a disorienting, concussive charge that [...] incapacitates all nearby targets”; the ground-based “Thanix missile”; the “syncing laser”, also known as “sync laser”, which “allows for laser-painting a target with pin-point accuracy”, and the anti-aircraft “Hades cannon” of Reaper design (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). All these fictional weapons are noun phrases where the common name signifier refers to warfare categories of arms which are used in real world too but their signified changes and therefore must be considered *irrealia*. In the above-mentioned compounds, the common nouns denote existing types of weapons which are directly translated into TLs’ equivalents, namely: *granata*, *missile*, *laser* and *cannone* in Italian and *granada*, *misil*, *laser* and *cañón* in Spanish. On the contrary, modifiers are either retained or directly translated: in Italian, ‘flashbang’, ‘Thanix’ and ‘Hades’ are retained while ‘syncing’ is omitted thus representing a generalization of the related artefactual reference; in Spanish, proper names are retained while ‘flashbang’ and ‘syncing’ are both directly translated into *cegador* [blinding] and *de sincronización* [synchronization as adjective] respectively.

Given its essential role in the war against the Reapers, special attention must be paid to the Crucible which is the most frequently occurring in ME3 corpus. It is “an ancient and highly

complex device constructed by the Protheans as a superweapon to stop the Reapers, but never successfully implemented before their extinction” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The Crucible exploits “the technology of mass relays” but in order to be activated, it requires “one final component: the Catalyst” which is supposed to be the Citadel or, more precisely, “an entity that resides within the Citadel and manifests as a young human boy” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Actually, the Crucible is only a power source but, “in combination with the Citadel and the mass relays, it can release tremendous amounts of energy throughout the galaxy” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). From a (multi)cultural perspective, according to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), in an email sent by salarian scientist Mordin Solus to Commander Shepard, the former “compares the Crucible’s construction with the human biblical story of the Tower of Babel, as a metaphor for the co-operation between multiple species toward a single goal”. As regards the name of this superweapon, “crucible” means “1. a vessel in which substances are heated to high temperatures; 2. the hearth at the bottom of a metallurgical furnace in which the metal collects; 3. a severe trial or test” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online) and it does not seem to be a chance that, as also the series’ Wiki suggests (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), ME3 Crucible “is both a test of galactic unity and a project which every race must pour its resources into”. In the game’s target versions, this superweapon’s name is transcreated in Italian and directly translated in Spanish, as in (82). In standard Italian, the neologism *Crucibolo*, yet calqued from the source term, does not exist while *Crisol* is the Spanish direct equivalent of ‘crucible’ meaning (1).

5.(82) Any new details on the Novità sul **Crucibolo**? ¿Alguna novedad sobre el **Crisol**?
Crucible?

Despite the Crucible’s key role in ME3, however, in the walkthrough selected conversations about the genophage are very frequent and this explains the higher number of occurrences in the corpus. As regards this horrific biological weapon used by the Salarrians to control the Krogan population by reducing the probability of female krogans’ viable pregnancies, it seems relevant to point out that ‘genophage’ exemplifies the use of neologisms in science fiction vocabulary, as Wozniak (2014: online) clearly explains. The creation of neologisms which “describe abstract concepts or objects not visually present in the film, but only referred to verbally” most commonly follows “the derivational patterns known to the audience, in order to

facilitate the viewers' task of surmising what these new words refer to and also, even more importantly, to create the impression of plausibility and establish the 'realism' of a term" (Wozniak 2014: online). "One of the frequent strategies is to use affixes typical to a given category of the words, often combined with a phonetic association that should lead the audience to the desired semantic association" (Wozniak 2014: online). Affixes "confer to these words an air of precision and scientific credibility, but also let the viewer guess (more or less) what their denotation is. This type of neologism does not create particular difficulties in translation, provided that similar derivational elements exist in the target language" (Wozniak 2014: online). In more details, the credibility of this fictional infection is based on its signifier's nature as a compound: the prefix "geno" meaning "to become or produce" and also coming from the Greek "genos" which means "birth" plus the suffix "phage" meaning "to eat or consume" (*Mosby's Medical Dictionary* 2016: 753; 1379). Since similar derivational elements exist in both target languages, the translation of 'genophage' is direct: as in (83), *genofagia* and *genofagia* which, apart from phonological differences, present the equivalent affixes of the original.

- | | | | |
|--------|---|--|---|
| 5.(83) | If you don't mind me asking,
what's it been like living with
the genophage ? | Se posso chiedertelo,
com'è vivere con la
genofagia ? | Si no te molesta la pregunta,
¿cómo es eso de vivir con la
genofagia ? |
|--------|---|--|---|

5.3.6.3 Equipment

The third and last group of fictional artefactual references of this study includes equipment, tools, devices and, from a linguistic perspective, it means initialisms like "VI" (virtual intelligence) and "AI" (artificial intelligence), neologisms resulting from compounds like "medi-gel", "omni-tool" and "NavPoint", and proper names such as "Catalyst", "Conduit" and "Battlespace", which present different challenges and seem to require different skills to translators.

"A Virtual Intelligence (VI) is a sophisticated program designed to make modern computer systems easier to use. They are not to be confused with artificial intelligences [...], as VIs are only utilized to assist the user and process data [...]. Though they appear to be intelligent, they aren't actually self-aware" (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). "Some VIs have 'personality imprints', with their behavior parameters, speech pattern and appearance based on

specific individuals, although it is illegal to make VIs based on currently living people” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As regards VIs functions, they “vary greatly depending on how they are deployed. They can handle search queries on the extranet, act as tour guides [...] or manage sophisticated lab and database work” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In ME universe, there are many VIs but in the walkthrough selected only Avina, the general information VI on the Citadel, goes on the stage. As regards the translation of this artefactual reference, while the latter’s proper name has been retained, both the full form ‘virtual intelligence’ and the initialism ‘VI’ are directly translated into TLs equivalents: *intelligenza virtuale* and *IV* in Italian, *inteligencia virtual* and *IV* in Spanish, as examples (84) and (85) demonstrate.

- | | | | |
|--------|--|--|---|
| 5.(84) | I am Avina, a fully interactive
virtual intelligence . | Io sono Avina,
un’ intelligenza virtuale
interattiva. | Soy Avina, una inteligencia virtual completamente interactiva. |
| 5.(85) | You’re a VI ? | Sei un’ IV ? | ¿Eres una IV ? |

Medi-gel is a hyphenated compound which combines the abbreviation of the adjective “medical” and the noun “gel” and represents a neologism which refers to “an all-purpose medicinal salve combining an anesthetic and clotting agent used by paramedics, EMTs [Emergency Medical Technicians], and military personnel” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). It heals various wounds and ailments, instantly sealing injuries against infection and allowing for rapid healing thanks to a frequency of ultrasound (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In ME3, this medicinal plays a fundamental role: medi-gel is the only way to completely regenerate Commander Shepard’s health but, since its capacity is limited and it must be purchased, medi-gel turns out to be a very valuable resource. In ME3 localizations, this medical tool name has been retained in both Italian and Spanish, although in Spanish the compound is not hyphenated, as in example (86). Retention seems to be an adequate solution since Italian and Spanish players easily understand the compound: ‘medi’ sounds as an abbreviation of the equivalent adjectives for ‘medical’ and the noun ‘gel’ exists in both target languages. The only difference between the two target versions lies in pronunciation.

- | | | | |
|--------|--|---|--|
| 5.(86) | Get her some medi-gel !
Now! | Datele del medi-gel !
Presto! | ¡Ponle un poco de medigel !
¡Ya! |
|--------|--|---|--|

“An Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a self-aware computing system capable of learning and independent decision making” with its own personality (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). From a linguistic perspective, it seems interesting to underline that in ME3 universe most of races consider AI as “living, conscious entity deserving the same rights as organics” and argue that the “use of the term ‘artificial’ is institutionalized racism on the part of organic life; the term ‘synthetic’ is considered the politically correct alternative” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Moreover, the “organics versus synthetics” conflict is an underlying theme in ME series: “organics create synthetics to improve their own existence, but those improvements have limits. To exceed those limits, synthetics must be allowed to evolve. They must, by definition, surpass their creators. The result is inevitable chaos and destruction” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The geth versus quarian conflict, which represents “the created versus creators” conflict, serves as cautionary tale against the dangers of artificial intelligence for all races in the galaxy.

Going back to the transfer of this artefactual reference, like ‘VI’, the initialism “AI” is directly translated into *IA* in both target languages as in example (87), and stands for “intelligenza artificiale” and “inteligencia artificial” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online) in Italian and Spanish respectively. The full form does not present any occurrences in ME3 corpus.

5.(87)	That’s a fully evolved AI .	È un’ IA completamente evoluta...	Es una IA completamente evolucionada.
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Omni-tool is, like medi-gel, a hyphenated compound which combines the prefix of Latin origin “omni” meaning “all or everywhere” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online) and the noun “tool”. Moreover, from a lexical point of view, it is a neologism whose meaning is easily accessible through the signifier. In ME3 universe, an omni-tool is a multipurpose diagnostic and manufacturing tool “used for a variety of civilian and battlefield tasks, such as hacking, decryption, or repair. [...] When activated, an omni-tool can appear over either a person’s forearms and/or hands, and [...] as an orange hologram” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In short, omni-tools are “handheld devices” that “can be used to analyze and adjust the functionality of most standard equipment, including weapons and armor, from a distance” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). As in example (88), in ME3 corpus TTs, this piece of equipment is transcreated into *Factotum* with capital letter in Italian and directly translated into *omniherramienta* in Spanish.

5.(88) [...] Students, switch your omni-tools to privacy mode so they can't track you.	[...] Studenti, mettetevi i Factotum in modalità privata, così non potranno rintracciarvi.	[...] Estudiantes, omniherramienta en modo privado para que no haya rastreo posible.
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In the Spanish case, the translator reproduced the derivational pattern of the original term and created a compound, without hyphen, by retaining the prefix ‘omni’ and adding the direct Spanish equivalent of ‘tool’. Conversely, in Italian, the translator transcreated the original by borrowing a single and well-known Latin word meaning “a person employed to do all kinds of work” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online). Accordingly, although it basically refers to people and not to things, the Italian creative solution perfectly renders the nature of omni-tools and allows players to enjoy its linguistic form.

According to the series’ Wiki, “the Catalyst, also known as the Intelligence, is an ancient artificial intelligence that resides within the Citadel. It embodies the collective consciousness and memories of the Reapers, and thus countless ancient civilizations” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The Catalyst was created by the ancient aquatic race of Leviathans which, based on the belief that organic races are always eventually felled by their own synthetic creations, designed an intelligence able to oversee the “relations between organic and synthetic life” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). By spreading pawns which collected data from various organics throughout the galaxy, the Catalyst studied the cosmos’ civilizations, and finally found a solution to the organics versus synthetics ineluctable conflict: the Reapers (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Indeed, the Catalyst developed the very first Reaper construct, whose function is that of cyclically harvesting “all spacefaring organic and synthetic species, with millions of bodies and minds from each race being processed and converted into new Reapers” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). “By doing this, the Reapers synthetically preserved the harvested race’s genetic makeup and collective knowledge, while simultaneously allowing for more primitive races to advance. This harvest ensured that the threat of complete annihilation of organics by synthetics was effectively averted” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Moreover, the Catalyst “commanded the Reapers to build the mass relays, speeding the development of civilizations during each cycle and increasing the efficiency of the entire process. The entire galaxy became the Catalyst’s ‘experiment’” and, by gathering more and more data about civilizations, it tries to come upon other possible solutions to the organic-synthetic conflict (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). In ME3, as already mentioned, the Catalyst is represented as “a transparent projection, taking the form of a young boy” (*Mass*

Effect Wiki: online). As regards ‘Catalyst’ as a proper name, it seems worth mentioning that it is a chemistry language term which, in localizations, is transferred by means of direct translation in both target languages, namely *Catalizzatore* in Italian and *Catalizador* in Spanish, as in example (89).

5.(89)	I thought the Citadel was the Catalyst .	Pensavo che la Cittadella fosse il Catalizzatore .	Creía que la Ciudadela era el Catalizador .
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NavPoint is another neologism which derives from the blending of two words: the abbreviated form of “navigation” and “point” and refers to the coordinates used to fix the position of a geographical location. In ME3 localizations, this artefactual reference is retained in Italian and explicitated in Spanish, as in example (90).

5.(90)	Looks that way. I'm sending you the NavPoint for his office. I'll meet you there.	Così pare. Ti invio il NavPoint del suo ufficio. Ci vediamo là.	Eso parece. Te envió el punto de navegación de su oficina. Nos vemos ahí.
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The Conduit is a massive structure created by the Reapers in war-torn London in 2186, designed to transport corpses and other matter from groundside directly to the Citadel relocated above Earth (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Given its function, allied galactic forces called it the “conduit” (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). It “follows basic mass relay transport principles” and it “emits a constant beam of blue light into the sky” while transmitting or receiving objects (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Living matter may survive the trip, despite its ballistic speed, but destination termini are always changing (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The name of this mysterious channel is directly translated in both target languages: *Condotto* in Italian and *Conducto* in Spanish.

Lastly, an artefactual reference concerns the galactic Alliance News Network program named Battlespace which, from a linguistic point of view, represents a compound word and, in localizations, is transferred by means of direct translation in both TLs: *Spazio di guerra* in Italian and *Espacio de combate* in Spanish, as in (91). In both cases, however, it seems worth noting that the modifier ‘battle’ has not been rendered into its *prima facie* equivalent, namely *battaglia* and *batalla* but into related words such as *guerra* [war] in Italian and *combate* [combat] in Spanish.

5.(91)	I'm a military reporter with a show called "Battlespace." [...]	Sono l'inviata del programma "Spazio di guerra". [...]	Soy reportera de guerra y tengo un programa llamado "Espacio de combate". [...]
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5.3.7 Intratextual metaludic references

In ME3 corpus there are two examples of what may be defined as intratextual metaludic references. In particular, they are references to *Mass Effect* textual universe and both are made through the proper names of two ME sociopolitical institutions: the Grissom Academy and the Treaty of Farixen.

The former, as it is easy to speculate, is named after a military and political leader in ME universe history. Jon Grissom is a famed Systems Alliance hero, regarded as one of the great pioneers of human space exploration (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The Grissom Academy, whose full name is indeed "Jon Grissom Academy" is the Alliance's premier school for young human biotics and is housed in a space station in orbit over the human colony of Elysium (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online).

The Treaty of Farixen, like real-world treaties, is named after the location where the treaty was signed, namely Farixen during the Farixen Naval Conference (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). The treaty is an intergalactic agreement which was signed by Council races in order to limit the number of dreadnoughts of their fleets, they agreed to fix a ratio of dreadnought construction between themselves due to their destructive potential (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). "Signing the Treaty of Farixen is a requirement for any race wishing to open an embassy on the Citadel" (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). According to the series' Wiki, "the Treaty of Farixen is almost certainly based off the Washington Naval Treaty, signed by the U.S., Great Britain, Japan, France, and Italy in 1922, limiting these states to capital ship tonnage ratios" in order to maintain the balance of power and the peace after World War I (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online).

More relevantly for this study, the proper names 'Grissom' and 'Farixen' occurring in the respective noun phrases produce instances of intratextuality and the translation strategy for their transfer, as usually happens when dealing with proper names, is retention. However, it is also true that these proper names in ME3 corpus are not independent since they always co-occur with 'academy' and 'treaty' in the noun phrases 'Grissom Academy' and 'Treaty of Farixen'. Accordingly, they might be also interpreted as instances of sociopolitical references but, given the focus of this study on proper names, given the importance of these names in ME universe

and given the intratextual features of these two noun phrases, their metaludic nature seems to prevail on the sociopolitical aspects.

5.4 Realia

Within the realism-fictionality spectrum of video games the corpus of this study aims to recreate, on the basis of its game world dimensions, *Mass Effect 3* is positioned upon the right-hand side of the axis. However, although ME3 game universe is definitely fictional or, better said, science-fictional, there is a special bond between its setting and the real world, which manifests itself in the humano-centric perspective the player is provided with. The following paragraphs explore the translation of ME3 *realia*, that is to say, the references made, in the game's dialogues, to existing entities which have been classified into: geographical references (5.4.1) which concern the place names mentioned, ethnic references (5.4.2) regarding the only existing race living in ME3 world, and intertextual references to cinema and literature (5.4.3). No references are found concerning real-world institutions although, as already mentioned, it must be said that almost all ME3 sociopolitical entities belonging to *irrealia* were developed in the image of the world we know, as the Systems Alliance "marines" clearly demonstrate. Moreover, ME3 *realia* include many artefactual references which fall under the category of military language (Chapter 6), due to the hybrid genre of this game which presents the typical (military) lingo of shooters. As data in Appendix C clearly show, the quantitative difference between *realia* and *irrealia* in ME3 corpus is remarkable: *realia* comprise a few place names, only one race and some intertextual references. However, despite the small amount, from a qualitative viewpoint, they represent interesting phenomena which seem to require different translational skills. Moreover, within the realism-fictionalism spectrum of video games the corpus of this study aims to recreate, *realia* provide evidence of ME3 sci-fi world relationship with the real world, whose comparison allows the player to fully understand and enjoy the game world (Gunn 2003).

5.4.1 Geographical references

As explored in Section 5.3.3, the geography of ME3 world is galaxy-sized and most geographical references in ME3 corpus belong to the category of *irrealia*. However, given the player's humano-centric perspective, some real-world locations are mentioned and their references are discussed in this paragraph.

According to Mitchell (2012: online), “some of the astronomical objects featured in the game are even real ones. [...] The game’s developers may have had some serious NASA-based inspiration”. As ME executive producer Casey Hudson (cit. in Mitchell 2012: online) explains, “we [BioWare] tried to include real-life locations wherever possible, such as famous nebulae, stars, the moon etc.” After all, “part of the goal with the Mass Effect universe was to set it in the real world, so that even as we [BioWare] created storylines of epic scale and exotic science-fiction themes, it would all appear to be an extension of the astronomy that you can read about today” (Hudson in Mitchell 2012: online). Like fictional geographical references, also real geographical references variety is rich: they range from planets like Earth and Mars to satellites like Luna, stars like Sol and its related Sol System, which corresponds to the Solar System, countries like Australia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain, always abbreviated into UK, cities like London and Vancouver, the latter being only a visual reference at the very beginning of the game, and “geographical objects” (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014: 201) like the Big Ben of London.

All place names have direct equivalents in the TLs, i.e. “exonyms” or “conventional place names”, as explained in Section 2.4.1., whose analysis seems to be irrelevant for the purposes of this study, especially in quantitative terms.

Nevertheless, some real geographical references seem to deserve special attention. Sol and Luna refer to the sun and the moon respectively but both forms are not standard English. “Sol” is “a poetic word for the Sun” and “Luna” is the Latin word for the moon (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online); indeed, they were the names of the Roman god and goddess representing the sun and the moon respectively. In this light, it is possible to speculate that these two forms are used as proper names aimed at distancing them from others suns and moons in the galaxy while producing a foreignizing stylistic effect in the ST, which is neutralized in both TLs. In Italian and Spanish ‘Sol’ in the noun phrase ‘Sol System’ is directly translated into the adjectives *solare* and *solar* respectively while the capital letter of the noun ‘System’ is retained only in Italian, as in example (92). As regards ‘Luna’, exemplified in (93), this name loses its linguistic oddity since this signifier corresponds to the standard TLs equivalents for ‘moon’.

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|--------|---|--|--|
| 5.(92) | From there, it was a short jump to the Sol System . Earth didn’t stand a chance. | Da qui al Sistema solare il passo è stato breve. La Terra non aveva speranze. | A partir de ahí, fue un salto rápido al sistema solar . La Tierra no pudo hacer nada. |
|--------|---|--|--|

5.(93)	Admiral, we've lost contact with Luna .	Ammiraglio, contatto perso con la Luna .	Almirante, acabamos de perder contacto con la Luna .
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In this light, it seems very interesting to note that even real-world referents may be linguistically reinterpreted in the source texts of science fiction works and that, unfortunately, the creativity or at least the artistic intent behind these unusual forms may be lost in translation. This seems to be particularly true in the transfer from English into Romance languages when Latin is used as a means of foreignization and linguistic estrangement in the SL.

Lastly, as already mentioned, a visual geographical reference is made to Vancouver at the beginning of the game, as in Figure 31 in Appendix C. However, the name of this Canadian city occurs in ME3 database although there are no instances in ME3 corpus. Although its merely visual nature sets it beyond the scope of this study, since ME developer BioWare is Canadian, if the game maker is the viewpoint to determine the source culture, the images showing Vancouver must be interpreted as a reference to the SC. Moreover, as Sapieha (2012: online) underlines, this is the first time players are offered real-world geographical setting. In particular, as ME3 art director Derek Watts (cit. in Sapieha 2012: online) explains, in order to choose a suitable setting for the beginning of the Reapers' invasion, "we [BioWare] thought about Hong Kong and Rio, which are surrounded by natural beauty, [...] but then we thought: We're a Canadian company, so we should make it a Canadian city. Vancouver had just finished the Olympics, so we set it in Vancouver". "Watts centered his Vancouver on the city's most iconic landmark, Canada Place. His team built out from there, spreading monolithic high-rises to the North Shore, designing architecture and infrastructure to run up Mount Seymour, and adding bridges over Burrard Inlet" (Sapieha 2012: online).

5.4.2 Ethnic references

In ME universe, the only real-world species is humans. They inhabit the planet Earth, expectedly enough, and are the newest sentient race to enter the galactic community, since humanity's embassy on the Citadel was founded only in 2165, in recognition of their growing power and influence (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Biologically, humans are depicted as fairly robust, strong, fast and agile individuals who can live to about 150 years. From a cultural perspective, they are generally considered as a whole: an intelligent, ambitious, aggressive, especially in colonization, individualistic and thus, unpredictable and dangerous race. This is

the reason why humans do not have any close allies among other races. Similarly, due to the pan-global cultural identity that has been slowly developing since the 21st century, humans see themselves as a single, collective group: human as opposed to alien. Their economy, although much smaller than those of the other Council races, is very powerful relative to their size, and their military prowess is amongst the greatest in the galaxy (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Human ME3 characters are numerous and prominent in the game's narrative: Commander Shepard himself/herself, James Vega, Ashley Williams, Jeff "Joker" Moreau, Admiral Anderson, Admiral Hackett, and the principal antagonist Illusive Man, amongst others. As regards Shepard, it seems worth mentioning that his/her humanity was a deliberate and strategic choice made by the developers to give players a foothold in the setting, a frame of reference to experience a universe through human eyes. In BioWare's creative director Mac Walters' words (cit. in Farokhmanesh 2016: online), "Mass Effect has always been a very human-centric story which "gives the players [...] something they can relate back to", since "ultimately we're all humans".

All ethnic references related to humans in ME3 corpus, which are 'humanity' (11 occurrences in the corpus, 142 in the database), 'human' mostly used as adjective (9 occurrences in the corpus, 498 in ME3 database), and the plural form 'humans' (3 occurrences in the corpus, 183 in the database), have been directly translated into TLs equivalents: in Italian they become *umanità*, *umano/a*, and *Umani* with capital letter when referring to the whole species, the latter being in line with the translation of other unreal races' names, and in Spanish they become *humanidad*, *humano/a* and *humanos*. In this light, their quantitative analysis does not provide any significant findings since the references made by these adjectives and names in the corpus are not meaningful or loaded.

Nevertheless, it seems relevant to mention that references are also made to human history and language too. In more details, the historical reference is to one of the major international conflicts that occurred during the twentieth century: World War II. Example (94) contains a dialogue line uttered by human Admiral Hackett in a conversation with human Commander Shepard where the former compares the Crucible with the atomic bomb. As regards human language and culture, example (95) shows a dialogue line uttered by Garrus Vakarian in a conversation with Commander Shepard during which the turian character mentions "an old saying" on Earth which is actually the final segment of an Irish toast. As Kte'pi (2015: 1684) suggests, "the Irish have developed a body not only of drinking songs but of traditional toasts,

most of which exhibit the dark humor of the culture” and, as the author explains, “perhaps the most famous is popular among Irish Americans, though it is fairly simple: May your glass be full, may the roof over your head be strong, and may you be in heaven half an hour before the devil knows you’re dead”. As regards the transfer of these two human-specific references, which are of historical and cultural nature respectively, direct translation seems to be the correct approach: ‘Second World War’ has local versions which cannot be ignored, given the international extent of the conflict, while the meaning of the old Irish saying needs to be clear to Italian and Spanish target players in order to be enjoyable in the game context.

5.(94)	Two centuries ago, scientists faced the same problem in the Second World War. They weren’t sure what the atomic bomb might do.	Due secoli fa, alcuni scienziati si trovarono davanti allo stesso problema, durante la seconda guerra mondiale. Non erano certi dell’effetto della bomba atomica.	Hace dos siglos, los científicos se enfrentaron al mismo problema en la Segunda Guerra Mundial. No sabían con certeza lo que haría la bomba atómica.
5.(95)	James told me there’s an old saying here on Earth: “May you be in heaven half an hour before the devil knows you’re dead.”	James mi ha detto che sulla Terra c’è un detto: “Che tu possa raggiungere il paradiso mezz’ora prima che il diavolo si accorga della tua morte.”	James me dijo que hay un viejo dicho en la Tierra: “Mejor que lleves media hora en el cielo antes de que el diablo sepa que estás muerto”.

5.4.3 Intertextual references

On the basis of the definition provided in Section 2.4.1, four instances of intertextuality are found in ME3 corpus. These four intertextual references are all linked to the human character Ashley Williams. The first one is basically her name which, according to the series’ Wiki (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online), refers to actor Bruce Campbell’s character Ashley “Ash” Williams in the American horror film franchise *Evil Dead* (1981 - Present). Indeed, one of ME3 Ashley’s weapons is the “boomstick” shotgun which is a constant companion for *Evil Dead*’s Ashley. The other three intertextual references are of literary nature and lie in her middle name and in two quotations which testify to her cultured mind due to her poetry-loving father. First, Ashley William’s middle name “Madeline” is a reference to Victorian writer Alfred Tennyson’s 1830

namesake poem (*Mass Effect Wiki*: online). Second, as in example (96) which contains an extract of a conversation between Commander Shepard and Ashley, she quotes the whole second stanza of the poem of another Victorian writer, namely William Ernest Henley's 1888 *Invictus*, she overtly mentions the source and provides a personal interpretation. Finally, as in (97), in order to please his beloved Ashley, Commander Shepard quotes the final four lines of the third stanza of Alfred Tennyson's 1854 poem titled *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.

- | | | | |
|--------|--|--|--|
| 5.(96) | <p>“In the fell clutch of circumstance, I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of chance, my head is bloody, but unbowed.”</p> <p>What’s that from?</p> <p>Invictus, by Henley. One of my dad’s sappy poets.</p> <p>It’s about not giving up.</p> | <p>“La morsa feroce degli eventi non m’ha tratto smorfia o grido. Sferzata a sangue dalla sorte non s’è piegata la mia testa.”</p> <p>Che versi sono?</p> <p>Invictus, di Henley. Uno dei poeti sdolcinati di mio padre.</p> <p>Dice che non bisogna arrendersi.</p> | <p>“En las feroces garras de la circunstancia, no he gemido ni gritado. Bajo los golpes del azar, mi cabeza sangra, pero no se inclina.”</p> <p>¿De quién es?</p> <p>Invictus, de Henley. Uno de los poetas sentimentaloides de mi padre.</p> <p>Habla de no rendirse.</p> |
| 5.(97) | <p>“Boldly they rode and well, Into the jaws of Death, Into the mouth of Hell.”</p> | <p>“E prodi essi cavalcarono, nelle fauci della Morte, nella bocca dell’Inferno.”</p> | <p>“Y valientes cabalgaron a las fauces de la muerte, a la boca del infierno”.</p> |

In more details, as regards the context of the dialogues excerpts above, in (96) Ashley and Shepard are talking about her relatives who managed to save themselves from the Reapers' attack although her sister's husband was killed in action; thus, they start discussing the horrors of war, especially from the viewpoint of soldiers' families. Very discouraged, she tries to boost their morale by quoting one of the most famous poems by William Ernest Henley which, as she explains, “it’s about not giving up”. The dialogue line in (97), on the contrary, is uttered just before the final fight against the Reapers. It could be the last time Shepard and Ashley speak to

each other and quoting a literary work Ashley loves seems to Shepard a suitable antidote in order to hearten her.

As regards the transfer of these four intertextual reference, first, it is important to mention that, while Ashley's middle name never occurs in ME3 database, 'Ashley' and its abbreviation 'Ash' are always retained in both localizations, as explored in Section 5.3.1. According to the Italian and Spanish versions of *Mass Effect Wiki*, 'Madeline' has been retained in both target languages too.

Secondly, as for the quotation in (96), the title of Henley's poem is retained in both target languages as it is: "invictus" is a Latin word made of the prefix "in-" and the past participle of the verb "vincere" [win] and means "unconquered, undefeated" (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online) and also "invincible". As a proper name, and also thanks to Italian and Spanish familiarity with Latin words, retention seems to be very effective. As regards the quotation of the stanza, a brief digression is worthy. As Guerra (2011: 209) explains, Henley's poem made itself known to the Italian audience via director Clint Eastwood's 2009 movie titled "Invictus" about South African politician Nelson Mandela. The poem is indeed cited in a very important scene by Mandela (interpreted by actor Morgan Freeman), in order to lift his spirits during imprisonment for apartheid. Before 2009, according to Guerra (2011: 209), both studies on Henley's poetry and his works were hardly accessible. In this light, *Invictus* the movie served a popularizer function for *Invictus* the poem. Nevertheless, Guerra (2011: 209) complains that the Italian translation of the poem was produced under the severe constraints of the dubbing process which finally distorts the actual meaning and limits the comprehension of the text, as envisioned by the author. A more in-depth analysis of Henley's poem and the comparison between Guerra's translation and the one quoted in the movie would be very fascinating but outside the scope of this research. What is more relevant here is that the poem's filmic version is the same as ME3 Ashley Williams' quotation, as all movie excerpts available on YouTube testify to. On the contrary, in Spanish, the translation of the poem's stanza is not based on the movie rendition and different versions may be found, probably because, as happens in Italy, Henley's works are not well-known to the general Spanish audience. Given the absence and, consequently, the constraint, of an official translation, it is possible to speculate that translators' research work was limited to finding one of the versions available on the Internet which, interestingly enough, in Italian corresponds to a filmic quotation, thus showing how cinema may turn to be a source and a reference for language professionals in game localization.

With regard to the quotation in (97), which comes from Alfred Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, which is in turn a homage to the Battle of Balaclava during the Crimean War (1853-1856) and which is literally referred to as "La carica della brigata leggera" and "La carga de la brigada ligera" in Italy and Spain respectively, it seems that no official Italian and Spanish translations exist but varied interpretations are provided on the Internet. In ME3 the approach seems to be a direct translation which takes into account the poetic nature of the dialogue line; for example, the marked position of the emphatic adverb 'boldly' preceding the subject in the ST is kept in both target texts and rendered into the Italian high-register adjectives *prode* and *valiente* [valiant].

On the whole, the transfer of these references seems to present translators different challenges since, on the one hand, retention allows them to straightforwardly deal with proper names and, on the other hand, when quotations are made from works which are not mainstream and, more importantly, whose local version, if any, is almost inaccessible, they can rely on ready-made translations from other media or they can make use of their poetic writing skills.

Chapter 6

Military Language between Realism and Fictionality

6.1 Introduction

The military, as every occupation, has developed “its own specialized language to designate people, objects, processes, and situations that are specific to the field but unfamiliar to people outside it” (Boggs Cory 2013: 759). According to Boggs Cory, military language “facilitates communication in the complex, unpredictable, and emotionally stressful military environment”, “it reinforces social hierarchies within the service”, “it helps create a sense of shared identity among military personnel”, “it allows soldiers and sailors to describe shared experiences with specificity and detail [...] and to clearly and directly communicate specific, and sometimes disturbing, information with a minimum of emotion” (2013: 759). In order to serve these purposes, namely military personnel’s communicative goals, military language is the result of many and varied linguistic phenomena which range “from highly rationalized bureaucratic jargon to colorful military slang” (Boggs Cory 2013: 759). In this light, official terminology and informal military speech seem to be the two edges of a multifaceted spectrum of linguistic events occurring in military language.

Official terminology may describe tactics, techniques and procedures as well as weapons, vehicles and equipment. It “functions to narrow the potential meaning of particular words” and “attempts to foreclose as many interpretative options as possible in order to reduce the likelihood of error or misjudgment” (Dauber 1999a: 380) since a misunderstanding in war settings can lead to a catastrophe. According to Dauber, official terminology is “a sanitized form of language” which “emphasizes the expertise of those who use it” and “contains a specific notion of hierarchy” (Dauber 1999a: 380). For example, the standardized procedures in radio communications are used to prevent voices over radios and other communication systems from being distorted, unclear or misinterpreted. The most effective and common system includes the use of the international military phonetic alphabet and specialized procedural words. Similarly, the alphanumeric designation used for military personnel and equipment allows to identify and categorize each unit or item, since it is designated by a unique combination of letters and numbers.

The need for precision and brevity in military communication gives rise to a wide number of abbreviations and acronyms. Most of them are official terms for frequently used words or phrases that might otherwise become unwieldy because of their length or complexity. Other abbreviations, on the contrary, are informal expressions of the military slang, a linguistic phenomenon which reflects the group identity and sense of unity shared by military personnel and presents a very creative linguistic code they use to describe their social reality (Dauber 1999b). According to Boggs Cory (2013: 760), for example, codenames and nicknames informally express the strong sense of group military identity.

As regards the USA and their leading role in international contemporary war settings, the importance of effective communication and standardized terminology is testified to by the direct commitment of the US government. The Joint Education and Doctrine Division of the US Department of Defense (DOD) manages the *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, and also issues a periodically updated publication of it, which contains all the military and associated terms, together with their definitions, which have been approved as “DOD terminology”. The purpose is to supplement standard English-language dictionaries and standardize military and associated terminology to improve communication and mutual understanding within DOD, with other federal agencies, and among the United States and its allies (US Department of Defense 2016). Given the specialization of the terms discussed in this chapter, for the purposes of the analysis, the DOD’s *Dictionary* (2016) and the *Dictionary of Military Terms* (Bowyer 2004) have been adopted as the main references to investigate military language expressions’ nature as terms, i.e. they are lemmas of a subject-specific specialized dictionary. In Italian, the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Military Vocabulary* (Busetto 2004) has been selected to compare the Italian translators’ choices with the most recent specialized dictionary of Italian military language.

Military language is a very specific vernacular whose translation may be a challenging task. Despite the considerable number of war-themed movies and television series, especially of US origin, to my knowledge, research on the translation of military register is still an unexplored area. In AVT, for example, very little scholarly attention has been paid to the

phenomenon²³ and the few studies available do not seem to provide significant contributions to this research analysis of military language.

As discussed in Section 2.2, the corpus of this study consists of three titles of a genre which can be called “war video games” or rather “war-themed video games” (Stahl 2010: 91-112). Indeed, the war theme or setting was one the fundamental criteria for their selection, in order to perform a transverse analysis of the corpus.

Given the military embeddedness of the three game worlds, especially as regards their settings, it comes as no surprise that military language and terminology play a fundamental role in game texts and represent a remarkable and varied source of linguistic and translational phenomena. As Patterson (2015: 212) explains, “the lingo used during combat, like ‘hostiles,’ ‘extraction point,’ and ‘LZ’ (landing zone) as well as the types of weaponry (pistols, SMGs, rifles, snipers, shotguns, and grenades)” are typical elements of the military gameplay of shooters and, accordingly, textual and linguistic features of this subgenre. After all, most of the games’ dialogues take place during military operations. Accordingly, these conversations involve soldiers who speak to other soldiers about warfare. In particular, the phenomena falling into the military language macrocategory, which will be discussed below, seem to mirror what may be considered as the keywords of effective military communication: accuracy, brevity and clarity.

As regards culture, US English is the means of expression of such specialized language and, needless to say, most characters participating in dialogues are the United States’ marines proper, as in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* and *Battlefield 4*, or marines belonging to a fictional Navy which is designed in the image of the actual US Navy, as in *Mass Effect 3*. In this light, the games’ military language and terminology may be considerably culture-specific. Nevertheless, English is also “the vehicular language for the Military, in an international geopolitical scenario marked by the globalization of conflicts beyond national borders and consequently by the integration of armies in multinational and multicultural coalition forces” (Orna Montesinos 2013: 87-88). Consequently, English becomes a *lingua franca* and this determines a significant presence of Anglicisms and calques in TLs’ military LSPs, Italian especially.

²³ See, for example, Gordo Peleato (2007) who focuses on dubbing, Ardi (2013) and Pirus (2015) who focus on subtitling.

The following paragraphs analyze the translation of this specialized language as artefactual references belonging to *realia* on the basis of the subclassification made in Section 2.4.1, and specifically deal with military terminology (6.2) which is, on the one hand, a brief discussion of the most relevant terms mainly referring to actions and, on the other hand, given the focus of this study on names and name-related items, a more detailed analysis of vehicles, weapons and equipment, whose degree of specialization ranges from moderate to high. Moreover, this section explores the transfer of military titles (6.3); the clock code (6.4); military phonetic alphabet (6.5); radio communication procedures (6.6), and abbreviations, acronyms and initialisms (6.7). As will emerge in the following paragraphs, and as tables and figures in Appendix D show, the analysis of these phenomena cover the three games subcorpora interpreted as a whole. However, when a game does not contain any instances of the category under investigation, quantitative data are not provided. Conversely, a transverse quantitative approach is adopted to examine those linguistic items which characterize military language in war-themed video games.

6.2 Military Terminology

As defined by Cabré (1996: 16), this type of *realia* deals with terminology as a product, the set of terms from a given subject field, namely the military realm, and consequently as a discipline from a descriptive perspective. Therefore, this section explores military terms in their basic terminological sense: words within the (military) specialized domain (Cabré 1996: 22). As Depecker recapitulates (2015: 37), a term is a unit described by a set of linguistic features similar to those of a word but, while a word is easily isolable in a language, its sense may be vague, multiple or changing, and it refers to an element in reality generically, a term mostly refers to technical or scientific reality, its definition is precise and validated by the description of the concept and of the object it is concerned with. However, “in some cases, it is not easy to distinguish between ‘word’ and ‘term’” since many ordinary words may be terms in specific domains. According to Depecker (2015: 37), what delimits the boundaries between them “is the idea, or rather ‘the concept’, i.e. the unit of thought expressed by language” through that homograph and homophone linguistic item, which may be both a word and a term at the same time.

In the corpus, this borderline category includes many of the terms found during the analysis since, as Wilson (2008: online) remarks, “the language of the military and of warfare

in particular has greatly impacted the English language” and “the ubiquity of military discourse” has had a clear influence “on the development of English vocabulary” and, one might add, on languages other than English too. In Italian, for example, movements from military language to everyday language and vice versa have been extensively explored (see Biffi 2011: online).

As far as the relationship between words and terms is concerned, English in MOHW provides an interesting example of polysemy and wordplay in dialogues. The verb ‘fight’, which is, needless to say, fundamental in this context, has multiple senses in English, among which: (a) “to oppose or struggle against (an enemy) in battle” and (b) “to oppose or struggle against (a person, thing, cause, etc.) in any manner” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online), the latter may be considered as a synonym of the verbs ‘argue’ or ‘quarrel’. This double nature is exploited by MOHW texts’ authors in a phone conversation between Preacher and his wife Lena at the beginning of the game. In the relevant scene, Preacher apologizes for his aggressive manner and says “I’m sorry” and Lena replies “Sorry. Sorry. Always sorry” and Preacher specifies “I don’t want to fight” and Lena bitterly retorts “You live for it”. As in example (1), the English ambiguity of the verb ‘fight’, implicitly used by Lena to express her pain for Preacher’s frequent deployments, is completely lost in Italian. *Litigare*, which is the equivalent of ‘fight’ meaning ‘argue’, and *combattere*, which is that of ‘fight’ meaning (a) above, are two separate verbs; accordingly, an equivalent type of wordplay is impossible in Italian. On the contrary, given the same double sense of the verb *pelear*, the Spanish translator could effectively render Lena’s caustic remark.

6.(1) I don’t want to fight .	Non voglio litigare .	No quiero pelear .
You live for it.	Ma se combatti per vivere.	Vives para ello.

Another considerable example of overlapping between a word and a term used for amusing purposes is provided in a BF4 dialogue line uttered by Irish, who plays with the compound term ‘safe house’ and the repetition of the adjective ‘safe’, as in example (2). According to the US Department of Defense (2016: 209), a “safe house” is “an innocent-appearing house or premises established by an organization for the purpose of conducting clandestine or covert activity in relative security”. As in (2), this term has been directly translated into *rifugio* and *refugio*

[shelter] in Italian and Spanish respectively, since there is not an equivalent compound in the TLs; thus, the ironic effect of the utterance is lost.

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|-------|---|--|---|
| 6.(2) | IRISH: Fuck, man.
Guess this safe house
ain't so safe . | IRISH: Cazzo. Questo rifugio
non mi sembra molto sicuro . | IRISH: Joder, tío. Creo que
este refugio no es muy
seguro . |
|-------|---|--|---|

Going back to terminology proper, from a grammatical perspective, findings show that they are mostly nouns and verbs which can be grouped according to numerous semantic fields. A very fascinating macrocategory including countless nouns and verbs is, for example, that of “military action”. After all, war is military action and it’s not by chance that soldiers’ fatalities are referred to as killed *in action* and this expression itself has become a term and even an acronym, namely ‘KIA’, in military language. Moreover, this category comprises plenty of linguistic subcategories of terms which offer ample opportunities for TS research. Many English homograph and homophone terms may be both noun and verb but in translation they require different renditions and the same terms may co-occur with other terms and create specialized conceptual units which may have their own equivalent expressions. For example, ‘fire’ in military language means “the discharge of a gun or missile” and “the effect of bullets or other projectiles hitting a target and its vicinity” (Bowyer 2004: 94) and its equivalent terms are *fuoco* and *fuego* in Italian and Spanish respectively. As a verb, however, ‘fire’ means “to discharge a gun or missile or to detonate an explosive device” (Bowyer 2004: 95) and thus it is mainly translated into *sparare* and *disparar* which are also the renditions of ‘take fire’ in a passive form. Then, there are collocations serving as noun phrases, such as ‘covering fire’ which means “fire designed to neutralize the enemy so that another person or unit can move” (Bowyer 2004: 61-62) and becomes *fuoco di copertura* or simply *copertura* and *fuego de cobertura* or simply *cobertura*, ‘direct fire’ which means “fire from weapons which are pointed directly at their targets (e.g. rifle, anti-tank gun, guided missile)” (Bowyer 2004: 74) and which is directly translated into *fuoco diretto* and *fuego directo*, ‘friendly-fire’ which means “an incident where friendly forces fire on their own troops or vehicles by mistake” (Bowyer 2004: 103) which becomes *fuoco amico* and *fuego amico*, or ‘heavy fire’ in which ‘heavy’ refers to intensity and large caliber weapons (Bowyer 2004: 117) and which is also directly translated into *fuoco pesante* and *fuego pesado* in Italian and Spanish respectively. Then, there are related verbal expressions such as (to be) ‘under fire’ that is “being shot at”, ‘open fire’ which means “start

shooting”, ‘cease fire!’ which is a formulaic collocation meaning “stop shooting” and ‘hold your fire!’ meaning “don’t shoot” (Bowyer 2004: 94-95), each with interesting translational features.

‘Target’ provides another example of the terminological wealth a translator may deal with in the texts of a war video game and, especially, of the one-to-many relationship between this term and its renditions. ‘Target’ as a verb means “to select as a target” and, as a noun, it is “any object or area which is shot at, fired upon or bombed” (Bowyer 2004: 241). In the corpus of this study, the noun ‘target’ (55 occurrences) is mostly translated into *bersaglio* (46 occurrences) in Italian and *objetivo* (54 occurrences) in Spanish, but in Italian, when it is not directly related to a military target during operations, it may also become *obiettivo* in all games and *tango* in MOHW, as in example (3), which is the code word to identify the phonetic alphabet letter ‘T’, as be discussed in Section 6.5. According to Busetto, *bersaglio* and *obiettivo* are the proper equivalents for ‘target’ (2004: 971).

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|-------|--|--|---|
| 6.(3) | They came out of nowhere.
Multiple targets! High and
low! | Sono sbucati dal nulla. Tango
multipli in alto e in basso! | Han salido de la nada.
¡Varios objetivos! ¡Arriba y
abajo! |
|-------|--|--|---|

Within the semantic macrocategory of military action, there are other two terms which deserve special attention for their features in the SL and/or for their translation: ‘clear’ and ‘contact’.

‘Clear’ can be both adjective and verb and in the ST corpus it presents 86 occurrences (70 as adjective and 16 as a verb): 44 occurrences in MOHW ST (41 as adjective and 3 as a verb), 24 occurrences in BF4 ST (18 as adjective and 6 as verb), 18 occurrences in ME3 ST (11 as adjective and 7 as verb). The adjective ‘clear’ means free from obstructions and/or hazards “such as chemical contamination, enemy troops, explosive devices, etc.” and similarly, as a verb, it means to remove obstructions or hazards (Boyer 2004: 47). In TTs, the equivalent military adjective is *libero* (35 occurrences) in Italian and *despejado* (53 occurrences) in Spanish, and the equivalent military verb is *liberare* (3 occurrences) in Italian and *despejar* (6 occurrences) in Spanish. When co-occurring with the verb ‘to be’ as in ‘we are clear’, in Italian the rendition is the expression *via libera* [all clear] (21 occurrences), which sometimes co-occur with the verb *avere* [to have] in *avere via libera*. Interestingly, this phrase is part of another similar military expression in Italian, which is also used in everyday language, namely *avere il via libera* meaning to have the green light. The latter figurative expression exists also in MOHW

texts and is indeed transferred directly in both localizations: ‘green light’ becomes *semaforo verde* and *luz verde* in the two target languages. As testified to by the number of occurrences, with special attention to Italian, the adjective ‘clear’ may also be substituted with non-specialized renditions such as *a posto* [all right], *essere al sicuro* [to be safe] and the verb may be also translated into *ripulire* [to clean up] or *aprire* [open] which are informal expressions.

‘Contact’, unlike ‘clear’, is mostly used as a noun in the games’ military terminology. It means (a) “a first sighting of the enemy (usually resulting in an exchange of fire)” and is also (b) “state in which you and the enemy are within effective range of each others’ weapons (and usually, shooting at each other)” (Bowyer 2004: 57). These are exactly the meanings of ‘contact’ as used in the games’ dialogues. Nevertheless, this term is polysemous in military language since it is also related to communication. This is the reason why Bowyer (2004) specifies in a note under the dictionary entry that “to avoid causing unnecessary excitement at headquarters, you should only use the word contact on the radio when talking about contact with the enemy. When you are talking about your ability to communicate with another person, use an alternative term” (Bowyer 2004: 57). In the corpus, there are 16 occurrences of ‘contact’ meaning (a) and (b): 11 occurrences in MOHW, 2 in BF4 and 3 in ME3. As regards localizations, it is transferred by means of direct translation in both TLs on the whole. In details, when its meaning is (a), the equivalent terms are *contatto* in Italian and *contacto* or *enemigo* in Spanish. When it refers to shooting (meaning b), in Italian it becomes *contatto* or *(essere) sotto tiro* [be under fire] while in Spanish it always remains *(tener) contacto* [(take) contact].

As the examples above aims to demonstrate, the terms falling into the semantic category of military action are numerous and the study of the related translational phenomena is very compelling but outside the reach of this dissertation. Consequently, in order to perform a balanced transverse analysis of the *realia* and *irrealia* expressed through artefactual references, the following part of the paragraph will focus on the same categories used to group unreal artefactual references, namely “vehicles”, “weapons” and “equipment”, as shown in Table 22 in Appendix D.

6.2.1 Vehicles

The *realia* related to the existing vehicles include several manned means of transport such as ‘boat’ and the related compounds ‘attack boat’, ‘patrol boat’ and ‘lifeboat’; ‘cab’; ‘car’ and the related ‘cable car’; ‘ship’ and the related ‘container ship’, ‘warship’ and its hyponym

‘destroyer’; ‘helicopter’ with its informal versions ‘chopper’ and ‘helo’; ‘vessel’ and the compound ‘merchant vessel’, and ‘truck’, or unmanned and remote-controlled vehicles such as ‘drone’ and ‘robot’, the latter frequently abbreviated into ‘bot’. From a linguistic perspective, although they are very frequently occurring types of *realia* with hundreds of instances, they are common nouns which present little, if any, difficulty in the interlinguistic transfer since they require the translation into the TL equivalent. Findings seem to confirm this tendency despite some instances of strategies other than direct translation but they do not represent quantitatively relevant cases.

Nevertheless, some of these nouns deserve more attention. For example, it seems interesting to underline that the number of the occurrences of ‘chopper’ (7) and ‘helo’ (11) are higher than those of ‘helicopter’ (3 occurrences) in the ST corpus. Moreover, in MOHW there is one instance of the context-specific metaphor ‘bird’ (1 occurrence in the MOHW ST, 8 in MOHW database), which is translated into *velivoli* [aircrafts] by means of generalization in Italian (Institute of Advanced Technology in the Humanities 1996: online) and into *helicópteros* in Spanish, as in example (4). All these informal versions belong to military slang (Taylor 2010: 14).

6.(4) Voodoo, **birds** are on the way. Voodoo, **velivoli** in arrivo. Voodoo, **helicópteros** en camino.

Moreover, in terms of realism, it seems relevant to mention that most of the terms above in MOHW actually refer to specific models of vehicles, especially aircrafts such as AH-64 Apache, MH-60 Blackhawk, MH-47 Chinook, among others, as illustrated in the namesake section in the series’ Wiki (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online) but these proper names do not occur in the corpus.

‘Robot’ refers to a vehicle used as an offensive unit fitted with weapons such as the grenade launcher and the machine gun (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online) and it is retained in both TLs, even in its abbreviation ‘bot’ in Italian, as in example (5).

6.(5) Damn! The **bot**’s down! Merda. Il **bot** è a terra! ¡Mierda! ¡El **robot** ha caído!

Another interesting name is ‘destroyer’ meaning “a medium sized high-speed warship used to support amphibious or strike forces” (Bowyer 2004: 72), whose rendition is the equivalent term *cacciatorpediniere* in Italian and the calque *destructor* in Spanish, as in example (6).

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|-------|---|--|--|
| 6.(6) | GARRISON: No time. The destroyers on our tail won't pause and wait for us. | GARRISON: Non c'è tempo. I cacciatorpediniere non aspetteranno. | GARRISON: No hay tiempo. Los destructores que hay detrás están muy cerca. |
|-------|---|--|--|

Special attention must be paid to those vehicles whose names in the SL may turn to be challenging for the translator. They are two acronyms and one proper name: ‘UAV’, ‘RHIB’ and ‘Gladiator’. Table 22 and Figure 32 in Appendix D show the number of occurrences of these terms and the translation strategies used to deal with it.

UAV stands for “unmanned aerial vehicle” and is “another name for a drone” (Bowyer 2004: 251). As exemplified in (7), ‘UAV’ is retained in both TLs since this acronym is used in both Italian (Busetto 2004: 893-894) and Spanish (García de la Cuesta 2003: 429).

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|-------|---|---|---|
| 6.(7) | The UAV had to pull off from the storm. Repositioning now. | Lo UAV ha dovuto allontanarsi. Lo riposiziono. | El UAV tuvo que alejarse de la tormenta. Reposicionando. |
|-------|---|---|---|

RHIB stands for “rigid hull inflatable boat” (US Department of Defense 2016: JP 1-02) and, as in example (8), this vehicle’s name is retained in Italian, with a feminine article due to the gender of the category noun *barca* [boat], and generalized into *lancha* [launch] in Spanish (see (Delgado Lállemand 2010:389).

- | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|
| 6.(8) | IRISH: Give me a RHIB and all the goddamn C4 you got left. | IRISH: Datemi una RHIB e tutto il fottuto C4 che ci è rimasto. | IRISH: Dadme una lancha y todo el puto C4 que quede. |
|-------|---|---|---|

Gladiator, whose full name is “Gloster Gladiator” (Bull 2004: 109), is an aircraft flying during the third game mission of MOHW. This name is completely retained in Italian and retained with orthographical adaptation in Spanish. After all, this aircraft is named after the ancient Rome combatant who fought against another man or animal for public entertainment and both

TLs have local versions, i.e. *gladiador* in Spanish. In the corpus, ‘Gladiator’ is used as the code name of this aircraft’s pilot, as in example (9).

6.(9) Roger **Gladiator** One One. Roger **Gladiator** 1 1. Recibido, **Gladiador** Uno Uno.

6.2.2 Weapons

The second group of terms referring to artefactual references in *realia* is that of weapons. This category include hypernyms such as ‘arm’, ‘gun’ meaning “any type of firearm” (Bowyer 2004: 113) and ‘weapon’, and common names of types of weapons such as ‘ammunition’ which is often informally abbreviated into ‘ammo’, ‘artillery’ meaning “a general title for large-caliber guns, missiles and air-defense weapons” (Bowyer 2004: 17), ‘bomb’, ‘charge’ meaning “an explosive device” (Bowyer 2004: 44) which is sometimes ‘shaped’ in order to penetrate thick targets using a high velocity jet (Poole 2005), ‘explosive’, ‘grenade’ meaning “a small bomb designed to be thrown by hand” (Boyer 2004: 110), ‘missile’, ‘shotgun’ meaning “a gun, usually with two barrels, which fires a quantity of small metal balls (or shot)” (Bowyer 2004: 221). As regards their transfer, ‘arm’, ‘gun’ and ‘weapon’ require a simple direct translation, even with little or no co-text and context. The only exception is ‘gun’ when used as an abbreviation for ‘machine gun’ in MOHW which requires translators to contextualize the direct translation and render it into the equivalent terms *mitragliatrice* and *canón* in Italian and Spanish respectively. The other common names are all directly translated. The only term deserving more attention is the adjective ‘shaped’ (charge) which occurs in MOHW and becomes *sagomata* in Italian and *hueca* in Spanish, although it seems that the more correct and frequent Italian equivalent is *cava* [empty] (*Treccani Encyclopedia*: online). Another interesting case is that of ‘ammo’ in BF4 and ME3, the informal abbreviation of ‘ammunition’ (Bowyer 2004: 12) and, remarkably, its full form never occurs in the two games’ dialogues. In BF4 ‘ammo’ presents 1 occurrence in the corpus and 49 occurrences in the whole database while in ME3 it presents 3 occurrences in the corpus and 340 occurrences in the database. In MOHW corpus, it does not occur at all but in the whole database, it presents 123 instances. ‘Ammo’ is always translated into the more formal TLs’ equivalents, namely *munizioni* and *munición* in Italian and Spanish respectively.

More interestingly for the purposes of this research, this first group of *realia* referring to weapons obviously includes proper names, mostly in the form of abbreviations and initialisms, which may be challenging in translation and require translators' research skills.

They are: 'AK' which is the shorter form of 'AK-47', 'MG', 'RPG', 'LMG', 'P.E.T.N.' which is the deadly explosive used by MOHW terrorists to threaten the world's safety, 'C4', 'RPG', 'claymore', 'stinger', 'EMP' and 'Mark-19'. These terms occur in either MOHW or BF4, or both, only. Indeed, ME3 proper names of weapons belong to the *irrealia* category of artefactual references and include, for example, 'flashbang grenade', 'Thanix missile', 'Hades cannon', amongst others, as explored in Section 5.3.6. In other words, they are noun phrases which contain a proper noun and a common noun and which, despite the existing entity the common noun refers to, relate to fictional weapons specific to ME3 world. Consequently, Table 22 and Figure 32 in Appendix D show the occurrences of the weapons' names and the translation strategies used in the localizations of MOHW and BF4.

AK-47 is "a Soviet-designed 7.62mm assault weapon" also known as 'Kalashnikov' (Bowyer 2004: 10). According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (online), this assault rifle is possibly the most widely used shoulder weapon in the world. The initials AK represent Avtomat Kalashnikova, Russian for 'automatic Kalashnikov', after Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov, who designed the accepted version of the weapon in 1947. In this light, it may be considered as an eponym too. While in MOHW database it appears as both 'AK-47' and 'AK', in MOHW ST corpus it only occurs in its shortened form 'AK' and retention is the strategy used to transfer this name, as in example (10). Interestingly, in Italian there is one occurrence of the full form 'AK47', as in example (11).

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|--------|---|--|--|
| 6.(10) | Stump, take out some of those skinnies with AKs . | Stump, fai fuori quelle mezzeseghe con gli AK . | Stump, cárgate a algunos flacuchos con AK . |
| 6.(11) | Three jacked-up skinnies with AKs on a pitching lifeboat isn't eminent danger? | Tre sfigati con gli AK47 su una scialuppa non sono un grave pericolo? | Tres putos flacuchos con AK en un bote de socorro, ¿no es eso un peligro claro? |

MG means "machine gun", "an automatic firearm, which will continue to fire and reload for as long as its trigger is depressed" (Bowyer 2004: 149) or, more simply, until the supply of ammunition is exhausted. Machine guns are weapons of small caliber, mostly belt-fed and

generally classified into three groups: light (LMG), medium, and heavy. While in MOHW Spanish localization this initialism is retained, in Italian the transfer of this weapon is by means of both retention, as in example (12), and explicitation, as in (13).

- | | | | |
|--------|--|---|--|
| 6.(12) | Shit, MG! Twelve
o'clock! | MG! A ore dodici! | ¡Mierda, MG! ¡A las doce! |
| 6.(13) | Dammit! They got an
MG in the hallway! | Dannazione! Mitragliatrice
all'entrata! | ¡Mierda! ¡Tienen una MG en el
vestíbulo! |

RPG is the initialism for ‘rocket propelled grenade’, a shoulder-fired, anti-tank weapon system that fires rockets equipped with an explosive warhead. According to Kaiser (2001: 403), the term is derived from the Soviet “reaktivniy protivotankovy granatomet”, an antitank rocket grenade launcher initially introduced in World War II. ‘RPG’ is the only term which occurs in both MOHW and BF4 and, as regards translation, while it is always retained in Italian, in Spanish the strategies are retention in BF4 and (incorrect) explicitation by direct translation in MOHW, which is exemplified in (14). *Lanzacohetes* is a ‘rocket launcher’ and the equivalent Spanish term for RPG is *lanzagranadas* [grenade launcher], which is similar to the Italian RPG counterpart compound *lanciagranate* [grenade launcher] according to Busetto (2004: 756).

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| 6.(14) | RPG! Top of the stairs! | RPG! In cima alle scale! | ¡ Lanzacohetes! ¡En las escaleras! |
|--------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|

LMG is the abbreviation for “light machine gun”, “a light man-portable machine gun designed to be carried by infantry sections of squads” (Bowyer 2004: 143). As exemplified in (15), this initialism is generalized into *mitra* in Italian and retained in Spanish, although the correct equivalent in Italian is *mitragliatrice leggera* [light machine gun] according to Busetto (2004: 502).

- | | | | |
|--------|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| 6.(15) | LMG! Window! Second
deck! | Mitra! Finestra! Primo
piano! | ¡ LMG! ¡Ventana! ¡Segunda
planta! |
|--------|-------------------------------------|---|---|

P.E.T.N., as opposed to the above-mentioned arms, is a chemical weapon: “pentaerythritol tetranitrate” (Sudweeks *et al.* 2007: 1756), one of the most dangerous explosive materials known. In MOHW texts, this initialism is retained in both target languages, as in example (16).

In Italian, it is also known as *pentrite* [penthrite], *pentaeritritolo tetranitrate* and *tetranitrato di pentaeritrite* (Busetto 2004: 656).

- 6.(16) So the **P.E.T.N.** found in Somalia and Yemen? [...] Ma il **P.E.T.N.** in Somalia e Yemen? [...] ¿Y el **P.E.T.N.** hallado en Somalia y Yemen? [...]

C4, which stands for “Composition C-4”, is a common variety of plastic explosive (see Ledgard 2007: 498). ‘Claymore’ (mines) means “an American anti-personnel device designed to fire a quantity of ball-bearings in a specific direction” (Bowyer 2004: 47) which was developed for the US Armed Forces by Norman MacLeod, who named the mine after a large Scottish medieval sword (Grupp 1993). ‘Stinger’ is the man-portable shoulder-fired ground-to-air missile (Bowyer 2004: 152). Both ‘claymore’ and ‘stinger’ are abbreviations of longer proper names, i.e. M18A1 Claymore and FIM-92 Stinger, but these full forms do not occur in dialogues. All these proper names of weapons are retained in both TLs but it is interesting to note that the Italian translator capitalized both names, as in examples (17) and (18) while in Spanish only ‘Stinger’ capitalized.

- 6.(17) IRISH: Grab **claymores**, explosives, anything we can use! IRISH: Prendi **Claymore**, esplosivi, qualsiasi cosa utile! IRISH: Coge **claymores**, explosivos, ¡todo lo que se pueda usar!
- 6.(18) PAC: Get a **stinger**, Reck. PAC: Prendi uno **Stinger**, Reck. PAC: Consigue un **Stinger**, Reck.

EMP means “electromagnetic pulse” (Bowyer 2004: 84) and, in localizations, it is retained in Italian and directly translated into the equivalent acronym *PEM* which stands for ‘pulso electromagnético’ in Spanish, as in example (19). Lastly, Mark-19, also known as ‘MK-19’, is a 40-mm belt-fed automatic grenade launcher which was developed by the US Navy and first appeared during the Vietnam War, and has been extensively used in the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War (Zabechi 2011: 431). ‘Mark’, abbreviated into ‘MK’ means “a model or type” (Bowyer 2004: 153) and ‘19’ is indeed the type number. This name is retained in both TLs, as in example (20).

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|--------|--|--|--|
| 6.(19) | KOVIC: Listen up. The Titan was out of range of the Shanghai EMP blast. [...] | KOVIC: Ascoltate: la Titan era fuori dalla portata dell' EMP di Shanghai. [...] | KOVIC: Atended. El Titan no estaba en el radio de ataque del PEM de Shanghai. [...] |
| 6.(20) | Preacher, get on the Mark-19! | Preacher, usa il Mark-19! | ¡Preacher, ponte con el Mark-19! |

As far as real-world arms are concerned, it seems relevant to include in this Section a brief discussion of some of the terms which refer to military units or weapon-related roles, such as ‘sniper’, which occurs in both MOHW and BF4, ‘gunner’ and ‘JV gun runner’, which occur only in MOHW. A ‘sniper’ is a trained marks-man, who specializes in sniping at the enemy. “They are usually sited away from the main force, so that they can concentrate on shooting at selected targets instead of being drawn into the general firefight. They are also less likely to be affected when the main force comes under artillery fire” (Bowyer 2004: 225). A ‘gunner’ is “an artillery soldier” (Bowyer 2004: 113) while a ‘gun runner’ is “a person who imports weapons illegally” (Bowyer 2004: 113) which is also referred to as ‘arms dealer’ in MOHW and ‘weapons dealer’ in ME3. The rendition of these terms is straightforward: ‘sniper’ becomes *cecchino* and *francotirador*; ‘gunner’ becomes *artigliere* and *artillero*, or *artillero pesado* for ‘heavy gunner’, ‘heavy’ is incomprehensively omitted in Italian. ‘(JV) Gun runner’ and its synonyms become *trafficante di armi* and *contrabandista* or *traficante de armas* in the two TLs respectively. As regards ‘JV’, it is an US English initialism which stands for ‘junior varsity’ and represents a borrowing from US sports language in which refers to “a team that represents a school, college, etc. on a level just below the varsity team in games or contests” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online). In MOHW, it means non-experienced, novice, beginner gun runner and, it is accordingly and reasonably translated into *piccolo* and *principiante* in Italian and Spanish respectively. Interestingly, in Italian, there is an idiom with the same meaning which refers exactly to weapons: (*essere*) *alle prime armi* [lit. be a rookie, novice, beginner].

6.2.3 Equipment

This category of artefacts in military language *realia* includes a wide variety of terms related to equipment, tools and devices ranging from common nouns such as ‘binoculars’, which are also abbreviated into ‘binos’, ‘detonator’ which is “a small explosive device used to detonate

an explosive charge” (Bowyer 2004: 73), ‘torch’ which is a US English abbreviation for ‘blowtorch’, and ‘voyage recorder’ to terms with a higher degree of specialization. They also comprise systems such as ‘radar’, “for detecting aircraft, vehicles, ships or other objects, through the transmission of high-frequency electromagnetic waves which are reflected back by the object” (Bowyer 2004: 194), the more widely known ‘scanner’, and lastly ‘sonar’, “for detecting underwater objects through the transmission of sound waves, which are reflected back by the object” (Bowyer 2004: 226).

In terms of realism-fictionality, it seems important to mention that a few instances of terms such as ‘radar’ and the onomatopoeic term of a radar’s noise ‘ping’, and ‘scanner’ can be also found in ME3 subcorpus but, as in the case of vehicles and weapons, these pieces of equipment signifiers refer to unreal signified, given the intergalactic and futuristic nature of the war ME3 characters fight.

Among the terms mentioned above, real artefacts’ names which are worth discussing in more details are those resulting from word formation processes, such as the acronyms ‘radar’ (38 occurrences in the corpus) and ‘sonar’ (3 occurrences in the corpus) which include part syllables of ‘radio detection and ranging’ and ‘sound navigation and ranging’ respectively. As example (21) shows, ‘radar’ and ‘sonar’ are retained in both TLs, but ‘sonar’ is slightly adapted in Spanish in order to comply with phonographic Spanish rules.

6.(21)	GARRISON: You’re gonna fire up radar, sonar and\nevery single scanner you got.	GARRISON: Attiviamo il radar , il sonar e\ngoingni scanner di cui disponiamo.	GARRISON: Conecta el radar , el sónar y\ncualquier otro escáner que tengamos.
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From the perspective of translation, more challenging terms which refer to existing tools are those names encoded in abbreviations, and specifically the acronyms ‘FLIR’, ‘NOD’ and ‘TADS’ and the initialisms ‘GPS’, ‘LTLM’ and ‘MRE’. As regards GPS in particular, it seems relevant to remark that it has a counterpart in the fictionality side of this study spectrum, namely ‘NavPoint’ in ME3, indeed explored as an instance of artefactual *irrealia* in Section 4.3.6. Table 22 and Figure 32 in Appendix D show the number of the occurrences in the corpus, which actually consists of MOHW and BF4 subcorpora, and the translation strategies used in the Italian and Spanish TTs.

‘GPS’ in an initialism standing for “global positioning system”, the widely known “satellite navigation system” (Bowyer 2004: 109) which, according to the US Department of Defense (2016: 99), in military context specifically means “a satellite-based radio navigation system operated by the US Department of Defense to provide all military, civil, and commercial users with precise positioning, navigation, and timing”. Given the extensive use of this system for civilian purposes too, one might expect that it is transferred by means of retention in both TLs. Conversely, as in example (22), GPS is left unaltered only in Spanish since the Italian translator explicitated it into the more general term *navigatore (satellitare)* [satnav]. Since (22) is a MOHW dialogue line uttered by Dusty when serving as a guide for Mother and Preacher’s driving mission in Dubai, *navigatore* refers to the device inside the car. In this light, explicitation does not seem to result from misinterpretation and it does not represent an instance of terminological inaccuracy.

6.(22)	You gotta swap cars, brother. You’re near the parkade. It’s on your GPS .	Devi cambiare auto. Sei vicino al parcheggio. Lo trovi sul navigatore .	Tienes que cambiar de coche,tío. Estás cerca del aparcamiento. Está en tu GPS .
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‘LTLM’ is an initialism and stands for “laser target locator module”, an evolution of LTD “laser target designator” which is “a device that emits a beam of laser energy which is used to mark a specific place or object” (US Department of Defense 2016: 139), “a device which projects a laser beam onto a target in order to illuminate it for a laser guided bomb or missile” (Bowyer 2004: 139). As example (23) shows, LTLM is transferred by means of retention in both localizations.

6.(23)	Let’s soften that position then. Preacher, get in the LTLM and mark those positions. [...]	Indeboliamo quella posizione. Preacher, usa l’ LTLM e segna quelle posizioni. [...]	Suavicemos la posición. Preacher, usa el LTLM y marca posiciones. [...]
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‘FLIR’ is the acronym for “forward-looking infrared”, which is “an airborne, electro-optical thermal imaging device that detects far-infrared energy, converts the energy into an electronic signal, and provides a visible image for day or night viewing” (US Department of Defense 2016: 94). In Italian FLIR means “[sistema all’]infrarosso per la visione frontale” (original

addition) (Busetto 2004: 339) and in Spanish “infrarrojo de barrido frontal”, “infrarrojo de exploración frontal”, “infrarrojo de vision frontal” (García de la Cuesta 2003: 163). However, as example (24) demonstrates, both MOHW translators retained the acronym in the two localizations, since it is borrowed in the two TLs’ military terminology.

6.(24)	[...] F.L.I.R. is showing a lot of movement at Alpha. Looks to be hostile.	[...] Il F.L.I.R. segnala notevole movimento ad Alpha. Sembra ostile.	[...] El F.L.I.R. muestra movimiento en Alfa. Parecen hostiles.
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‘NOD’ is the acronym of “night observation [or optical] device” (Stahl and Landen 2001: 733), also known as “night vision device” (NVD), which is “any electro-optical device that is used to detect visible and infrared energy and provide a visible image” (US Department of Defense 2016: 166). In MOHW ST, it is in lower-case letters and always plural. In localizations, as exemplified in (25), while in Italian this acronym noun is retained in upper-case letters, in Spanish its rendition is the explicitation into *visión nocturna* [night vision] with no reference to the category ‘device’, which may be translated into *dispositivo* (Defensa 2016: online). Moreover, in Spanish ‘drop’, the verb indicating what soldiers are expected to do with nods is omitted, and this makes the sentence incomplete.

6.(25)	Drop your nods .	Spegnete i NOD .	Visión nocturna.
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In BF4 *realia* referring to military equipment there is a very interesting artefactual reference to the American-specific ‘MRE’, which deserve special attention. It is an initialism for “meal ready-to-eat”, “an American-produced individual ration for food” (Bowyer 2004: 162). This term occurs in a conversation between Hannah and Irish while they are flying back to the USS Valkyrie and Irish suffers from nausea due to airsickness. As the dialogue lines below (26) exemplify, ‘MRE’ is omitted in both TLs and translators paraphrased the sentence uttered by Irish into ‘I have an upset stomach. But I can make it’ in Italian and ‘After what I have eaten? I could be better’ in Spanish. According to Busetto (2004: 727), Italian military language has an equivalent expression for the English initialism, which is “razione di combattimento” [combat ration] also known as “razione K” [K ration] which is exactly the ration of ready-to-eat food, generally of high nutritional value, which is distributed to frontline troops. Similarly, in Spanish this unit of concept is named “ración de combate” (Villarejo 2012: online). Given

the existence of equivalent terms, or given the possibility of retaining the initialism preceded by a category noun in both TLs, such as the Italian and Spanish words for ‘meal’, ‘food’, ‘ration’, the omission of ‘MRE’ in both TTs determines the disappearance of a very SC-specific military term in localization, where the SC is interpreted as the main culture of the game world, namely the Anglo-American culture in BF4, as explored in Section 2.4.

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|--------|---|---|--|
| 6.(26) | HANNAH: You gonna be okay? | HANNAH: Va tutto bene? | HANNAH: ¿Estás bien, Irish? |
| | IRISH: Raw rabbit and MREs. Testing my steel. | IRISH: Ho lo stomaco sottosopra. Ma ce la posso fare. | IRISH: ¿Después de lo que he comido? Podría estar mejor. |

‘TADS’ is an acronym which stands for “target acquisition designation sight”, also known as “pilot night vision sensor”, the advanced electro-optical fire control system developed by Lockheed Martin (an American global aerospace, defense, security and advanced technologies company) and used by Apache attack helicopter pilots for targeting and pilotage in day, night and/or adverse-weather missions (Yenne 2005: 104). In Italian, this acronym and its definition are borrowed (Nones and Marrone 2011: 158) while in Spanish it seems to have an equivalent explanation, “sistema de adquisición y designación de blancos” (García de la Cuesta 2003: 400). As in example (27), in MOHW localizations TDS is (unaccountably) omitted in Italian and retained in Spanish.

- | | | | |
|--------|---|--|---|
| 6.(27) | [...] we are pulling off and going to engage with TADS from a safe distance. | [...] stiamo ripiegando e procederemo all’ingaggio Ø da una distanza più sicura. | [...] nos retiramos y vamos a atacar con el TADS desde una distancia segura. |
|--------|---|--|---|

6.3 Military Titles

Each member of the Army has a military grade which, once attained, becomes his or her (permanent) military title by force of regulation and custom. In official communication, such as documents, it must always accompany the soldier’s surname, but it is also (almost obligatorily) used in conversations (Bonn 2005: 16-18) involving military personnel in military and non-military contexts. Indeed, military titles represent a considerable quantity of *realia* throughout the corpus of this study, regardless of the degree of realism or fictionality of military

institutions represented in the three games. As already mentioned, the main difference lies in the fact that military titles in MOHW and BF4 refer to roles in existing military organizations, both US and non-US, while those occurring in ME3 refer to ranks of futuristic institutions whose design mimic real-world ones. In this light, it seems very interesting to investigate them in the whole corpus, while paying attention to peculiarities, if any, in single games' subcorpora.

Table 23 and Figure 33 in Appendix D show the frequency of all military titles in the corpus and in MOHW, BF4 and ME3 subcorpora together with the strategies translators chose to render them into Italian and Spanish.

The most frequently occurring military title in the corpus is 'commander' which occurs only in ME3 subcorpus (2,301 occurrences in ME3 database ST) and mostly refers to this game protagonist, namely Commander Shepard. In English, this term refers to the "rank of an officer in the British or US Navy (sometimes in command of a small warship)" (Bowyer 2004: 54). Indeed, in ME3, Shepard is the commander of the human massive and highly technological starship named Normandy of the System Alliance. In localizations, this title is directly translated into *comandante* in both TLs. From a linguistic perspective, however, as examples (28) and (29) demonstrate, this rank provides an example of the gender-unfair translation into Italian of Shepard-related expressions, as Pettini (forthcoming) explains, which even affects dialogue strings voiced-over by the voice actress of Shepard's female version. Indeed, although the word-ending letter 'e' in *comandante* makes this title gender-neutral, only the Spanish translator used gender-marked satellite elements, like the gender-variable article *el* or *la* [the] preceding the noun, thus taking into account Shepard's customizable gender at linguistic level. Like Spanish, a gender-fair rendition would be '[{M}Il][{F}La] comandante Shepard'.

6.(28)	<p>Commander Shepard isn't going to let anything happen to us!</p>	<p><i>Il comandante</i> Shepard ci terrà sempre al sicuro!</p>	<p>¡[M]El! [F]La comandante Shepard no dejará que nos pase nada!</p>
6.(29)	<p>I'm Commander Shepard with the Alliance. [...]</p>	<p>Sono <i>il comandante</i> Shepard dell'Alleanza. [...]</p>	<p>Soy [M]el [F]la comandante Shepard, de la Alianza. [...]</p>

The Italian scarce attention paid to gender in translation also affects other female characters, such as the asari councilor, as explored in Section 4.3.5, and with special reference to another

commander, Ashley Williams, a non-playable female character who is referred to as *il comandante* in Italian, as (30) shows.

6.(30) Commander, you might want to check in on Commander Williams down on the observation deck.	Comandante, forse dovresti andare a parlare con <i>il comandante</i> Williams all'osservatorio.	Comandante, deberías pasar a ver a <i>la comandante</i> Williams por la cubierta de observación.
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An ‘admiral’ is “a senior officer in the British and US navies (usually in command of a fleet)” (Bowyer 2004: 5). This title occurs in both BF4 and ME3, the latter determines the high number of occurrences since two of the ME3 admirals of the System Alliance Navy, namely David Anderson and Steven Hackett, play a prominent role in the game narrative and thus in dialogues with the playable character. In BF4 and ME3 databases, there are 7 and 394 occurrences of ‘admiral’ in the STs respectively. In TLs, ‘admiral’ is directly translated into *ammiraglio* in Italian and *almirante* in Spanish respectively.

‘Captain’ is a title which occurs in all subcorpora, whose databases contain 46, 29, 169 occurrences in MOHW, BF4 and ME3 STs respectively. This rank refers to, according to Bowyer (2004: 40):

1. a senior officer in the navy (above a commander, and usually in command of a warship)
2. an officer in the army or marines above the rank of lieutenant and below a major
3. *US* an officer in the navy (usually in command of a warship)
4. *US* an officer in the army, marines or air force (usually in command of a company or equivalent-sized grouping).

In MOHW, ‘captain’ also occurs in informal abbreviations like ‘cap’ (1 occurrence) and ‘cap’n’ (1 occurrence) but, according to Bowyer (2004: 40), the correct abbreviation is ‘Cpt’. In localizations, this title and its abbreviations are explicitated into *capitano* and *capitán*.

‘Sergeant’ is another title which occurs in all games in the corpus. In MOHW, BF4 and ME3 databases’ STs there are 119, 92 and 26 occurrences respectively. It refers to “a non-commissioned officer (NCO) in the US and British army, marines or air force. Abbr Sgt.” (Bowyer 2004: 218). ‘Sgt.’ is indeed the abbreviation which occurs in MOHW, with 6 occurrences in this game’s database ST. A related military title, which might have required

translators to do some research is ‘staff sergeant’ in BF4, who is “US a senior non-commissioned officer (SNCO) in the army, marines or air force” (Bowyer 2004: 230); accordingly, it seems to be US culture-specific. As examples (31) and (32) demonstrate, only the Spanish translator tried to consistently transfer an equivalent title, although it seems that the correct term is *sargento primero* according to the *Real Academia Española Dictionary of Spanish Language* (2015: online). Conversely, in Italian, there is only one correct rendition, namely ‘sergente maggiore’ (Busetto 2004: 969), as in (32) and the other occurrences are transferred by means of generalization, as in (31).

6.(31)	IRISH: Negative, Staff Sergeant .	IRISH: Negativo, sergente .	IRISH: Negativo, sargento de primera .
6.(32)	GARRISON: So Staff Sergeant Dunn was killed for\nsomething we already knew?	GARRISON: Quindi il sergente maggiore Dunn è morto\nper qualcosa che sapevamo già?	GARRISON: ¿Así que el sargento de primera Dunn murió por\nalgo que ya sabíamos?

‘Lieutenant’ is another US-culture specific military title. According to Bowyer (2004: 142), a lieutenant is “US [...] a junior officer in the army or marines (equivalent of a first lieutenant in the US Army; usually in command of a platoon or equivalent sized grouping) 2. a junior officer in the navy, below lieutenant-commander 3. US an officer in the navy”. ‘Lieutenant-commander’ thus refers to “an officer in the navy above lieutenant and below commander” (Bowyer 2004: 142). Both terms occur in the corpus and, more precisely, in ME3; consequently, they are ranks of the (System Alliance) Navy. In ME3 database ST there are 196 instances of ‘lieutenant’ and 32 of ‘lieutenant-commander’. According to Busetto (2004: 956), these two titles’ Italian counterparts are *luogotenente* and *tenente di vascello* for ‘lieutenant’ and *capitano di corvetta* for ‘lieutenant-commander’. According to Álvarez Laita and Medina Arnaiz (2011: 106), the Spanish equivalent roles in the Navy are *teniente de navío* and *capitán de corbeta* for ‘lieutenant’ and ‘lieutenant-commander’ respectively. In localizations, the former is translated into *tenente* in Italian and *teniente* in Spanish while the latter becomes *tenente* in Italian and *teniente comandante* in Spanish. If we take the definitions provided by Busetto (2004) and by Álvarez Laita and Medina Arnaiz (2011) into account, all renditions in both TLs are unfaithful generalizations or even incorrect renditions. On the contrary, if we focus on the TTs only it seems that the adoption of the Italian military title *tenente* for both the source

ranks eventually produces a more verisimilar result, especially given ME3 Italian full localization. In Spanish, on the contrary, although it is readily comprehensible, the source rank direct translation by means of a calque into *teniente comandante* might sound odd to well informed players who can perceive the terminological inaccuracy due to the partial localization of ME3 into Spanish, i.e. English voice-over and Spanish subtitles.

A ‘general’ is “1. a senior army commander (not necessarily holding the rank of general), [...] 2. US a Senior rank in the British army or marines” (Bowyer 2004: 107). This title occurs in MOHW where it refers to a general of Philippine NAVSOG and in ME3 where it refers to a general of the turian race army. In TTs ‘general’ is directly translated into *generale* in Italian and *general* in Spanish.

‘Corporal’ means “a junior non-commissioned officer (NCO) in the army, marines or air force” (Bowyer 2004: 59), it occurs in MOHW and is used to address a Philippine NAVSOG operative while in ME3, it is used ironically to address Commander Shepard, as in example [...]. This explains the instance of omission in Spanish. MOHW and ME3 databases’ STs contain 31 and 10 occurrences respectively.

6.(33) Get us out of here, **Corporal**. Portaci via, **caporale**. Sácanos de aquí, **cabo**.

‘Major’ is “1. an officer in the army or marines, below lieutenant-colonel and above captain [...]” (Bowyer 2004: 151). It occurs in ME3 subcorpus and refers to a major in the Navy of the System Alliance. In ME3 database, there are 94 instances of ‘major’ in the ST. In localizations, it is directly translated into *maggiore* and *mayor* in Italian and Spanish respectively.

Moreover, in Italian there is a general tendency towards omission which, from a linguistic perspective, interestingly enough, affects abbreviations: the informal short version of ‘captain’, namely ‘cap’n’ (Partridge 2006: 181) and ‘sgt.’, the official short form for ‘sergeant’ (Bowyer 2004: 2018), both occurring in MOHW. In example (34), the addressee of the dialogue line is the captain Task Force Mako has just rescued and the informal register may be interpreted as an attempt to relieve tension and reassure him after detention. Conversely, example (35) contains a dialogue line uttered during military operations and the Italian transfer of the surname ‘Wright’ without title, seems less appropriate although it poses no problems of identification.

6.(34) **Cap’n**?! You okay? Ø Va tutto bene? ¡¿**Capitán**?! ¿Está bien?

6.(35) **Sgt.** Wright, are we clear? Ø Wright, via libera? **Sargento** Wright, ¿despejado?

6.4 Clock Code

As Bowyer (2004: 48) explains, the clock code is “a system used to indicate other aircraft in relation to your own aircraft; 12 o’clock is straight ahead; 6 o’clock is directly behind you; 3 o’clock is to your right, 9 o’clock is to your left”. Originated in aviation, this code is commonly used to indicate the position and the relative direction of an object in military language, described using the analogy of a 12-hour clock to designate angles and directions. Although the focus of this study is on names and name-related expressions, since this code is widely used in MOHW and BF4 dialogues, a brief discussion seems worthy. In details, the transfer of the clock code seems to require translators to adopt equivalent formulaic expressions in the two TLs or, when possible, paraphrase the code in order to make it easier to understand. Given the rapidity of communications during military operations, it comes as no surprise that clock code formulae are also shortened in the STs. Indeed, while many occurrences report the full form: the number plus the formula ‘o’clock’, others don’t and numbers may be both letters and figures, as in the following examples (36) – (47).

- | | | | |
|--------|---|--|---|
| 6.(36) | Two o’clock! | A ore due! | ¡A las dos! |
| 6.(37) | Stump, get on our six,
we’ll get you out of there! | Stump, resta a ore sei, ti
portiamo via da qui! | ¡Stump, colócate a nuestras
seis y te sacaremos! |
| 6.(38) | Aggressor on your 6. | Aggressore a ore 6. | Agresor a tus 6. |
| 6.(39) | Our six is cut off! [...] | Dietro bloccato! [...] | ¡Nos han cortado la retirada!
[...] |
| 6.(40) | I got your six. | Ti copro le spalle. | Te cubro. |
| 6.(41) | PAC: On your six. | PAC: Ti seguio. | PAC: A tus seis. |
| 6.(42) | PAC: On your six, Reck! | PAC: Alle tue spalle, Reck! | PAC: ¡A tus seis, Recker! |
| 6.(43) | Ten o’clock! That curved
building! | Ore dieci! Da quell’edificio
curvo! | ¡A las diez! ¡Ese edificio
curvado! |

6.(44)	Sniper! Eleven o'clock! High!	Cecchino! A ore undici! In alto!	¡Francotirador! ¡A las once! ¡Arriba!
6.(45)	Okay, next to the sign. Twelve o'clock. Just left of it.	OK, vicino al cartello. Ore dodici. Un po' a sinistra.	Vale, junto a la señal. A las doce. A la izquierda.
6.(46)	Movement twelve!	A ore dodici!	¡Movimiento a las doce!
6.(47)	DUNN: 12 o'clock!	DUNN: A ore 12!	DUNN: ¡A las doce!

As regards localizations, it seems worth underlining that in Italian the clock code almost always includes the word *ore* [hours] and the preposition *a* [at] to introduce the position. Similarly, in Spanish the formulaic expression is: the preposition *a* [at] plus the definite feminine plural article *las* or possessive adjective plus the number. Accordingly, direct translation is the strategy used to transfer the clock code in the two TLs. However, it is worth pointing out that, as in examples (39) - (42), the position 'six o'clock' may be also rendered differently and substituted by what it means and implies. '(Our) six' in (39) becomes *dietro* [the position behind (us)] in Italian and *retirada* [pullback] in Spanish, while in (40) '(I got your) six' becomes *ti copro le spalle* and *te cubro* [I cover/shield you] in Italian and Spanish. 'On your six' in (41) and (42) in Italian is paraphrased into *ti seguo* [I follow you] and *alle tue spalle* [behind you].

6.5 Military Phonetic Alphabet

One of the aspects of the military's *lingua franca* and also war lingo is the use of a phonetic alphabet or rather of a list of code words to identify letters in radio or telephone communication, in order to ensure brevity and clarity and avoid any ambiguity or confusion which may result from excessive noise or radio interference. This code system is international but there are several spelling alphabets adopted in radiotelephony. The most widely used is the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) phonetic alphabet which has been approved by many other international and national organizations such as NATO. Indeed, it is also commonly referred to as NATO phonetic alphabet. Letters are arbitrarily assigned code words acrophonically, so that single code words are uttered to identify letters which refer to military terms and combinations of code words are pronounced in order to spell out military terms.

As Table 24 shows, the letters mentioned in the corpus are: Able, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo, Foxtrot, Golf, India, Kilo, Lima, Mike, November and Tango and they occur in MOHW and ME3 subcorpora. Indeed, some letters occur in both games, others only in one of the two but both games' databases contain instances of this phenomenon as a whole. Conversely, no occurrences are found in BF4 subcorpus, although BF4 database includes several examples. Figure 34 illustrates the strategies translators used to transfer military phonetic alphabet code words.

Moreover, except for 'Able', which occurs in ME3 and which is the ancestor of the 'Alpha' code word, according to *Naval History and Heritage Command* (2016: online), all letters belong to the current internationally agreed phonetic alphabet (see ICAO 2011: online). In ME3, they are the names of the human Systems Alliance's Navy special forces units: 'Able', 'Bravo', 'Charlie', 'Delta', 'Echo', 'Foxtrot', 'Golf', 'India', 'Kilo', and 'November'. Conversely, in MOHW phonetic alphabet letters' function is multiple since they are not used as appellations and, thus, they better exemplify the purposes of brevity and clarity they serve.

In ME3 localizations, all letters are completely retained in Italian while in Spanish solutions vary: retention may also mean slight adaptations such as *Eco* for 'Echo' and direct translation is (incorrectly) used to render 'Able' into *Abel* and 'November' into *Noviembre*. In this light, it is possible to speculate that the translator did not understand the domain-specific nature of those names as standardized code words. However, since their use simply serves Commander Shepard's need to identify artillery companies during space wars, it is also possible to speculate that players do not perceive the inaccuracy.

As mentioned above, on the contrary, MOHW occurrences provide a more faithful picture of the phenomenon and of its functions in communication during military operations. In this light, they deserve a more in-depth analysis focused on MOHW.

'Alpha' refers to the first rally point Mother and Preacher must proceed to in order to be extracted during an operation, and also to the category of casualties' severity, which means that phonetic alphabet letters are used as brevity codes to transmit information related to casualty evacuation. In this instance, for example, it implies precedence, being Alpha the code for 'urgent' (Field Medical Service Technician 2008: online). While the noun 'rally point', also abbreviated into its initialism 'RP' is sometimes omitted, as in examples (48) - (50), when qualifying the casualty, 'Alpha' always follows 'CAT', the abbreviation for 'category' (Millbrooke 2008: 128), as in example (51).

6.(48)	[...] Proceeding to Rally Point Alpha .	[...] andiamo al Punto di raccolta Alpha .	[...] vamos al punto de encuentro Alfa .
6.(49)	Mako One, C-2. Paladin One vectoring to RP Alpha . [...]	Mako 1, C-2. Paladin 1 in direzione del punto di raccolta Alpha . [...]	Mako Uno, C-2. Paladín Uno avanza hacia punto de reunión Alfa . [...]
6.(50)	[...] Just be at Alpha when we get there.	[...] Ma che siano da Alpha quando arriviamo.	[...] Solo estad en Alfa cuando lleguemos.
6.(51)	[...] We have one CAT Alpha and at least two CAT Bravos with us. Have medical ready.	[...] Abbiamo un ferito Alpha e almeno due feriti Bravo. Preparate il soccorso medico.	[...] Tenemos un CAT Alfa y dos CAT Bravos con nosotros. Asistencia médica lista.

As the above strings show, this code word is retained in both Italian and Spanish, the latter with a slight graphical adaptation, although the equivalent form is *Alfa* in Italian too (Busetto 2004: 42).

Like Alpha, ‘Bravo’ is used to qualify two rally points, as in examples (52) and (53). Bravo is also the category of a casualty, meaning ‘urgent surgical’ (Field Medical Service Technician 2008: online), as in examples (51) and (54). Bravo is retained in both TLs since this is the equivalent form in both Italian (Busetto 2004: 150) and Spanish military languages. However, in example (54), the Italian translator misinterpreted the meaning of the abbreviation CAT for category, thus changing the referent from a person whose injury belongs to category B into ‘team Bravo’. Interestingly, this mistake has been corrected during audio localization. Indeed, the text of voice-over is *una perdita e un ‘ferito’ Bravo* [wounded] for ‘one KIA one CAT Bravo’. KIA and medivac will be discussed later, when exploring acronyms and abbreviations in Section 6.7.

6.(52)	Mother, Alpha is blown! Proceed to Rally Point Bravo!	Mother, la copertura di Alpha è saltata! Procedere al punto di raccolta Bravo!	¡Mother, Alfa ha estallado! ¡Avanza hacia el punto de reunión Bravo!
6.(53)	[...]. We’re almost at Bravo .	[...] siamo quasi a Bravo .	[...] Casi estamos en Bravo .

6.(54) [...] Be advised, vessel is secure. One KIA one CAT Bravo . Request immediate medivac.	[...] Confermiamo, obiettivo al sicuro. Una perdita, Team Bravo . Richiedo trasporto immediato.	[...] Atención, vehículo asegurado. Un muerto, un CAT Bravo . Solicito evacuación médica.
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‘Charlie’ and ‘Lima’ occur together in ‘Lima Charlie’, as in example (55), standing for “loud and clear” (Dickson 2003: 383) and meaning “I heard and understood what you said” (Pollitt 2014: online). “Related to radio voice communication, *loud and clear* is the quality of reception, as compared to communications that are *weak and distorted*” (Taylor 2010: 207, emphasis in the original). This procedure expression follows the receiver’s and the speaker’s call signs, and while it is left unaltered in Spanish, in Italian it is rendered by explicitation into the equivalent TL procedure expression *forte e chiaro* [loud and clear], thus domesticating this radio communication.

6.(55) 1-4, 1-6. Lima Charlie . We’re sending the bot. Over.	1-4, 1-6. Forte e chiaro . Mandiamo il bot. Passo.	1-4, 1-6. Lima Charlie . Enviamos robot. Cambio.
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‘Mike’ (Dickson 2003: 281) occurs in two procedure expressions, or “prowords” (Weik 2012: 760): ‘mike’ and ‘mike mike’, as in examples (56), (57) and (58). The former stands for ‘minute’ while ‘mike mike’ for ‘mm’, i.e. millimeter (Dalzell 2009: 660).

6.(56) [...] Solid Copy, we’re moving. Five mikes .	[...] Ricevuto, ci muoviamo. Cinque mike .	[...] Recibido, avanzamos. Cinco minutos .
6.(57) Roger. Three mikes . Then we’re coming after you.	Roger. Tre minuti , poi vi seguiamo.	Recibido. Tres minutos . Después, iremos detrás.
6.(58) You got forty mike mike and 7.62. Good to go.	Avete 40 mm e 7.62. Via.	Tienes cuarenta milímetros y 7,62. Listos.

As regards their translation, while in Italian ‘mike’ is either retained as in example (56) or transferred into *minuto* [minute] by explicitation as in (57), in Spanish the meaning is always made explicit and rendered into *minuto* [minute]. Conversely, ‘mike mike’ is translated into the explicit equivalent ‘millimeter’ in both TLs but in Italian it is abbreviated into the symbol *mm*.

In more details, in (58), ‘forty mike mike’ and ‘7.62’ (millimeters) refer to the caliber of the grenade launcher and the machine gun’s 7.62x51mm cartridge the MUSA robot is equipped with (*Medal of Honor Wiki*: online) in the game.

Finally, ‘tango’ stands for ‘target’ and refers to enemies. In localizations, as illustrated in examples (59) – (61), ‘tango’ is retained in Italian and transferred by means of explicitation in Spanish. Given the specialization of this term, unless players are familiar with US English military language, it is possible to speculate that its meaning may be only understood in context, in other words, when playing. Moreover, linguistically, as regards the number of this proword, in English it is used both singular and plural, in Italian it is always singular thus conveying the idea of enemies’ movement, while the Spanish rendition *enemigos* is always plural even if ‘tango’ may generically refer to one single enemy during combat sessions.

6.(59)	Watch your movement.	Occhio ai movimenti.	Cuidad los movimientos.
	Tangos in the buildings!	Tango all'interno!	¡Enemigos en los edificios!
6.(60)	Tangos on the bridge!	Tango sul ponte!	¡Enemigos en el puente!
6.(61)	Tango , top deck!	Tango , ultimo piano!	¡Enemigo , arriba!

6.6 Radio Communication Procedures

In order to transmit messages, orders, instructions, reports and all pieces of information during military operations, the characters in the games of this study corpus codedly interconnect via radio channels thanks to an arbitrary set of formulae and prowords (Weik 2012: 760) which are typical to military radio communication. Table 25 and Figure 35 show the instances of this phenomenon in the corpus and the translation strategies used to transfer them into Italian and Spanish.

According to the standard message format (US Department of the Army 2009: 232-233), radio communication must report heading, text and ending. First, the warfighters identify the addressee, and afterward self, by means of the formula ‘this is’ plus the listener’s and speaker’s call signs or code names, as shown in examples (62) and (63) in MOHW, (64) and (65) in BF4 and (66) and (67) in ME3. ‘This is’, which may be also omitted in the communication, as in MOHW example (68) where Mother is the speaker and Voodoo the addressee, means “this

transmission is from the station whose designator immediately follows” (US Department of the Army 2009: 235).

6.(62)	Mako One this is Grizzly Six Actual. [...]	Mako 1, qui Grizzly 6 Actual. [...]	Mako Uno, aquí Grizzly Seis. [...]
6.(63)	Lift One Six, Lift One Six, this is Mako One. [...]	Lift Uno Sei, Lift Uno Sei, qui Mako Uno. [...]	Transporte Uno Seis, Uno Seis, aquí Mako Uno. [...]
6.(64)	DUNN: Fortress, this is Tombstone actual, [...].	DUNN: Fortress, qui caposquadra Tombstone [...].	DUNN: Fortress, aquí Oficial Tombstone [...].
6.(65)	GARRISON: Gatekeeper, this is Fortress. Say again! [...]	GARRISON: Gatekeeper, qui Fortress. Ripetete! [...]	GARRISON: Gatekeeper, aquí Fortress. ¡Repetid, [...].
6.(66)	Normandy, this is Anderson... do you read?	Normandy, qui Anderson. Mi sentite?	Normandía, aquí Anderson... ¿Me recibes?
6.(67)	Sanders, this is Shepard. [...]	Sanders, qui Shepard. [...]	Sanders, aquí Shepard. [...]
6.(68)	Voodoo, Mother. Where are my boats?	Voodoo, Mother. Le mie barche?	Voodoo, Mother. Where are my boats?

In both TLs, ‘this is’ is mostly translated into the equivalent formulae *qui* and *aquí*, both being adverbs of place which introduce the speaker’s call sign or code name. However, ‘this is’ may be also omitted as example (69) shows as regards Spanish and examples (73) and (75) testify to as for Italian. Moreover, in Spanish ‘this is’ may be literally translated into *este es* [this is] as in (70), or *soy* [I am] as in (76), or translated into another formulaic expression, namely *al habla* [speaking] as in (71) and (72). Omission does not alter the communication since, as mentioned above, this formulaic expression may also be excluded in the SL, as in (68). In Italian, ‘this is’ may be also followed by *parla* [speaking] as in example (74) or substituted by *parla*, as in (76).

6.(69)	1-6 this is 1-4. Movement in the building across the street.	1-6 qui è 1-4. Movimenti nel palazzo dall'altro lato.	1-6, Ø 1-4. Movimiento en el edificio, cruzando la calle.
6.(70)	Everyone this is Voodoo. [...]	Ascoltatemi tutti, qui Voodoo. [...]	Gente, este es Voodoo. [...]
6.(71)	GARRISON: Any station this net, this is Fortress. [...]	GARRISON: A tutte le unità in ascolto, qui Fortress. [...]	GARRISON: A todas las estaciones, Fortress al habla . [...]
6.(72)	GARRISON: This is Fortress. [...]	GARRISON: Qui Fortress. [...]	GARRISON: Fortress al habla . [...]
6.(73)	GATEKEEPER: Fortress, this is Gatekeeper, we advise you immediately— (static)—Over.	GATEKEEPER: Fortress- Ø Gatekeeper- stabilire una - alternativa. Passo.	GATEKEEPER: Fortress, aquí Gatekeeper. Recomendamos tomar ruta alternativa. Cambio.
6.(74)	IRISH: Fortress, this is Tombstone three, [...]	IRISH: Fortress, qui parla Tombstone 3. [...].	IRISH: Fortress, aquí Tombstone tres, [...].
6.(75)	This is Commander Shepard, Alliance Navy. Do you read?	Ø Comandante Shepard, Marina dell'Alleanza. Mi ricevi?	Aquí [M]el[F]la comandante Shepard, de la Marina de la Alianza. ¿Me recibes?
6.(76)	Hammer. This is Admiral Anderson.	Hammer. Parla l'ammiraglio Anderson.	Martillo. Soy el almirante Anderson.

After uttering the very message, soldiers end the transmission with final instructions such as ‘stand by’, ‘wait’, ‘execute’, amongst others (US Department of the Army 2009: 233) and, more relevantly, ‘over’ or ‘out’. As regards these two ending prowords, according to the US Department of the Army (2009: 235), a specification is in order: the term ‘over’ means “this is the end of my transmission to you and a response is necessary. Go ahead: transmit” while ‘out’ means “this is the end of my transmission to you and no answer is expected”. These prowords in dialogues are explified in (77) - (85) and, as regards their transfer, both are directly translated into the TL prowords, namely *passo* and *cambio* for ‘over’ and *chiudo* and *fuera* or *corto* for ‘out’ in Italian and Spanish respectively. Nevertheless, in both TTs there are a few instances of

mistranslations: in Italian, for example, *passo* [over] is omitted once but occurs as a rendition of ‘do you copy?’ in (81), which is a different radio communication expression, while in Spanish *cambio* [over] is used to render ‘out’, as in example (82). Moreover, it seems interesting to mention that, given the blurred boundaries between languages for special purposes and everyday language, *passo e chiudo* in Italian and *cambio y fuera* or *cambio y corto* in Spanish have become playful parting formulae. As regards ME3 specifically, ‘over’ never occurs in this game subcorpus and while ‘out’ is always translated into *chiudo* in Italian, in Spanish different equivalent renditions are chosen by the translator: 6 instances of *corto* as in example (83), 1 instance of *fuera* as in (84) and 7 instances of *cambio y corto* [over and out] as in (85).

6.(77)	Stump, Mother. Give status. Over.	Stump, Mother. Rapporto. Passo.	Stump, Mother. Estado. Cambio.
6.(78)	Solid copy, Mako out.	Ricevuto, Mako chiude.	Recibido, Mako fuera.
6.(79)	IRISH: [...] We’re close to\our target point. Over.	IRISH: [...] Siamo vicini\all'obiettivo. Passo.	IRISH: [...] Estamos cerca\nde nuestro objetivo. Cambio.
6.(80)	IRISH: Copy that, Fortress. Out.	IRISH: Ricevuto, Fortress. Chiudo.	IRISH: Entendido, Fortress. Corto.
6.(81)	IRISH: Fortress, this is Tombstone, [...]. Need another way out. Do you copy?	IRISH: Fortress, qui Tombstone, [...]. C'è un'altra via di fuga? Passo.	IRISH: Fortress, aquí Tombstone. [...], necesitamos otra salida. ¿Recibido?
6.(82)	GARRISON: [...] Helo is inbound. Get your squad in position. Out.	GARRISON: [...] Elicottero in arrivo, portatevi in posizione. Chiudo.	GARRISON: [...] Helicóptero de camino. Ten a la patrulla en posición, cambio.
6.(83)	Good work, Commander. Hackett out.	Ben fatto, comandante. Hackett, chiudo.	Buen trabajo, comandante. Hackett, corto.
6.(84)	Roger that. Cortez out.	Ricevuto. Cortez, chiudo.	Recibido. Cortez fuera.
6.(85)	Keep me posted. Hackett out.	Tienimi aggiornato. Chiudo.	Mantenme informado. Hackett, cambio y corto.

‘Roger,’ which means “I have received your last transmission satisfactory, radio check is loud and clear” (US Department of the Army 2009: 235), belongs to the so-called “radio checks”, aimed at “rating signal strength and readability” (2009: 234). As the examples below show (86) - [...], ‘roger’ may also co-occur with ‘that’ in ‘roger that’ in 82 occurrences in MOHW database, 13 occurrences in MOHW corpus, 7 occurrences in BF4 database and 3 occurrences in BF4 corpus, 65 occurrences in ME3 database and 12 occurrences in ME3 corpus. From a translational perspective, in Italian ‘roger’ and ‘roger that’ are mostly retained (48 occurrences) in MOHW, thus producing a foreignizing effect as in examples (86), (87) and (94), or directly translated into *ricevuto* (11 occurrences in MOHW corpus, 3 in BF4 corpus, all 12 occurrences in ME3 corpus) as in examples (88) – (91), *OK* (2 occurrences in MOHW corpus) as in (92) and *sì* [yes] (1 occurrence in MOHW corpus) as in (93). Conversely, in Spanish it is almost totally directly translated into *recibido*, the correct equivalent proword (García de la Cuesta 2003: 349) with only two occurrences of *entendido* and one occurrence of *comprendido* [both meaning understood], as in examples (91) and (94).

6.(86)	Roger. Preacher, on the door.	Roger. Preacher, la porta.	Recibido. Preacher, la puerta.
6.(87)	Roger that, Mako.	Roger, Mako.	Recibido, Mako.
6.(88)	Roger.	Ricevuto.	Recibido.
6.(89)	Roger that.	Ricevuto.	Recibido.
6.(90)	DUNN: Roger that. We’ll be there.	DUNN: Ricevuto. Ci saremo.	DUNN: Recibido. Allí estaremos.
6.(91)	Roger that, EDI.	Ricevuto, IDA.	Entendido, SID.
6.(92)	Roger.	OK.	Recibido.
6.(93)	Roger, Tiger 12.	Sì, Tiger 12.	Recibido, Tigre 12.
6.(94)	Roger. Looks like you’re clear. [...]	Roger. Sembra che la via sia libera. [...]	Comprendido. Parece despejado. [...]

In the semantic enigmas of the notes and queries section of *The Guardian* newspaper (online), most military officers participating in the discussion agree that the origin of ‘roger’ comes from

the previous NATO phonetic alphabet letter for ‘R’, which is now coded into ‘Romeo’ and means ‘received’.

Other procedure words used to acknowledge the message reception are ‘check’ and ‘copy’. The former occurs only in MOHW and may co-occur with ‘that’ (1 occurrence in MOHW corpus, 8 in MOHW database) and is directly translated into *OK* (12 occurrences) and *ricevuto* (3 occurrences) in Italian and into *recibido* in Spanish, as in examples (95) – (97). ‘Copy’ occurs in all subcorpora but is used in different collocations. In MOHW, ‘copy’ mostly co-occurs with the adjective ‘solid’ (5 occurrences in MOHW corpus, 6 in MOHW database) and with ‘that’ (3 occurrences in MOHW corpus, 28 in MOHW database) and is always directly translated into *ricevuto* in Italian, while in Spanish there are eight occurrences of *recibido* and one occurrence of *entendido* [understood], as in examples (98) – (100). Moreover, in MOHW ‘copy’ represents one instance of omission in the procedure expression ‘solid copy’ in the English ST, but ‘solid’ is correctly interpreted by translators and rendered into *OK* and *recibido* in Italian and Spanish respectively, as in example (101).

6.(95)	Check. Preacher, on me.	OK. Preacher, con me.	Recibido. Preacher, sígueme.
6.(96)	Check. Let's fucking do it then.	Ricevuto. Facciamolo, cazzo.	Recibido. Vamos a hacerlo, joder.
6.(97)	Check that. Let's back 'em into a corner, then.	Ricevuto! Chiudiamoli in un angolo, allora.	Recibido. Arrinconémosles entonces.
6.(98)	Solid copy. Holding position.	Ricevuto. Resistiamo.	Recibido. Mantenemos posición.
6.(99)	Copy that.	Ricevuto.	Recibido.
6.(100)	Copy.	Ricevuto!	Entendido.
6.(101)	Solid, Dingo. [...]	OK, Dingo. [...]	Recibido, Dingo. [...]

In BF4, ‘copy’ co-occurs with the adjective ‘clean’ (1 occurrence in BF4 corpus, 2 in BF4 database) and with ‘that’ (2 occurrences in BF4 corpus, 6 in BF4 database), and is also used as a verb to acknowledge the listener’s reception (3 occurrences in BF4 corpus, 8 in BF4 database). As regards its transfer in BF4, ‘copy’ is directly translated into *ricevuto* and *recibido* as in

example (102) and into the right verbal forms of *ricevere* and *recibir* as in (103), or into other synonymous expressions which, however, are not specific to radio communication procedures such as *confermato* [confirmed] in (104) in Italian, and *entendido* [understood] and *escuchar* [hear] in examples (105) and (106) in Spanish. For the purposes of comprehensiveness, in example (103) there is another radio procedural expression ‘I say again’ (US Department of the Army 2009: 236) which means “I am repeating transmission or part indicated” (US Department of the Army 2009: 338) and is correctly rendered into direct equivalents such as *ripeto* and *repito*, both first person singular of the simple present of TLs’ equivalent verbs of ‘repeat’.

6.(102)	IRISH: Copy Fortress. En route. [...]	IRISH: Ricevuto Fortress, in marcia. [...]	IRISH: Recibido , Fortress. Allá vamos. [...]
6.(103)	IRISH: [...] <i>I say again</i> Fortress, this is Tombstone three, how copy ? Over.	IRISH: [...] <i>Ripeto</i> : Fortress, qui Tombstone 3, mi ricevete ? Passo.	IRISH: [...] <i>Repito</i> : Fortress, aquí Tombstone tres, ¿me recibís ? Cambio.
6.(104)	FIREBIRD: Copy that . Engaging.	FIREBIRD: Confermato . Ingaggio.	FIREBIRD: Recibido , atacando.
6.(105)	GARRISON: Any station this net, this is Fortress. Does anyone copy ?	GARRISON: A tutte le unità in ascolto, qui Fortress. Qualcuno mi riceve ?	GARRISON: A todas las estaciones, Fortress al habla. ¿Me escucha alguien?
6.(106)	IRISH: Copy that , Fortress. Out.	IRISH: Ricevuto , Fortress. Chiudo.	IRISH: Entendido , Fortress. Corto.

In ME3 corpus, ‘copy’ co-occurs with ‘that’ once (88 occurrences in ME3 database) while it is used as a verb in two occurrences (79 instances in ME3 database). In TLs, ‘copy that’ is translated into *ricevuto* and *recibido* and the verb accordingly rendered into *ricevere* and *recibir*, as in examples (107) and (108).

6.(107)	Normandy. We’re going to reroute. Do you copy ?	Normandy, dovremo fare una deviazione. Mi ricevete ?	Normandía, vamos a cambiar de ruta. ¿Me recibes ?
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6.(108)	Copy that! Everybody get to the ship! Move!	Ricevuto! Tutti a bordo! Presto!	Recibido. Todo el mundo al vehículo. ¡Vamos!
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Another procedure word in radio communications is ‘negative’, simply meaning ‘no’. In the three games’ databases, there are 21, 15 and 65 occurrences of this proword in MOHW, BF4 and ME3 respectively. Given the transparency of this term, translators could easily adopt direct equivalents in both target languages, being *negativo* in Italian and Spanish, as in examples (109) - (111).

6.(109)	Voodoo, negative on that air. [...]	Voodoo, negativo sul supporto aereo. [...]	Voodoo, apoyo aéreo negativo . [...]
6.(110)	IRISH: Negative Gatekeeper. No survivors.	IRISH: Negativo, Gatekeeper. Nessun superstite.	IRISH: Negativo, Gatekeeper. No hay supervivientes.
6.(111)	Negative. Our entire force was decimated.	Negativo. La nostra armata è stata decimata.	Negativo. Han liquidado a nuestro contingente.

Finally, in BF4 dialogues, another radio communication procedure word is mentioned. As in examples (112) and (113), ‘20’ belongs to the so-called “ten-codes” or “ten-signals” of Citizen Band radio talk (Jackson and Amvela 2000: 137), which represent common phrases in radio transmissions also in military context. In details, ‘20’ is part of ‘10-20’ meaning ‘location’ and, as the examples below show, this code was rendered by explicitation in both languages due to the opacity of this US culture-specific expression for which a simple direct translation is very likely to be unintelligible. In Italian, it becomes *where did Irish end up?* in (112) and *Tombstone three, (what’s your) position?* in (113), while in Spanish it is explained and rendered into *do you know where is Irish?* in (112) and *Tombstone three, Tombstone actual, where are you?* in (113).

6.(112)	DUNN: You got a 20 on Irish?	DUNN: Dove si è cacciato Irish?	DUNN: ¿Sabes dónde está Irish?
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6.(113)	DUNN: [...] Tombstone three, Tombstone actual, what's your 20 ?	DUNN: [...] Tombstone 3, posizione ?	DUNN: [...] Tombstone tres, Tombstone Oficial, ¿ dónde estás?
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6.7 Abbreviations

As already mentioned, accuracy, brevity and clarity are paramount during communications on the battlefield. Accordingly, besides the abbreviations already discussed in the previous paragraphs, a set of more or less standardized shortened terms is used to be as accurate and concise as possible at the same time. In particular, US military language is full of abbreviations which, from a linguistic perspective, include phenomena whose transfer may pose remarkable issues to language professionals who must resort to their research skills.

As Table 26 in Appendix D shows, these phenomena include several types and forms of abbreviations whose specialization in military language and, consequently, whose opacity for translators may considerably vary. Moreover, some of them are so deeply connected to the potentialities of the English language system that their transfer may prove to be challenging. Figure 36 illustrates the strategies translators selected to deal with their transfer into Italian and Spanish.

A first group of abbreviations occurring in this study corpus is that of informal shortened items such as ‘air’ for ‘air support’ or ‘aircraft’, ‘click’ for ‘kilometer’, ‘ID’ for ‘identification’, ‘intel’ for ‘intelligence’, ‘medical’ for ‘medical assistance or personnel’ and ‘med’ for ‘medical’, ‘op’ for ‘operation’ and the related terms ‘Spec-ops’ and ‘black ops’, ‘evac’ for ‘evacuation’, among others.

‘Air’ is an informal military abbreviation which means “relating to the use of aircraft” (Bowyer 2004: 7) and which, if it is an abbreviation of ‘air support’, cannot be translated without the following equivalent noun. As examples (114) and (115) show, in MOHW both translators explicitated and contextually rendered the abbreviation by adding the equivalent terms for ‘support’, except for one instance of omission in Italian. In (116), *così* [in such conditions] makes ‘air support’ implicit and, although the text strings below are part of the same game sessions, the first mention in (114) is too far from (116) to allow the player to easily understand the referent and the exact reason for the game characters’ difficulties, namely the lack of air support.

6.(114)	Voodoo, negative on that air . [...]	Voodoo, negativo sul supporto aereo . [...]	Voodoo, apoyo aéreo negativo. [...]
6.(115)	Grizzly Six, Voodoo. You got your air . [...]	Grizzly 6, Voodoo. Avete supporto aereo . [...]	Grizzly Seis, Voodoo. Tienes tu apoyo aéreo . [...]
6.(116)	[...] We can't fucking move without that air . Can you clear the rooftops?	[...] Non possiamo muoverci così, cazzo. Potete liberare i tetti?	[...] No podemos movernos sin ese apoyo aéreo . ¿Puedes despejar los tejadros?

In BF4 'air' is used as a shortening of 'aircraft' and is preceded by the adjective 'hostile' and, while in Italian it is translated into *velivolo (nemico)* [hostile aircraft], in Spanish it is paraphrased into *enemigos en el aire* [hostiles in the air], as in example (117).

6.(117)	FIREBIRD: Tombstone actual, radar's lighting up. You got hostile air .	FIREBIRD: Caposquadra Tombstone, segnale sul radar. Velivolo nemico.	FIREBIRD: Oficial Tombstone, alerta en el radar. Hay enemigos en el aire.
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'Click' is a US informal abbreviation for 'kilometer' (Bowyer 2004: 47) and, accordingly, a metric distance and speed measurement (Taylor 2010: 194). Since information concerning distance and locations may be useful to players in game missions, a proper transfer must favor clarity and this means an explicitation, i.e. the TLs equivalents of 'kilometer', as in example (118). Retaining the abbreviation as it is would not make sense, given the domain and cultural specificity of such term. In Italian, however, in (119) 'click' is omitted and the information about the position of the speaker character, namely "a few kilometers south of the capitol", becomes more simply *vicino all'edificio governativo* [near the capitol]. The omission of more precise directions also affects example (118), since 'north' is not transferred in Italian. In BF4, 'click' is always explicitated into the TLs' equivalents of 'kilometer' as in example (120) while in ME3 it is omitted and translators only transfer "south of the main colony", as in example (121).

6.(118)	You'll hit traffic two clicks north. [...]	Ti imbatteai nel traffico tra due chilometri . [...]	Dos kilómetros al norte habrá tráfico. [...]
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6.(119)	In the air. A few clicks south of the capitol.	In volo. <i>Vicino</i> all'edificio governativo.	En el aire. Unos kilómetros al sur del Capitolio.
6.(120)	GARRISON: [...] Follow the road three clicks west.	GARRISON: [...] Seguite la strada, tre chilometri a ovest.	GARRISON: [...] Por la carretera, 3 kilómetros al oeste.
6.(121)	I was organizing construction at a remote station a few clicks south of the main colony.	Organizzavo la costruzione di una stazione remota Ø a sud della colonia principale.	Yo estaba organizando unas obras en una estación lejana, Ø al sur de la colonia principal.

‘ID’ is an informal abbreviation for identity, a proof of identity, identification (Bowyer 2004: 123) and “identification; identifier; [...]” (US Department of Defense 2016: A-83). In MOHW dialogues’ context, between the senses above, it refers to identification which means “the process of determining the friendly or hostile character of an unknown detected contact” and specifically “in ground combat operations, discrimination between recognizable objects as being friendly or enemy, or the name that belongs to the object as a member of a class” (US Department of Defense 2016: 107) but, from a grammatical perspective, in MOHW texts it is used informally as a verb. In MOHW ST it is an order, ID means ‘identify your targets’. From the perspective of pragmatics, ordering, the illocutionary act (Austin 1975) contained in example (122) and its verbal nature are maintained only in Spanish: *identificad* is the second person plural of the imperative form of *identificar* [identify] and, from a translational perspective, ID is made explicit by direct translation. In Italian, on the contrary, ‘ID’ is retained, without capital letters, but serves as a noun. In Italian *id* is an Anglicism belonging to the computing and Internet term ‘user id’ (*Treccani Dictionary of Italian Language* 2016: online) in which it is the abbreviation of ‘identifier’, in Italian *identificativo*. However, in (122), it seems to stand for *identificazione* [identification] and the whole sentence, which may be back-translated into ‘Target identification. Go.’ seems to comply with the original illocutionary act.

6.(122)	ID your targets. Go.	Id dei bersagli. Via.	Identificad objetivos. Vamos.
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‘Intel’ is the US abbreviation for ‘intelligence’ (Bowyer 2004: 128) which means both “any information which may be useful (especially information about the enemy)” and “people and

equipment involved in the gathering, analysis and dissemination of intelligence” (Bowyer 2004: 128). According to the US Department of Defense (2016: 114), intelligence is indeed “1. the product resulting from the collection, processing, integration, evaluation, analysis, and interpretation of available information concerning foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or potential operations. [...] 3. The organizations engaged in such activities”. In MOHW, ‘intel’ seems to refer to pieces of information and not to intelligence activities or organizations. In the game’s localizations, it is translated into *información* in Spanish while in Italian it becomes plural *informazioni* as in (123) and *abbiamo scoperto* [we have found out] as in (124) which makes ‘intel’ implicit. In this light, the Spanish translator used explicitation in both cases, which is adopted in Italian too in (123), while the instance in (124) may be considered as an omission.

6.(123)	<p>Intel’s pointing to the P.E.T.N. moving through the tribal areas to couriers in Afghanistan [...].</p>	<p>Dalle informazioni, il P.E.T.N. attraversa le aree tribali fino a dei corrieri in Afghanistan [...].</p>	<p>La información indica que el P.E.T.N. se mueve a través de las zonas tribales hasta mensajeros en Afganistán [...].</p>
6.(124)	<p>[...] Recent intel points to our old friend Stovan Botic as our P.E.T.N. supplier.</p>	<p>[...] Abbiamo scoperto che il fornitore di P.E.T.N. è il nostro vecchio amico Stovan Botic.</p>	<p>[...] Información reciente señala a nuestro viejo amigo Stovan Botic como nuestro proveedor de P.E.T.N.</p>

In BF4, ‘intel’ is translated into *informazioni* in Italian and *información* and *datos* in Spanish as in examples (125) and (126) while in ME3 it has a counterpart only in Spanish, as in examples (127) and (128).

6.(125)	<p>GARRISON: Tombstone retrieved the intel.</p>	<p>GARRISON: Tombstone ha recuperato le informazioni.</p>	<p>GARRISON: Tombstone ha conseguido la información.</p>
6.(126)	<p>DUNN: Take deep breaths, son. You got the intel?</p>	<p>DUNN: Adesso calmati. Hai le informazioni?</p>	<p>DUNN: Respira hondo, hijo. ¿Tienes los datos?</p>

6.(126)	Our intel says Primarch Fedorian is on Palaven's largest moon. [...]	Il Primarca Fedorian sta sulla luna maggiore di Palaven. [...]	La información que tenemos dice que el primarca Fedorian está en la luna más grande de Palaven. [...]
6.(127)	[...] I've got intel suggesting that high-level hanar officials may be indoctrinated.	[...] Sospetto che dei rappresentanti hanar d'alto livello siano stati indottrinati.	[...] Tengo informaciones que apuntan a que altos cargos hanar podrían estar adoctrinados.

‘Medical’ may be considered as another abbreviation, used informally by the military. Indeed, medical is an adjective and usually requires the presence of a noun, such as ‘cover’, ‘officer’, ‘unit’, among others. On the contrary, in MOHW texts, it is also used alone and refers to different (medical) referents, such as medical assistance and medical personnel, such as doctors and healthcare assistants. Indeed, while directly translating the adjective ‘medical’ into TLs equivalents, both translators had to expand the reference and add the nouns which are implicit in the ST, such as *soccorso* and *asistencia* when it refers to medical assistance. Explicitation is also used when medical refers to personnel but, while it implies an addition in Italian and ‘medical’ becomes *personale medico*, the Spanish translator converted the adjective into the noun *médicos* [doctors]. In this study corpus, there is also the informal abbreviation of the adjective ‘medical’, namely ‘med’ in BF4 subcorpus and it co-occurs with ‘bay’ which means “a space set aside for a specific purpose” (Bowyer 2004: 26). In BF4 dialogues the compound refers to the infirmary of USS Valkyrie and seems to be a variation of the standard expression ‘sick bay’ which means “a room or area for the treatment of the sick or injured, as on board a ship or at a boarding school” (*Collins English Dictionary* 2016: online). In BF4 localizations, ‘med bay’ is translated into into the standard equivalent terms *infermeria* and *enfermería* in Italian and Spanish respectively, as in (128).

6.(128)	IRISH: We can go through the med bay .	IRISH: Possiamo passare dall' infermeria .	IRISH: Podemos atravesar la enfermería .
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‘Op’ is the informal abbreviation of ‘operation’ in military language, written in lower-case letters (Bowyer 2004: 172), since in capitals it is an acronym standing for ‘observation post’. Although ‘OP’ is the graphic form of this shortening in some of its occurrences in MOHW,

context and co-texts indicate that it actually refers to operation. In MOHW target versions, the Italian translator understood the meaning and translated it into *operazione* [operation] twice, as in dialogue strings in (130) and (131) with only one instance of generalization in (129), but in *non sparare alla guardia se no ‘salta tutto’* [don’t shoot the guard or everything’s over], *tutto* [everything] seems to quite clearly refer to the military operation Mother and Preacher are involved in. On the contrary, the Spanish translator mistranslated ‘OP’ into either the equivalent Spanish initialism ‘PO’ as in (129), its full form *punto de observación* [observation post] as in (130), to finally render ‘OP’ into the correct informal equivalent *operación* [operation], as in (131). In this light, however, the Spanish misinterpretation seems to be due to the translator’s faithfulness to military language and terminology, whose translation requires good research skills.

6.(129)	Don’t shoot the guard or the OP is blown.	Non sparare alla guardia se no salta tutto .	No dispares al guardia o fastidiarás el PO .
6.(130)	Mother, Dusty. What the hell just happened with your little OP ?	Mother, Dusty. Che è successo alla tua operazione ?	Mother, Dusty. ¿Qué ha pasado con vuestro punto de observación ?
6.(131)	This OP ’s too important to leave up to a bunch of frogmen.	Questa operazione è troppo importante per lasciarla in mano a un manipolo di uomini rana.	Esta operación es demasiado importante para dejársela a hombres rana.

In BF4, ‘op’ is part of ‘Spec-Ops’ which is a US-English widely used abbreviation of ‘Special Operations’ referring to military specialized units of highly trained personnel for unconventional missions. In BF4 dialogues, they are Russian special forces and, as regards translation in example (132), in Italian ‘Spec-Ops’ is translated into the military language compound *reparti speciali* [special units] while in Spanish, although it is made explicit, *de operaciones* seems to be the abbreviation of “unidad de operaciones especiales” (Ryan *et al.* 2011). In both cases, regardless of equivalence between source and target military LSPs, explicitation allows players to understand the meaning of this popular abbreviation.

6.(132) PAC: They were Russians, right? Spec-Ops? [...]	PAC: Erano russi, vero? Reparti speciali? [...]	PAC: Eran rusos, ¿no? ¿ De operaciones? [...]
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In ME3, ‘op’ co-occurs with ‘black’ in ‘black ops (team)’. In TTs, the equivalent for ‘operation’ is rendered only in Spanish in *grupo de operaciones secretas* [secret operation team] while in Italian ‘op’ is omitted and the noun phrase becomes *squadra segreta* [secret team].

‘Evac’ is the informal abbreviation of ‘evacuation’ and as in example (133), in Spanish it is translated into the equivalent full form, namely *evacuación* while in Italian it is also expanded into *mezzo per il rientro* [return vehicle] which specifies the type of evacuation BF4 soldiers have lost.

6.(133) IRISH: Fortress, this is Tombstone, our evac is gone. Need another way out. [...]	IRISH: Fortress, qui Tombstone, il mezzo per il rientro è andato. C’è un’altra via di fuga? [...]	IRISH: Fortress, aquí Tombstone. Hemos perdido la evacuación , necesitamos otra salida. [...]
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‘Evac’ seems to be the right candidate to discuss the second group of abbreviations this study focuses on, namely blends such as ‘medivac’, of which ‘evac’ is part, ‘satlink’, ‘SIGINT’ and ‘SITREP’.

‘Medivac’ is an abbreviation resulting from the word-formation process known as blending: the beginning of the word ‘medical’ plus the beginning of the word ‘evacuation’, whose meaning is a combination of the two. Actually, the correct spelling seems to be ‘medevac’ and means “the evacuation of a person due to illness rather than injury” if used as a noun and “to evacuate an ill person” if used as a verb (Bowyer 2004: 155). In this light, in MOHW ST it seems to be incorrect, since the game’s characters need medevac exactly for a person killed in action (KIA) and an injured person. In the game’s localizations, as exemplified in (134) an equivalent direct translation, actually a calque, is provided only in Spanish: *evacuación médica*. Conversely, in Italian the abbreviation becomes *trasporto* [transport], which is a context-dependent hypernym of evacuation, thus representing a generalization.

6.(134) [...] One KIA one CAT Bravo. Request immediate medivac .	[...] Una perdita, Team Bravo. Richiedo trasporto immediato.	[...] Un muerto, un CAT Bravo. Solicito evacuación médica .
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As discussed in Section 6.5, in example (134) the translation of ‘CAT’ into ‘Team’ in Italian is incorrect, since ‘CAT’ is an abbreviation for ‘category’ and ‘Bravo’ the severity of the injured person.

‘Satlink’ is an abbreviation resulting from the blending of the beginning of the word ‘satellite’ and the word ‘link’ and means bidirectional communication via satellite. In MOHW texts, it refers to the way Dusty is communicating with Mother and Preacher during the driving mission set in Dubai. As regards its transfer, this blend is retained in Italian and translated into *enlace por satélite* [link via satellite] in Spanish by means of explication.

‘SIGINT’ is another blend word: the beginning of the word ‘signals’ plus the beginning of the word ‘intelligence’, whose meaning is “intelligence derived from communications, electronic, and foreign instrumentation signals” (US Department of Defense 2016: 217). According to Bowyer (2004: 221-222), it is “intelligence obtained by listening to the enemy’s radio transmissions”. According to Busetto (2004: 800), the equivalent Italian definition is “informazioni delle emissioni elettromagnetiche” [intelligence derived from the interpretation of electromagnetic signals] while in Spanish it is the calque “inteligencia de señales” [signals intelligence] (García de la Cuesta 2003: 369). As in example (135), the Italian translator omitted the blend and translated the abbreviation with the generalization *segnali* [signals] while in Spanish the blend is retained but expanded into the noun phrase *señales de SIGINT*, thus specifying that SIGINT are a type of signals.

6.(135)	[...] SIGINT hits are lighting up from Manila to East Africa. [...]	[...] Rileviamo segnali da Manila all’Africa orientale. [...]	[...] Se encienden señales de SIGINT desde Manila a África Oriental. [...]
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According to Castelvechi (2002: 53), SIGINT belongs to US Intelligence terminology and refers to only one of their control tools, particularly used by Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency.

‘SITREP’ is another abbreviation resulting from blending: the beginning of the word ‘situation’ plus the beginning of the word ‘report’, whose meaning is “a report giving the situation in the area of a reporting unit or formation” (US Department of Defense 2016: 218). In Italian, according to Busetto (2004: 804), the equivalent form is “rapporto situazione” while in Spanish it is “informe de situación” (García de la Cuesta 2003: 372). As example (136)

shows, in MOHW the correct military LSP expression has been transferred in Spanish only, since the Italian *punto* in the expression *fare il punto (della situazione)* [to sum up and take stock of the situation] is a remarkable generalization representing the rendition in layman's terms.

6.(136)	So what's the SITREP , Voodoo?	Ci fai il punto , Voodoo?	¿ Informe de situación , Voodoo?
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In BF4, 'sitrep' is not capitalized and becomes *rapporto* [report] in Italian and *informe de situación* [situation report] in Spanish, as in (137). As compared to its Italian occurrence in MOHW, namely *punto*, it can be said that *rapporto* is a more suitable candidate to render this term especially if we interpret it as the short form of the correct equivalent compound "rapporto situazione" (Busetto 2004: 804). In ME3, as opposed to the accurate rendition in MOHW and BF4, the Spanish translator used a generalization, as in example (138).

6.(137)	DUNN: Gimme a sitrep!	DUNN: Voglio un rapporto!	DUNN: ¿ Informe de situación!
6.(138)	Just going over the sitrep .	Stavo giusto esaminando i rapporti .	Voy a repasar la situación .

The third group of abbreviations which deserve special attention includes acronyms and initialisms such as 'CAS', 'KIA', 'MIA', 'ROE', 'TOT', 'DZ', 'LZ', 'IED', 'PC', 'FOB', 'ETA' and 'SOS'.

'CAS' is an acronym for 'close air support', which means "attack by aircraft on a target which is *close* to friendly ground forces" (my emphasis) (Bowyer 2004: 48). According to the US Department of Defense (2016: 34), it is "air action by fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft against hostile targets that are *in close proximity* to friendly forces and that require detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of those forces" (my emphasis). In Italian and Spanish, this acronym is borrowed as such and the equivalent definitions are direct translations, namely "appoggio aereo ravvicinato" (Busetto 2014: 193) in Italian and "apoyo aéreo cercano" (García de la Cuesta 2003: 72) in Spanish. However, as example (139) shows, both Italian and Spanish translators transferred the acronym by means of a generalization: *supporto aereo* and *apoyo aéreo* [air support] are hypernyms of CAS which is exactly 'close'.

6.(139)	[...] We're taking contact! What's left in the CAS stack?	[...] Siamo sotto tiro! È rimasto del supporto aereo ?	[...] ¡Tenemos contacto! ¿Qué queda de apoyo aéreo ?
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'DZ' is the initialism for 'drop zone'. It is "an area of ground selected for the landing of troops by parachute" (Bowyer 2004: 80), "a specific area upon which airborne troops, equipment, or supplies are airdropped" (US Department of Defense 2016: 72). Interestingly, according to Bowyer (2004: 80), "the American army uses the phrase landing zone (LZ)" instead of DZ, but the US Department of Defense specifies the difference since a LZ is "any specified zone used for the landing of aircraft" (2016: 138). In Italian and Spanish, DZ is defined as "zona di lancio" (Busetto 2004: 303) and "zona de lanzamiento" (García de la Cuesta 2003: 125) respectively but, as in example (140), in MOHW dialogues, only the Spanish translator rendered it properly, by explaining the initialism. In Italian, not only the noun 'zone' becomes the synonym *area* [area], but the whole expression is remarkably generalized. The dialogue line in (140) is uttered by Dingo when Dusty joins with Task Force Mako on the battlefield and since they are going to drop by parachute, 'DZ' in Dingo's ironic line refers exactly to that specific zone.

6.(140)	Yeah, well, last time I checked, there's no handicapped parking at the DZ .	Beh, sì, non mi risulta di aver visto un parcheggio per disabili nell' area .	No vi aparcamiento para discapitados en la zona de lanzamiento .
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'LZ' is instead the initialism which occurs in ME3 subcorpus. According to Busetto, the Italian counterpart is "ZAE" (2004: 955) which means "zona atterraggio elicotteri" (2004: 927) while in Spanish it is "zona de aterrizaje de paracaidistas" (García de la Cuesta 2003: 907). In this light, in Spanish the rendition seems to be a short version of the official equivalent, while in Italian it is a suitable solution despite the inaccurate translation of the noun 'zone' into *punto* [point], as in (141).

6.(141)	We're closing in on the LZ , Commander.	Ci avviciniamo al punto d'atterraggio .	Nos acercamos a la zona de aterrizaje , comandante.
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‘ETA’ is an acronym which stands for “estimated time of arrival” and means “the time when a vehicle, group of soldiers, etc., is expected to arrive” (Bowyer 2004: 88). As example (142) shows, in BF4 translators translated the abbreviation by means of explicitation in both TTs due to its specificity and to the absence of an equivalent acronym but, while in Italian the rendition is a neutral and concise *arrivo previsto* [estimated arrival], in Spanish it seems to lose its terminological nature and become a question in layman’s terms, although the correct equivalent actually is “hora prevista de llegada” (García de la Cuesta 2003: 139).

6.(142)	FIREBIRD: Tombstone actual, this is Firebird 2-1. We’re inbound. What’s your ETA ? Over.	FIREBIRD: Caposquadra Tombstone, qui Firebird 2-1. In avvicinamento. Arrivo previsto ? Passo.	FIREBIRD: Oficial Tombstone, aquí Firebird 2-1. Vamos de camino, ¿ cuánto os falta ? Cambio.
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In ME3, as in examples (143) ‘ETA’ becomes *tempo previsto* [estimated time] in Italian which seems the calque of a shorter form of ‘estimated time of arrival’ and *llegamos en* [we will arrive in] which, as happens in the renditions exemplified in (144), do not take into account this acronym’s nature as a term in military language.

6.(143)	Lieutenant-Commander Williams, we’re in sight of the spaceport. ETA : 3 minutes.	Tenente Williams, siamo vicini allo spaziorporto. Tempo previsto : 3 minuti.	Teniente-comandante Williams. Podemos ver el espaciopuerto. Llegamos en 3 minutos.
6.(144)	We’re in deep! Commander, what is your ETA ?	Siamo nei guai! Comandante, quando prevedete di arrivare?	¡Estamos hasta el cuello! Comandante, ¿ cuánto os falta ?

‘FOB’ is an initialism whose full form is “forward operation base” which means “a supply dump (especially of ammunition and fuel) which is located in the battle area” (Bowyer 2004: 99). As Busetto states, the Italian equivalent is “base operative avanzata” (2004: 952). In both Italian and Spanish, this initialism is translated by means of a generalization, since either ‘forward’ or ‘operation’ are omitted and the unit of concept seems to lose its referent, as in (145).

6.(145) There's the **FOB!** La **base operativa!** ¡Ahí está la **base avanzada!**

'IED' is an initialism for "improvised explosive device", meaning "home-made bomb or mine" (Bowyer 2004: 123), "a weapon that is fabricated or emplaced in an unconventional manner incorporating destructive, lethal, noxious, pyrotechnic, or incendiary chemicals designed to kill, destroy, incapacitate, harass, deny mobility, or distract" (US Department of Defense 2016: 108). The Italian explanation is the direct translation "ordigno esplosivo improvvisato" (Ministero della Difesa 2015: online) as well as "dispositivo esplosivo improvvisato" is the Spanish one (Estado Mayor de la Defensa – Centro de Excelencia contra IED 2013: online). As example (146) shows, the initialism is explained in both TLs but the result is a generalization, since both *esplosivo rudimentale* [rudimentary explosive] and *explosivos* [explosives] do not convey the characteristics of IED, even though the Italian adjective *rudimentale* suggests an idea similar to 'improvised'.

6.(146) Watch it! **IED's** are Occhio! C'è dell'**esplosivo** ¡Cuidado! **Explosivos** entre
hidden in rubble. **rudimentale** tra le macerie. los escombros.

KIA is the acronym for "killed in action", that is to say "killed during an engagement" (Bowyer 2004: 136) and belongs to medical terminology used in military setting to classify casualties. In Italian, it means "ucciso in azione" or "caduto" according to Busetto (2004: 464, 955) and "muerto en acción" in Spanish (Rodríguez González 1987).

6.(147) [...] One **KIA** one CAT [...] Una **perdita**, Team [...] Un **muerto**, un CAT
Bravo. Request immediate Bravo. Richiedo trasporto Bravo. Solicito evacuación
medivac. immediato. médica.

As in example (54) and (134), which have been already discussed as regards 'CAT Bravo' and 'medivac' above, 'KIA' is transferred in both TLs by means of generalization: *perdita* [loss, death] and *muerto* [dead person] which make the acronym clear but do not transfer its specialized meaning. Moreover, it seems interesting to note that the specialized expression 'killed in action' occurs in ME3 subcorpus and in the game localizations, "her husband was killed in action" becomes *suo marito è stato ucciso nei combattimenti* [her husband was killed in combat] in Italian and *su marido murió en combate* [her husband died in combat] in Spanish.

Similarly, in ME3 subcorpus there is an instance of ‘MIA’ which means “missing in action” (Bowyer 2004: 157) and refers “to a service-man who has gone during battle” (Bowyer 2004: 159). According to Busetto (2004: 548), its equivalent form is “disperso in azione” while the Spanish counterpart seems to be *desaparecido en combate*, which is exactly the rendition of the occurrence in ME3 dialogue line (148) while in Italian it is a generalization.

6.(148)	Someone in your family is MIA ?	Qualcuno della sua famiglia è disperso ?	¿Alguien de tu familia ha desaparecido en combate ?
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In BF4 dialogues the full form of ‘MIA’ occurs too but, while in Italian it is explained into the equivalent expression *disperso in azione* (Busetto 2004: 548), in Spanish it simply becomes *desaparecido* which, conversely, represents a generalization.

‘PC’ is an initialism for ‘prisoner in custody’, it occurs during MOHW seventh game mission “Hat trick” in which Voodoo, Tick, Dingo and Stump (playable character) must rescue a merchant vessel’s captain from three Somali pirates holding him hostage in a drifting lifeboat. ‘PC’, as in example (149), is explained by means of direct translation in both TLs: *ostaggio* [hostage] in Italian and *prisionero* [prisoner] in Spanish.

6.(149)	Three confirmed kills, Voodoo. PC is secure.	Tre uccisioni certe, Voodoo. Ostaggio al sicuro.	Tres muertes confirmadas, Voodoo. Prisionero a salvo.
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‘ROE’ stands for “rules of engagement” which are “directives issued by competent military authority that delineate the circumstances and limitations under which United States forces will initiate and/or continue combat engagement with other forces encountered” (US Department of Defense 2016: 207) or “a set of rules governing the firing of weapons and use of force by soldiers (especially in peace-keeping and counter-insurgency role)” (Bowyer 2004: 210). In MOHW, ‘R.O.E.’ is explained into the calques “regole d’ingaggio” (Busetto 2004: 751) and “reglas de enfrentamiento” (Ministerio de Defensa 2012: online) in Italian and Spanish respectively; thus, the solutions used in both localizations correspond to the correct expressions mentioned above and the strategy used is explicitation.

TOT means “time on/over target” (Bowyer 2004: 246), which refers to the “time at which aircraft are scheduled to attack/photograph the target” (US Department of the Army 2004: 1-188) and is used in naval gunfire, mortar and close air support. According to Busetto (2004:

879) the Italian equivalent explanation is the direct translation “tempo sul bersaglio” or “ora sull’obiettivo” (2004: 972) while in Spanish Beigbeder Atienza defines it as “hora de llegada al objetivo” (1997: 1431).

6.(150) Firing! **TOT** three seconds! Fuoco! Tre secondi ¡Disparando! ¡**Tiempo objetivo**,
all’**impatto**! tres segundos!

As example (150) illustrates, TOT has been explained in both TLs. Nevertheless, in Spanish, it conveys the idea of a standard expression which combines two nouns, namely *tiempo* [time] and *objetivo* [target], which belong to the acronym. Conversely, in Italian *impatto* [impact] represents the meaning of the acronym, the result of the action implied: thus, it is a considerable generalization which does not convey the specialized meaning of the original term.

Lastly, ‘SOS’ is a widely popular initialism used as “an international distress signal, signifying an urgent request for assistance” (Bowyer 2004: 226) and seems to stand for “save our souls” or “save our ship” (Fioretta 2003: 622). Given the transparency of this abbreviation, it is retained in both TLs.

Conclusions and Further Research

The paragraphs which follow summarize the most relevant conclusions of the analysis of *realia* and *irrealia* present in the corpus purposefully compiled for this research, whose objective was to investigate whether and how the relationship between the real world and the game world, i.e. the degree of realism or fictionality of game contents, affects game translation. The discussion has offered a comparative overview of the different categories of *realia* and *irrealia* and of the translation strategies concerning the three war-themed games titled *Medal of Honor Warfighter* (MOHW), *Battlefield 4* (BF4) and *Mass Effect 3* (ME3), which have been selected in order to simulate a realism-fictionalism spectrum. The analysis has also highlighted the most important features of the corpus as a whole and of the subcorpus each game represents. Although several aspects of the results have been evaluated in the previous chapters, the following paragraphs aim to highlight the main contributions of this research to the field of Game Localization from the perspective of Translation Studies. For these purposes, given the variety of *realia* and *irrealia* examined, and given the consequent diversity of translational approaches and strategies needed, it seems more appropriate to read data and interpret findings thematically. In other words, conclusions will be drawn with respect to the areas of interface between reality and fictionality of game worlds' dimensions.

Nevertheless, the interpretation of the main findings of the analysis of *realia* and *irrealia* should not neglect the limitations and the delimitations of the present work mainly due to its experimental approach. Indeed, the objectives and the scope of this research have constrained, on the one hand, the purposeful selection of the games to include in the corpus and, on the other hand, the size and the nature of the corpus itself. For example, as regards the text type chosen for the investigation, both the linguistic and translational features of video games' fictional dialogues, and the characteristics of subtitling and dubbing in game translation have been deliberately excluded from the analysis partly because of the existence of an extensive literature especially on the latter, and partly in order to not extend the boundaries of the present research beyond its purposes. Conversely, the limited amount of prior studies on the GL specific subject selected here has suggested adopting the interdisciplinary methodological approach described in Chapter 2: its exploratory nature has disclosed a heterogeneity of linguistic phenomena which provide several possible avenues for more in-depth studies on every single category of *realia* and *irrealia*.

From the perspective of culturalization, findings support Edward's (2012) concept of "contextual proximity" and underline its connection to reality, even when the latter is extended in science-fiction games. The two first-person shooters included in the corpus, namely MOHW and BF4, have raised cultural issues and aroused national and international controversy to the point of being banned in different locales because of their verisimilar and believable war settings which place their game worlds in close contextual proximity with the real world. This exemplifies how cultural sensitivity may have a direct impact on international distribution and, consequently, on sales at a global level, given the market-driven nature of the game industry, and especially the economic contribution of localization to total revenues.

In the case of *Medal of Honor Warfighter*, as illustrated in Section 3.1, it was the developers' strive for realism and authenticity that caused the great backlash against this title. The US Navy SEALs who were hired as consultants by Danger Close to write the storyline were charged with violation of orders, misuse of command gear, dereliction of duty and disclosure of classified material. After very harsh criticism, Electronic Arts had to disable the links to the websites of the manufacturers of the weapons and equipment featured in the game and promoted on MOHW website. Moreover, the Pakistani government banned the game for portraying their country and their people as terrorists supporting Al Qaeda.

Battlefield 4, as explored in Section 4.1, despite its fictional geopolitical scenario, due to its Americans-versus-communists plot, faced a considerable backlash and censure from the Chinese government and, given the extent of Chinese game market (see NewZoo 2016b), it presumably caused heavy profit losses to the game's publisher.

Even *Mass Effect 3*, whose science-fiction imaginary universe is not in close proximity to the real world, at least as compared to MOHW and BF4, as discussed in Section 5.1, may raise cultural issues due to its humano-centric perspective, when interpreted as a virtual laboratory to experiment with reality. Indeed, backlash against this title was mostly concerned with genre issues, and no game contents turned out to be contentious to the point of causing a local boycott or ban. However, the cultural and sociopolitical representation of fictional races has drawn the attention of several scholars who, beyond the seemingly apolitical futuristic scenario, read ME3 contents as vehicles of ideologies such as racist, patriarchal and imperial American multiculturalism. This, through rule-based representations and interactions, may have had a unique persuasive power over players.

Furthermore, findings allow to draw some conclusions with respect to the non-verbal relationship between realism and fictionality. As multimodal and multimedial audiovisual products, video games' non-verbal references are countless: every piece of content might be interpreted as a reference. Contents relate to reality or irreality continuously and through every kind of meaning-making modes. This study has briefly outlined the most pertinent references made via semiotic channels other than language in game texts and, in more detail, the non-verbal items which are linked to the categories of *realia* and *irrealia* under scrutiny. A wider examination of all areas of interface of visual and acoustic nature would have required analytical tools which are beyond the realm of TS. Nevertheless, the corpus has shown many and diverse points of contact between non-verbal and verbal references within the realism-fictionality continuum of war video games.

In *Medal of Honor Warfighter*, as discussed in Section 3.3.1, non-verbal references to reality are made visually through the physical design of some characters: Preacher, for example, is based on his voice actor. Non-verbal references may be also culture-specific: Dusty wears a backwards cap which reads 'FDNY' and the Cleric seems to be a fictional stand-in of Osama bin Laden. Moreover, reality serves as a conceptual source of inspiration for characterization: Voodoo and Dusty are based on two of the Special Forces operators who worked as consultants for MOHW developers. The non-verbal relationship between the real world and MOHW game world is also expressed in the game's audio assets through a special type of intertextuality: the warrior-inspired theme song of the soundtrack derives from the collaboration between the developer and the US rock band Linkin Park, whose official video features a sort of synopsis of MOHW story.

In *Battlefield 4*, non-verbal references include the intertextual relation between some characters' design, namely William Dunn and Roland Garrison, and war film actors in terms of both physical appearance and personality.

In *Mass Effect 3*, non-verbal references to the real world are made visually by the physical design of Commander Shepard, Liara T'Soni, Miranda Lawson, and Jeff Moreau, but other characters are conceptually inspired by other types of realities: for example, the Illusive man intertextually refers to the concept of *The X-Files*' Cigarette Smoking Man. Non-verbal references in ME3 also include culture-specific areas of interface with Canada, the homeland of the game's developers. References to Canadian identity, ranging from images of Canadian cities to Canadian actors' vocal performances, purposefully made when the series has achieved

global popularity, are interpreted as connections aimed to represent Canadianness as a model for cosmopolitan world-views in video games which are generally overtly American.

With respect to the single categories of *realia* and *irrealia*, findings show different translation tendencies in the transfer from English into Italian and Spanish.

Given the role of the player as both protagonist and story-teller in game worlds' narratives, individual references in game localization seem to be very important since characters' names are the linguistic means which express the complex network of interrelationships between the player's avatar and non-playable characters. Moreover, naming in game design may serve many purposes, especially when names are created to convey meaning. As mentioned in Section 2.5, since characters' names belong to the game-world specific terminology, they are usually kept unaltered in translation. Moreover, the general tendency towards retention seems to perpetuate itself due to the constraints posed by the status of many video games, like those composing the corpus, as titles of long-running game series: a body of terms establishes itself as specific to game franchises and terminological consistency is *de rigueur*. This is the reason why localization vendors and publishers compile game-specific glossaries which, however, do not seem to provide a faithful picture of the challenges which translators face, especially in terms of the relationship between realism and fictionality.

In *Medal of Honor Warfighter*, individual references are mostly codenames and nicknames and findings show a general tendency towards retention in both TLs. This strategy accounts for 95% and 93% of all renditions in Italian and Spanish respectively. Direct translation, which represents 4% and 5% of Italian and Spanish instances respectively, is only used to make explicit the sense of nicknames such as 'the Cleric' and 'the Engineer' and, only in Spanish, the codename of a minor NPC. Nevertheless, the use of retention in MOHW exemplifies how the implicit meaning of characters' names may be lost in translation. As discussed in Section 3.3.1, 'Preacher' and 'Mother' refer to some aspects of the personality of these soldiers and while SL players can perceive and enjoy the irony behind these codenames quite easily, it seems very unlikely for TLs players to appreciate the original wordplay.

In *Battlefield 4*, individual references include names, surnames and nicknames, the latter mostly result from characters' surname abbreviations, as explored in Section 4.3.1. Moreover, many names are cultural markers which highlight the multicultural nature of BF4 game world population: 'Pakowski' relates to Pac's Polish origin and there are many Chinese names and surnames, such as 'Huang', 'Chang', 'Jin Jié', etc., together with Eastern names and surnames

like ‘Laszlo’, ‘Dimitri’, ‘Kovic’ and ‘Mayakovsky’. Retention accounts for 97% and 98% of all renditions in Italian and Spanish respectively. Direct translation (2%) is indeed used only to transfer category names of speaker characters which are not proper names. There are also some instances of omission or explicitation by means of addition (1% in Italian), i.e. the proper name is added in the TT. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that transcreation is used when names serve humor purposes: in Italian, it affects the transfer of a name which was creatively reinterpreted to be hilarious in the SL; in Spanish, transcreation is adopted to play on culture-specific stereotypical names. Although there are only a very few instances of transcreation, their relevance points to the need for further research on the relationship between names, humor and culture. In BF4, however, the remarkable use of retention provides other examples of translation loss concerning appellations. Like ‘Preacher’ and ‘Mother’ in MOHW, ‘Irish’ is a meaningful nickname which contains a culture-specific reference. With no compensation strategies, it is very unlikely that players can access the popular belief about the legendary luck of Irish people which is implicit in this nickname.

In *Mass Effect 3*, as explored in Section 5.3.1, individual references mostly include names, surnames and nicknames and retention represents 88% and 91% of all instances in Italian and Spanish respectively. Findings show that the difference lies in the higher number of omissions (4%) of character’s proper names in the Italian TT as opposed to only 1% in Spanish. Indeed, both TLs render the same individual references by direct translation (8%). In particular, the latter strategy is used to transfer ‘Illusive Man’ which is the meaningful nickname of the main antagonist, to keep the biblical reference behind the female krogan’s name ‘Eve’, and to maintain the acronym nature of the artificial intelligence character’s name ‘EDI’. As regards retention, moreover, it seems important to underline that this strategy in ME3 does not limit the transmission of meaningful proper names. On the contrary, it allows translators to be faithful to the messages authors aim to convey by means of references in characters’ names: the protagonist’s last name is a homage to the astronaut Alan Shepard; the nickname of the Normandy’s pilot Jeff ‘Joker’ Moreau refers to his wisecracking character and possibly to Batman franchise fictional supervillain of the same name; Ashley Williams’ first name refers to a horror film character of the same name and her middle name to the title of a poem, which represent two intertextual references; the surnames of James Vega, Steve Cortez and Kai Leng are cultural markers which identify the Hispanic American and the Chinese cultures these characters represent.

In war-themed video games collective references are another special type of *irrealia* which may be military language-related designations or inventive names for fictional races' groups. As outlined in Section 3.3.2, task forces' names in *Medal of Honor Warfighter*, and consequently soldiers' call signs are always retained in both TLs (97%), except for a few instances of omission in Italian and direct translation in Spanish (3%).

In *Battlefield 4*, collective references are made to the principal team of US soldiers, namely Tombstone, which identifies both the whole group and single operatives in call signs. As explored in Section 4.3.2, the totality of this name's occurrences is translated by means of retention in Italian and Spanish.

In *Mass Effect 3* (Section 5.3.2), the proper names of race-specific or multiracial gangs, clans and mercenary groups are either retained (48%) or directly translated (52%): the latter strategy explains the meaning of their appellations in both TLs which may refer to a specific feature of their design, as in the case of 'Blue Suns', or their aggressive nature, as in the cases of 'Blood Pack'. Nevertheless, the greater general tendency towards retention in Italian (80%) as opposed to direct translation in Spanish (83%) can be observed also in the transfer of collective references, as the instances of 'Hammer' and 'Sword' testify to.

The spatial dimension of war video games seems to be the one which best represents the relationship between the real world and the game world since the degree of realism or fictionality of video games' geographical setting is immediately accessible, especially non-verbally. In *realia*, geographical references in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* and *Battlefield 4* dialogues do not provide remarkable phenomena neither quantitatively or qualitatively. All the instances are directly translated into the TLs' conventional counterparts. Most real-world toponyms are well-known place names of cities, countries, geographical areas, amongst others, and it is possible to speculate that their transfer is almost automatic from English into Italian and Spanish. Conversely, some of them are more specific or less famous, such as Dubai's streets in MOHW, and they may require the translator to use his/her research skills. Nevertheless, from a cultural perspective, geographical references in BF4 have shown that loaded meaning may hide behind some place names when they are used with a humorous effect, as in the case of 'Sweden', or to refer to the city-country dichotomy within US culture, as in the case of 'Carolina boy', as explored in Section 4.4.1.

Conversely, as *irrealia*, the places referred to in dialogues do not exist and fictional toponyms are completely imaginative. ME3 geographical references are mostly retained: 61%

of all instances in both TLs. Other strategies include direct translation (34% in Italian and 39% in Spanish) and specification, the latter is adopted only in Italian and means the use of a hyponym. As discussed in Section 5.3.3, unreal toponyms in ME3 resulted from a completely random naming process. Quite a few of them are meaningful. The sense the SL item aims to convey may be explained only through direct translation, as in the cases of the space stronghold ‘Citadel’, the ‘Perseus Veil’ nebula and the krogans’ afterlife destination named ‘the Void’. Other toponyms of metaludic origin, such as the ‘Huerta Memorial Hospital’, are instead retained due to constraint posed by the proper name contained in the noun phrase which is specific to ME game-world terminology.

The environmental dimension of game worlds is one of the most fascinating facets of these multifaceted representational artefacts known as video games. The hybrid nature of the multimedia interactive entertainment industry (Consalvo 2006) is mirrored in the multicultural game worlds distributed globally thanks to localization. Given the complex nature, role and meaning of culture in video games, this study has focused only on the linguistic elements in dialogues which serve as references to the cultures inhabiting the game world. The translation of nationality adjectives and nouns might be interpreted as a trivial issue. Indeed, within *realia*, ethnic references usually pose little, if any, translation challenge. Nevertheless, as findings have shown, nationality adjectives and nouns may provide interesting phenomena to analyze from the perspective of GL, given their close connection to real cultures.

In *Medal of Honor Warfighter*, as explored in Section 3.4.2, almost all ethnic references are directly translated into the TLs’ equivalent nationality adjectives or nouns, which represent 84% and 92% of all instances. The only exception is the Filipino Islamist separatist group ‘ASG’ which is retained in both Italian and Spanish (8%). More relevantly, as discussed in Section 4.4.2, like some of BF4 proper nouns based on culture-specificity and used as humor devices, some instances of ethnic references are culturally loaded. Indeed, 80% and 75% of all renditions are direct translations in Italian and Spanish respectively, and 5% of both TLs solutions are transcreated. In Spanish, transcreation is used to recreate the ironic and somehow derogatory effect of ‘American’ when used in a dialogue lined uttered by a Russian character. In Italian, transcreation is adopted to translate the English slang form ‘ruski’ for ‘Russian’ and the result becomes a politically loaded and stereotypical noun like *compagno* [comrade].

Moreover, the representation of real-world cultures is also linguistic, i.e. game texts contain instances of languages other than English, and this serves a characterization purpose in

the design of “foreign” characters, i.e. characters whose culture is not Anglophone. In *Medal of Honor Warfighter*, for the sake of realism, audio localization involved native speaker dialect coaches to record dialogue lines in languages other than English and native speaker translators to render them into the subtitles of the game’s ST. Indeed, foreign languages in MOHW are represented only in audio assets and a very few words of foreign origin occur in dialogues. In *Battlefield 4*, on the contrary, findings show some Russian words occurring in dialogues which contribute to linguistically portray the Russian character. Multilingualism and cultural identity representation, especially when related to existing cultures, provide a mine of areas for further research in game localization, especially if we consider the increasingly multicultural game worlds multimedia interactive entertainment software offers to players.

When they belong to *irrealia*, ethnic references are proper names of fictional races in ME3, as analyzed in Section 5.3.4. Retention covers 53% of all instances in both TLs but while in Italian fictional cultures’ appellations are completely retained and even capitalized when nouns refer to whole races, which is not standard Italian, in Spanish retention may also include many slight orthographic adaptations, such as *salariano* for ‘salarian’, *quariano* for ‘quarian’, *proteano* for ‘Prothean’. Direct translation is instead used to allow target players to enjoy meaningful names of species, such as ‘harvesters’, ‘collectors’ and ‘brutes’. It is also appropriately used to explain the meaning behind the way some races refer to other races due to special relations among them: for example, ‘Old Machines’ and ‘creators’ are the names used by the geth to refer to the Reapers and to the quarians respectively. Nevertheless, while in Spanish direct translation is commonly used (45%), in Italian this strategy represents only 17% of all instances due to a very creative approach of Italian translators in the transfer of frequently occurring species’ names. Indeed, although expressive renditions are found in both TLs, as in the case of ‘Enkindlers’ which is the name used by the hanar people to refer to the Prothean, transcreations represent 39% of Italian ethnic references since creativity is used to translate ‘Reapers’, and also ‘husks’ and ‘thresher maws’.

The peoples that inhabit the game worlds of the corpus are organized in highly structured societies. Within *realia*, the names of the sociopolitical entities mentioned in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* and *Battlefield 4* dialogues refer to many institutions specific to the real-world cultures. As illustrated in Section 3.4.3, in MOHW retention cover 50% of all instances in Italian, since only the ‘Navy’ is directly translated (20%) and the ‘Capitol’ is correctly rendered into a hypernym (30%). In Spanish, on the contrary, direct translation represents 60% of all

occurrences in MOHW and includes both calques and official equivalents. In *Battlefield 4*, as explored in Section 4.4.3, most of sociopolitical references are made to well-known institutions whose names are retained in both TLs: 80% of Italian instances and 90% of Spanish instances, the difference lies in the Italian omission of 10% of sociopolitical names. Interestingly, 10% in both TLs is represented by the generalization of a US culture-specific military title which, however, represents a functional solution.

Sociopolitical references which fall into the category of *irrealia* are only found in *Mass Effect 3* and they are mostly transferred by means of direct translation: 54% in Italian, 58% in Spanish. This seems to depend on the possibility of relying on TLs' counterparts whose meaning clarifies the function of fictional institutions, especially if we consider that most names of fictional sociopolitical entities are proper names only in the game world. Indeed, as discussed in Section 5.3.5, in the real world, 'alliance', 'council', 'councilor', 'defense committee', and others are common nouns and as such, they can be easily made accessible by direct translation. Conversely, retention is used only to keep the Latin charm of 'Cerberus' and to adhere to the internationally known Navy soldier named 'marine'. Due to the high number of occurrences of 'Cerberus', retention accounts for 41% of strategies in both TLs. Moreover, only one creative solution is found in Italian to transfer institutions whose SL name derives from creative word-formation processes: in the cases of 'Spectre' and 'C-Sec', the latter is indeed transcreated into Italian into an initialism which perfectly fits the typical linguistic nature of organizations' names.

The environmental dimension of the game worlds in the corpus also includes all the artefacts which have been created by the cultures populating them. First, it seems worth underlining that no instances of irreal artefacts are found in *Medal of Honor Warfighter*; two instances of irreal artefact are found in *Battlefield 4*; dozens of instances of irreal artefacts are found in *Mass Effect 3*. This seems to suggest that the increasing degree of fictionality of war video games may influence the quantity, and the quality, of objects made by cultures for warfare purposes. Moreover, this research has focused only on dialogues while artefacts' names mainly occur in other text types which represent potential avenues for future research on this type of *realia* and *irrealia*.

Within *irrealia*, artefactual references are varied and present different translation strategies. In *Battlefield 4*, for example, fictional vehicles include two proper names and retention represents 100% of their renditions in both TLs which, however, seems to reduce their

suggestive function: their names are both of mythological inspiration, as argued in Section 4.3.3.

Conversely, in *Mass Effect 3*, a distinction must be made between different types of artefacts, namely vehicles, weapons and equipment. When dealing with vehicles, retention is used in both TLs to transfer the proper names of infantry vehicles which are identified through letters and numbers, as usually happens in military naming. Direct translation is adopted in both TLs for names of fictional vehicles which are common nouns outside the game world and which refer to common types of military vehicles: like fictional institutions, TLs equivalents allow players to understand the referents despite their futuristic nature. A direct equivalent is also offered to clarify a meaningful name, as in the case of ‘Harbinger’. Different strategies, namely retention in Italian and direct translation in Spanish, are adopted for the names of prominent vehicles, such as the Normandy and the Sovereign. Creative renditions are provided in both TTs when translators deal with a neologism which represents a compound whose meaning is connected to its function: ‘liveship’ is transcreated into *nave-serra* and *econave* in Italian and Spanish respectively. As regards the second group of fictional artefacts, retention is mainly used in both TTs to transfer the proper names which serve as the heads of noun phrases and which linguistically distinguish those weapons from real-world counterparts, whose name is a common noun, such as ‘Thanix missile’, ‘Hades cannon’ and, in Italian only, ‘flashbang grenade’. Transcreation affects the Italian rendition of the most important fictional weapon, namely the ‘Crucible’, into a neologism which, however, results from the calque of the SL item. In the transfer of artefacts which belong to equipment, SL inventive names which derive from compounding such as ‘medi-gel’, ‘omni-tool’ and ‘NavPoint’ are retained or transcreated in Italian. Proper names which derive from the function of the referent and which are common nouns outside the game world, such as ‘Catalyst’ and ‘Conduit’, are directly translated in Italian. In Spanish, however, there is a higher tendency towards direct translation: only ‘medi-gel’ is retained and ‘NavPoint’ is explained by means of explicitation.

Beyond different approaches adopted to deal with different types of artefacts, as illustrated above, from a wider perspective, more general quantitative data about tendencies seem to be worth mentioning with respect to TL-specific translational behavior. For example, while in Italian retention and direct translation account for 35% and 56% respectively, in Spanish these strategies represent 9% and 80% of all renditions. In both languages transcreation is used to transfer 8% of artefactual references. Other strategies used by translators are

generalization in Italian (1%) and omission and explicitation in Spanish, representing 1% and 2% of the solutions in this TL. The main quantitative difference, accordingly, lies in the different use of direct translation and retention, which seem to be TL-specific general approaches in Spanish and Italian respectively.

Within *realia*, artefactual references fall into the complex phenomenon of military language, the LSP which allows soldiers to communicate with accuracy, brevity and clarity, and which ranges from highly sanitized terminology to informal expressions. This study has focused only on some of the manifold linguistic events occurring in this domain and findings have shown the great extent of potential topics for further research. For example, all manifestations of military slang provide countless topics for future studies. With respect to categories of artefacts such as vehicles, weapons and equipment, and with special attention to proper names only, as explored in Section 6.2, the analysis has highlighted a general tendency towards retention in both TLs (90% in Italian and 64% in Spanish) due to the influence English military language has on the two national LSPs. Moreover, other translation strategies are chosen to transfer very short forms of names such as acronyms and initialisms. For example, explicitation accounts for 6% and 28% of instances in Italian and Spanish respectively. This strategy departs from the concise form of the SL item and provides a full form equivalent in the TL which clarifies its meaning which, however, is not always as accurate as the original or may be even misleading, as in the case of *lanzacohete* for ‘RPG’ in Spanish. Omission (4% in Italian and 2% in Spanish) is another strategy both TLs’ translators used to deal with acronyms and initialisms referring to artefacts, probably due to the opaque nature of some names or to their culture-specificity, like ‘MRE’.

As examined in Section 6.3, translation strategies for military titles show a general tendency towards direct translation in both Italian (86%) and Spanish (93%) when ranks are not culture-specific. On the contrary, titles like ‘lieutenant’, ‘lieutenant-commander’, ‘staff sergeant’ are usually transferred by means of generalization, which represents 6% and 9% of all renditions in Italian and Spanish respectively. Moreover, in Italian omission affects 4% of military ranks: only the surnames of soldiers are transferred in this TL and this seems to reduce the highly hierarchical nature of forms of address in military contexts.

The role of English as a *lingua franca* in international war settings is exemplified by the remarkable tendency towards retention in both Italian (92%) and Spanish (68%) in the transfer of those code words identifying letters of the military phonetic alphabet, which allow soldiers

to clearly and directly communicate military conceptual units, as explored in Section 6.5. The difference between the two TLs depends on the more frequent use of explicitation in Spanish: 22% as opposed to 8% of Italian instances, which aim at conveying the meaning of these terms and substitute expressions such as ‘Lima Charlie’ and ‘mike mike’, or single code words like ‘mike’, with equivalent military expressions or single terms.

Radio communication, conversely, is a TL-specific military phenomenon including a set of formulae and proverbs which follow a standard message format. Accordingly, as the analysis in Section 6.6 has demonstrated, SL radio communication procedures are directly translated into TLs’ equivalent procedures: direct translation represents 96% and 97% of all instances in Italian and Spanish respectively.

Findings in Chapter 6 have highlighted a remarkable number of abbreviations in almost all military linguistic phenomena since brevity is a key element in communications between soldiers. As examined in more detail in Section 6.7, some short forms are standardized; others are informal expressions representing military slang. In both cases, however, translation may be very challenging: the most essential feature of these terms, namely brevity, is very difficult, if not impossible, to render and when it combines with informal jargon, faithfulness to both levels seems to be unworkable. Indeed, explicitation accounts for 51% and 73% of strategies used in Italian and Spanish respectively and it represents the most suitable approach to allow players to understand such SL-specific terms. Indeed, only a small amount of abbreviations is translated by retention (6% in Italian, 4% in Spanish). Another group of frequent solutions is that of generalization (43% in Italian, 19% in Spanish) which focus on meaning but, more or less inevitably, produces a rendering with little or no military specialization.

Another group of references analyzed in this study concerns the relationships each game world’s texts can build up to other texts, namely intratextual metaludic references, which are interpreted as *irrealia*, and intertextual references, which are interpreted as *realia*.

Intratextuality in *Medal of Honor Warfighter*, as explored in Section 3.3.3, contributes to the rhetorical tribute paid to the US Special Forces operators and exemplifies the strong sense of camaraderie between soldiers. The only instance found in MOHW subcorpus is transferred by means of retention, given the constraint posed by the series’ official terminology. However, from a linguistic perspective, ‘Rabbit’ is a codename which carries an ironic implicit meaning which is unlikely to be accessible to TLs players.

In *Battlefield 4*, as discussed in Section 4.3.4, the scope of intratextual metaludic references is broadened since they are made to gaming-related expressions which testify to how the language of gaming is currently part of English. Borrowings have become idioms whose translation may be very challenging, if the objective is to keep the idiomatic nature and the gaming-related nature of the expression at the same time.

In *Mass Effect 3*, as mentioned above and examined in Section 5.3.7, intratextual metaludic references include the proper names of two sociopolitical institutions of ME universe which occur in noun phrases containing a common noun too. As usually happens in these cases of appellations, the common noun is directly translated and this disambiguates the expression while the proper name is retained, since it belongs to the game world-specific terminology.

Like intratextuality, intertextual references in *Medal of Honor Warfighter* are used as a rhetorical device to enhance the tribute to the US Special Forces deployed overseas. Intertextuality translates into two very meaningful quotations made at the beginning and at the end of the game experience. As argued in Section 3.4.4, the first quotation comes from a speech given by John F. Kennedy and, out of its original context, it is used to contribute to the images of sacrifice, heroism and patriotism US warfighters represent. The second quotation is from Stacey Freiwald, the widow of a Navy SEAL killed in action in Afghanistan. She represents the personal (and gendered) perspective on the consequences military service has for families in the homeland. The objective of the translation of these passages, which might require translators the use of their research skills, is to recreate the original effect and render the mythical representation of US soldiers in the TLs. The US culture values and beliefs related to the heroic military role and the extraordinary nature of US soldiers must be conveyed by paying special attention to some key words; thus, rhetorical and literary writing skills are paramount.

In *Battlefield 4*, as discussed in Section 4.4.4, intertextuality takes place when references are made to pieces of music: the first one is part of the game's soundtrack, as mentioned above, and is simply referred to in dialogues as 'song', which determines its predominantly non-verbal nature. The second one is instead made to a US culture-specific marching song, namely 'Dixie', the *de facto* national anthem of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War. Although this reference is correctly retained in both TLs, the translation of the co-text in Italian does not help players to easily access the referent.

In *Mass Effect 3*, as examined in Section 5.4.3, intertextual references are made through the human female character and poetry-loving Ashley Williams. First, her name and nickname

‘Ash’, as already mentioned, refer to the famous namesake character of the American film horror franchise *Evil Dead* (1981 – Present), while her middle name ‘Madeline’ refers to Alfred Tennyson’s 1830 namesake poem. Secondly, she quotes a whole stanza of William Ernest Henley’s 1888 poem titled ‘Invictus’ and Commander Shepard tries to encourage her before the final fight against the Reapers and quotes some lines of another poem written by Tennyson. In translation, while her name, nickname and middle name are all retained, it is possible to speculate that translators had recourse to their research skills to transfer the quotations and, when a TL version was not accessible, to their literary writing skills. However, it seems that in Italian the translator decided to rely on the ready-made solution provided by the poem’s translation as quoted in a famous movie.

With respect to the main hypotheses this research aimed to prove, findings seem to confirm that the different degree of realism or fictionality of game contents quantitatively and qualitatively influences translatable assets in game localization. It affects the scope and the types of challenges translators have to face. Different strategies are thus required to transfer the game experience as envisioned by developers. In turn, different skills may be needed for different game worlds and even for different dimensions of the same game world. Nevertheless, on the one hand, despite the implications due to the subgenre-specific characteristics, war-themed video game texts share a number of linguistic aspects which mainly fall into military language phenomena and highlight the importance of domain-specific knowledge based on research and terminological management. On the other hand, war-themed video games texts may present unique linguistic aspects which seem to be closely connected to the realistic or unrealistic nature of single dimensions of their game worlds. In sum, in game localization and translation manifold challenges and issues may emerge where language meets real or unreal cultures. In this light, *realia* and *irrealia* may open up new avenues of research which will help define the role of culture-related references in video games’ texts from different angles and perspectives.

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Grand Theft Auto series (Rockstar Games 1997 - Present)

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Oxo (Alexander S. Douglas 1952)

Pac-Man (Namco 1980)

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Spacewar (Steve Russel 1962)

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Tennis for Two (William Higinbotham 1958)

Ultima Online (Electronic Arts 1997 – Present)

World Of Warcraft (Blizzard Entertainment 2004 – Present)

Zero Wing (Toaplam 1991)

Appendix A – Chapter 3 Tables and Figures

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Playable character						
Thomas “Preacher” Walker	328	58	57	56		
“P”	10	2	3	2	retention	retention
“Preach”	6	1	1	3		
Kyle “Stump” Hendrix	261	47	46	44	retention	retention
“Argyrus”	1	1	1	1	retention	retention
Non-playable characters						
Helpers						
“Voodoo”	192	45	44	45	retention	retention
“Dusty”	124	31	31	30	retention	retention
“Mother”	119	23	23	22	retention	retention
“Dingo”	63	4	4	4	retention	retention
“Tick”	29	4	4	4	retention	retention
“Tiger 12”	21	3	3	3	retention	direct translation
Villains						
Hassan Rasheed	33	11	11	11	retention	retention
“the Cleric”	25	12	12	12	direct translation	direct translation
Stovan Botic	34	6	6	6	retention	retention
“the Engineer”	5	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
“mohandes”	1	1	1	1	retention	retention
Sad al Din	19	3	3	3	retention	retention
Other characters						
Ajab	36	3	3	3	retention	retention
Greko	24	5	5	5	retention	retention
Kaysana	6	3	3	3	retention	retention
Bella	5	1	1	1	retention	retention
Wright	5	1	1	1	retention	retention
Diabel	4	2	2	2	retention	retention

Kaska	4	2	2	2	retention	retention
Lena	4	1	1	1	retention	retention
Maniek	4	1	1	1	retention	retention
Zuku	2	1	1	1	retention	retention
Szczuply	1	1	1	1	retention	retention
“Rabbit”	1	1	1	1	retention	retention

Table 4. *Medal of Honor Warfighter* irrealia: individual references

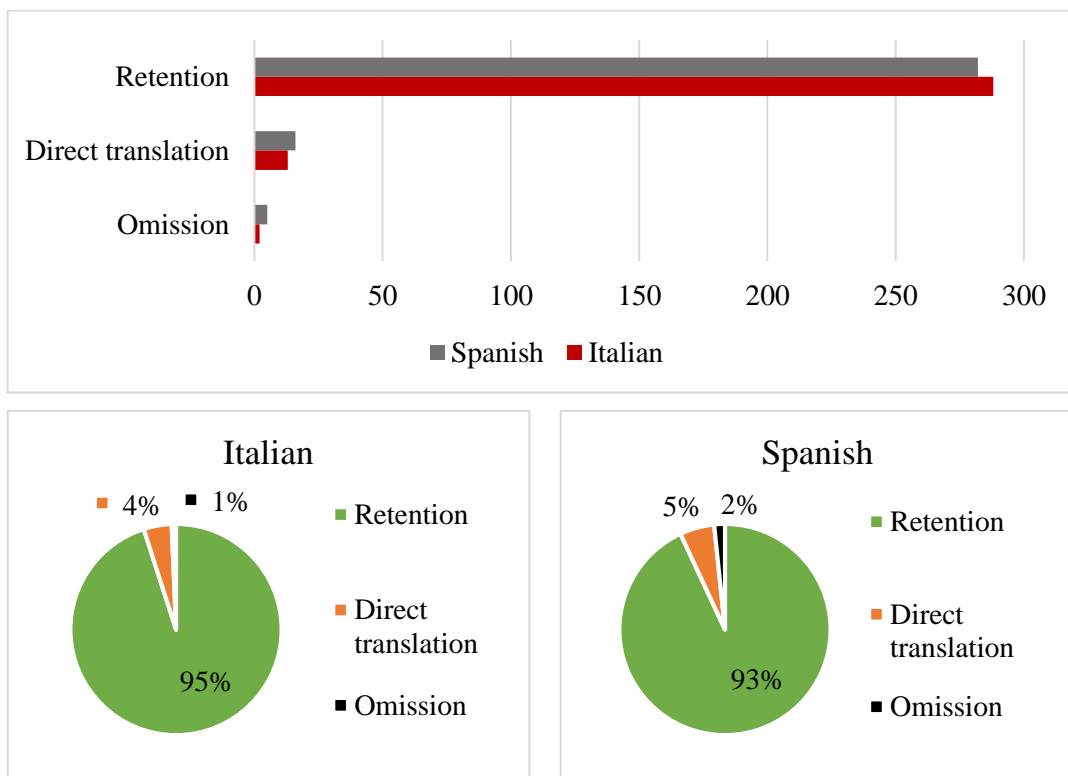


Figure 5. Translation strategies for *Medal of Honor Warfighter* irrealia: individual references



Figure 6. *Medal of Honor Warfighter* Preacher's physical resemblance to voice actor Christian Mortensen

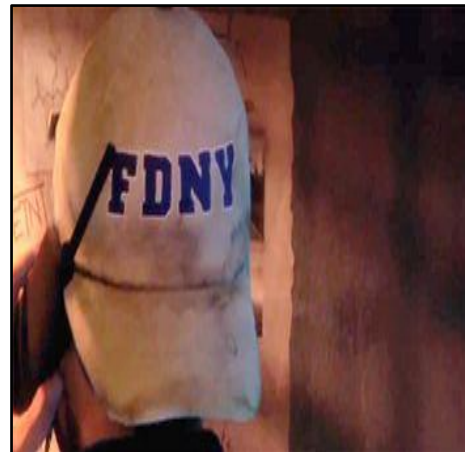


Figure 7. *Medal of Honor Warfighter* Dusty's physical appearance

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Mako	95	25	24	25	retention	retention
Grizzly	26	6	6	6	retention	retention
Blackbird	3	1	1	1	retention	direct translation
Atlas	1	0	0	0	retention	retention

Table 5. *Medal of Honor Warfighter* irrealia: collective references

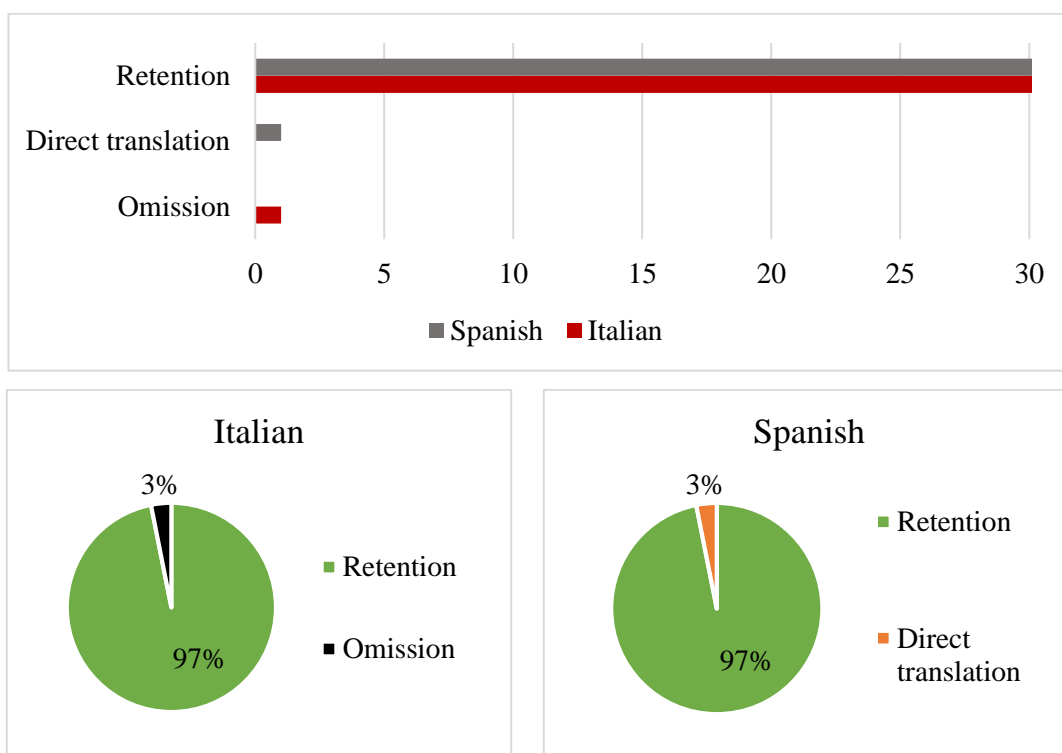


Figure 8. Translation strategies for *Medal of Honor Warfighter* irrealia: collective references

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
US	12	3	1	3	direct translation	direct translation
American	10	3	5	3		
ASG	9	1	1	1	retention	retention
Pakistani	3	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
jihadi	1	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
Bosnian	1	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
German	1	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
Russian	4	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
Serb	1	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation

Table 6. *Medal of Honor Warfighter* realia: ethnic references

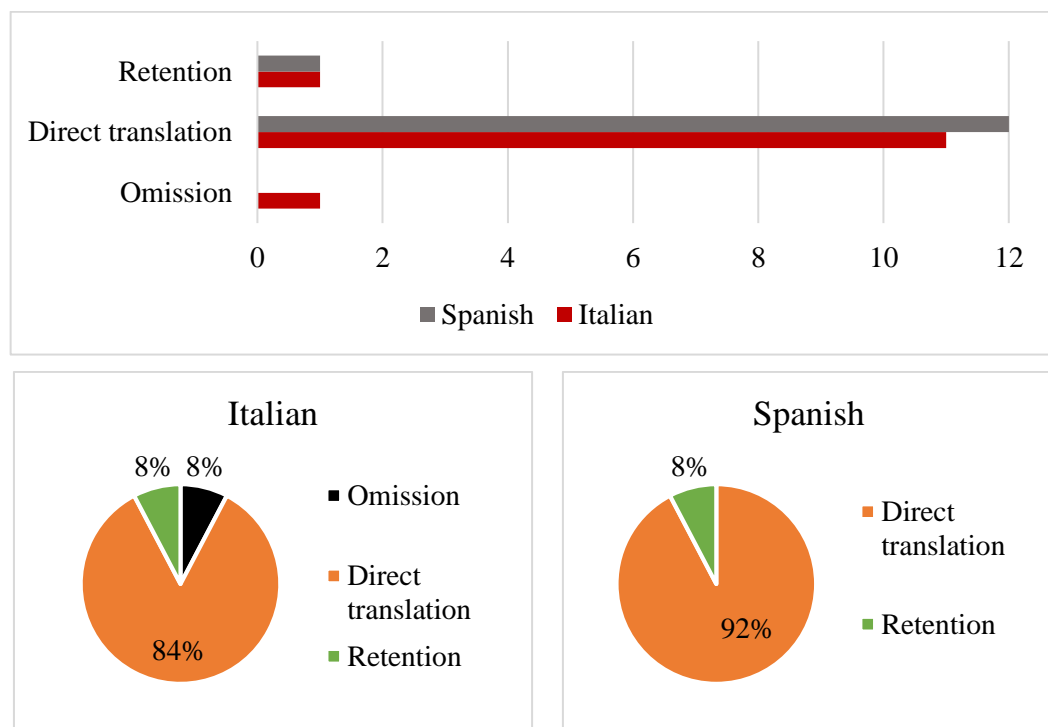


Figure 9. Translation strategies for *Medal of Honor Warfighter* realia: ethnic references

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Capitol	18	3	3	3	generalization	direct translation
OGA	8	1	1	1	retention	retention
Langley	2	1	1	1		
ISI	7	2	2	2	retention	retention
(US) Navy	3	2	2	2	direct translation	direct translation
NATO	2	1	1	1	retention	direct translation

Table 7. *Medal of Honor Warfighter* realia: sociopolitical references

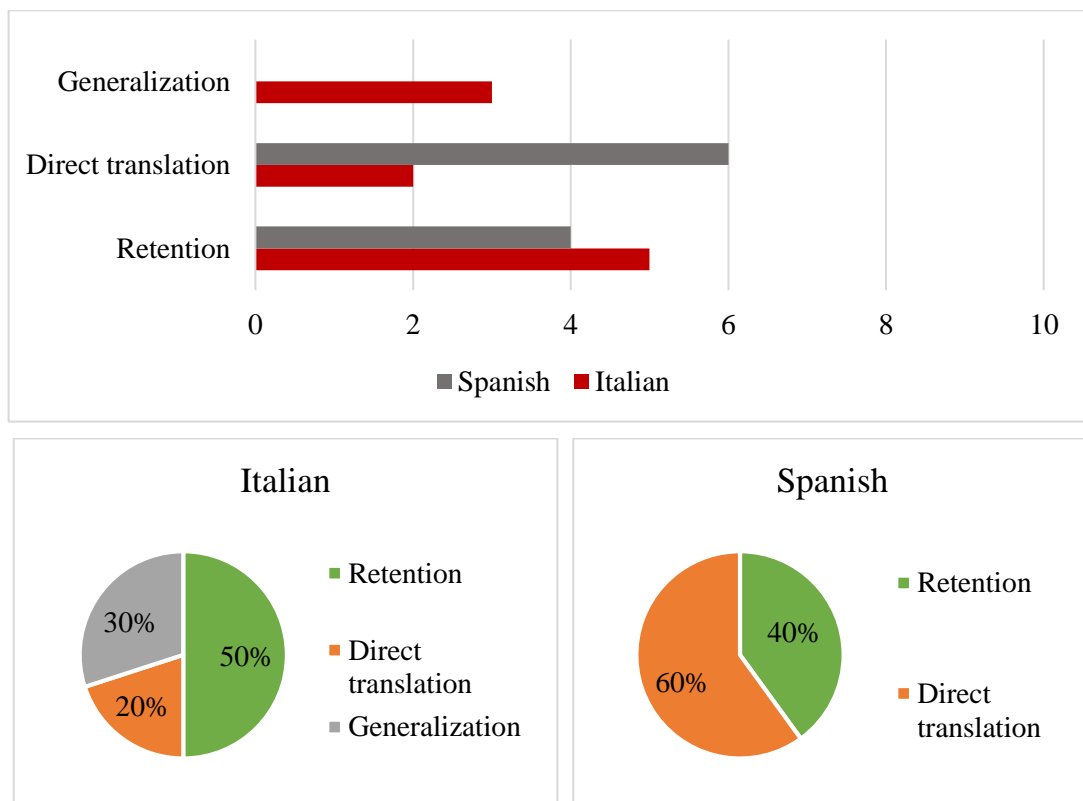


Figure 10. Translation strategies for *Medal of Honor Warfighter* realia: sociopolitical references

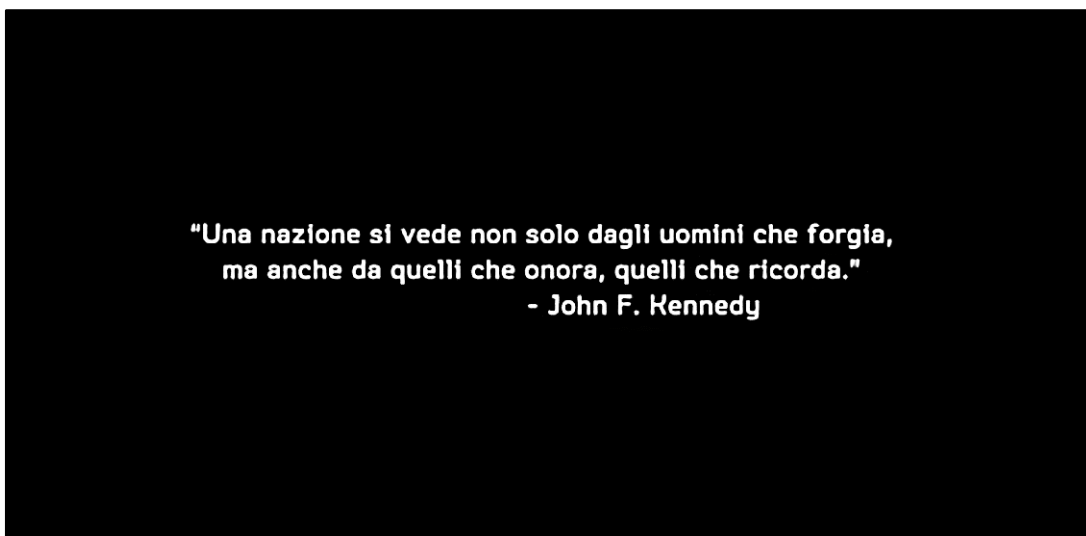


Figure 11. *Medal of Honor Warfighter* John F. Kennedy's quotation

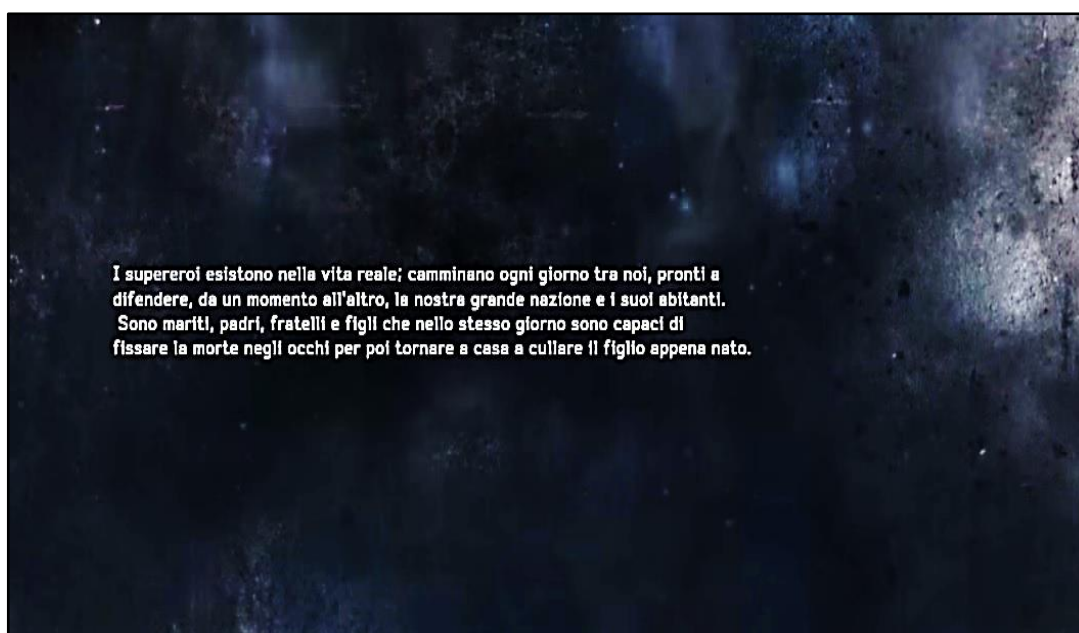


Figure 12. *Medal of Honor Warfighter* Stacey Freiwald's quotation

Appendix B – Chapter 4 Tables and Figures

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Playable character						
Daniel “Reck” Recker	572	70	71	73	retention	retention
Non-playable characters						
Helpers						
Kimble “Irish” Graves	1,646	286	285	287	retention	retention
Clayton “Pac” Pakowski	1,066	150	148	150	retention	retention
Huang “Hannah” Shuyi	665	109	109	109	retention	retention
Laszlo Kovic	234	76	76	76	retention	retention
William Dunn	227	94	94	93	retention	retention
Dimitri “Dima” Mayakovsky	223	109	109	109	retention	retention
“Ivan”	3	1	1	0	retention	transcreation
Villains						
(Admiral) Chang	58	9	10	10	retention	retention
Other characters						
Roland Garrison	181	64	63	63	retention	retention
“Fortress”	36	15	15	15		
“Firebird”	56	26	26	26	retention	retention
Hawkins	18	4	4	4		
“Anvil 2”	50	2	2	2	retention	retention
Jin Jié	49	18	19	19	retention	retention
“Gatekeeper”	7	5	5	5	retention	retention
“Oracle”	5	5	5	5	retention	retention
“Bloodhound”	2	2	2	2	retention	retention
Extras						
Marine	52 (81)	6 (14)	6	6	retention	retention
Sailor	27	7	7	7	direct translation	direct translation
Doctor	15	2	2	2	direct translation	direct translation

Jump master	13	6	6	6	direct translation	direct translation
Officer	5	2	2	2	direct translation	direct translation
Driver	1	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation

Table 8. *Battlefield 4* irrealia: individual references

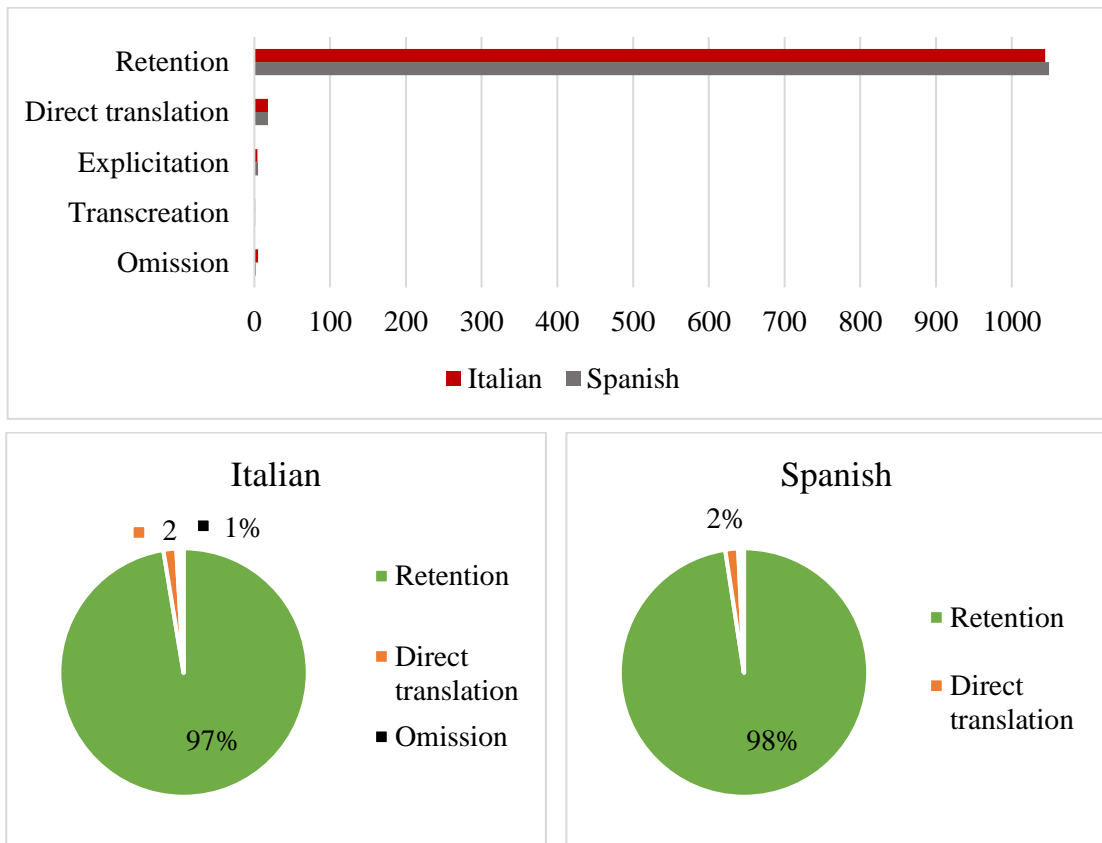


Figure 13. Translation strategies for *Battlefield 4* irrealia: individual references



Figure 14. *Battlefield 4* Dunn's physical resemblance to director and actor Paul Gross



Figure 15. *Battlefield 4* Garrison's physical resemblance to actor Sam Shepard

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Tombstone (squad)	83	19	19	19	retention	retention
Tombstone actual	15	7	5	7	retention	retention
Tombstone three	8	4	4	4	retention	retention

Table 9. *Battlefield 4* irrealia: collective references

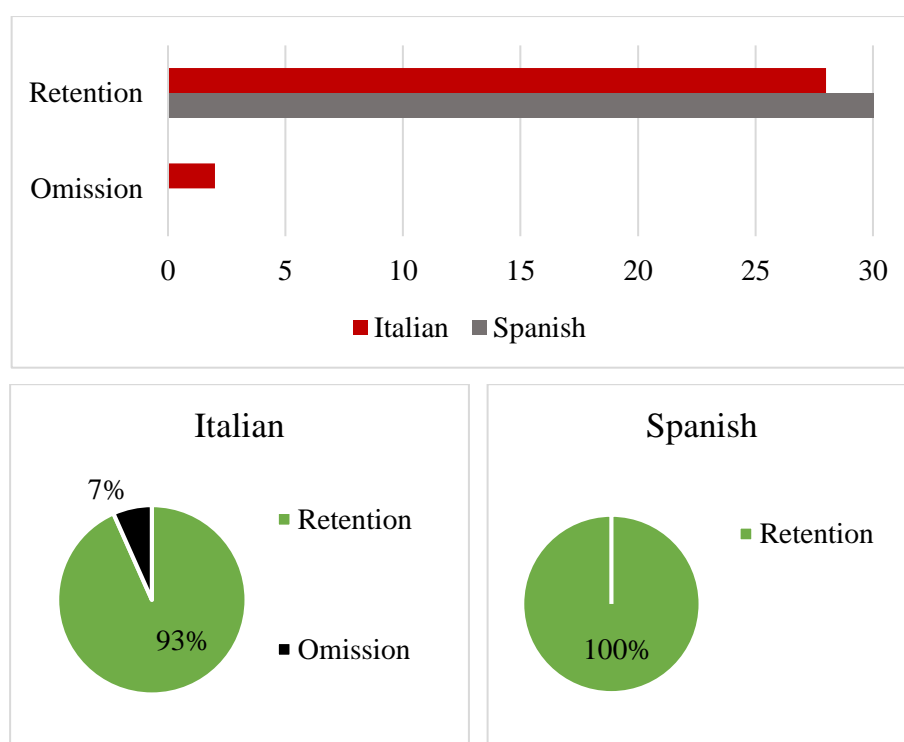


Figure 16. Translation strategies for *Battlefield 4* irrealia: collective references

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
USS Valkyrie	43	11	11	11	retention	retention
USS Titan	22	1	1	1	retention	retention

Table 10. *Battlefield 4* irrealia: artefactual references

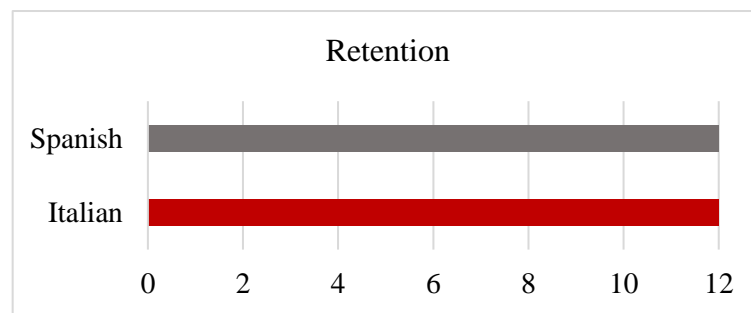


Figure 17. Translation strategies for *Battlefield 4* irrealia: artefactual references

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Chinese	31	5	4	4	direct translation	direct translation
Russian	27	6	6	6	direct translation	direct translation
ruski	1	1	1	1	transcreation	generalization
<i>Kitayetz zhenshchina</i>	1	1	1	1	retention	retention
<i>Maltshite Slava Bogu</i>	1	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
					retention	retention
American	14	4	4	4	direct translation	direct translation, transcreation
Azerbaijani	1	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation

Table 11. *Battlefield 4* realia: ethnic references

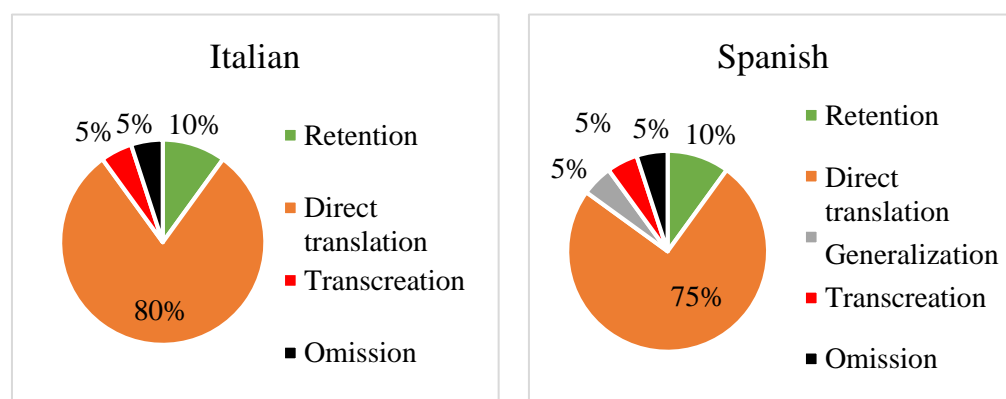
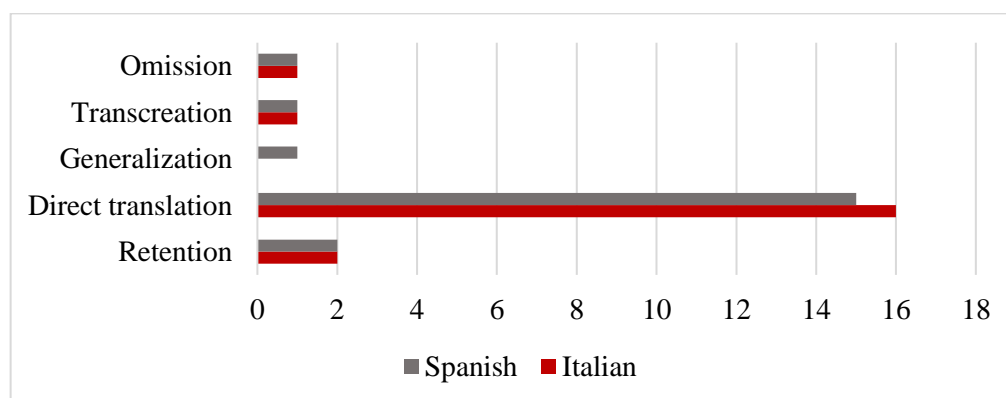


Figure 18. Translation strategies for *Battlefield 4* realia: ethnic references

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Marine	29 (81)	8 (14)	7	8	retention	retention
CIA	6	1	1	1	retention	retention
Combat lifesaver	1	1	1	1	generalization	generalization

Table 12. *Battlefield 4* realia: sociopolitical references

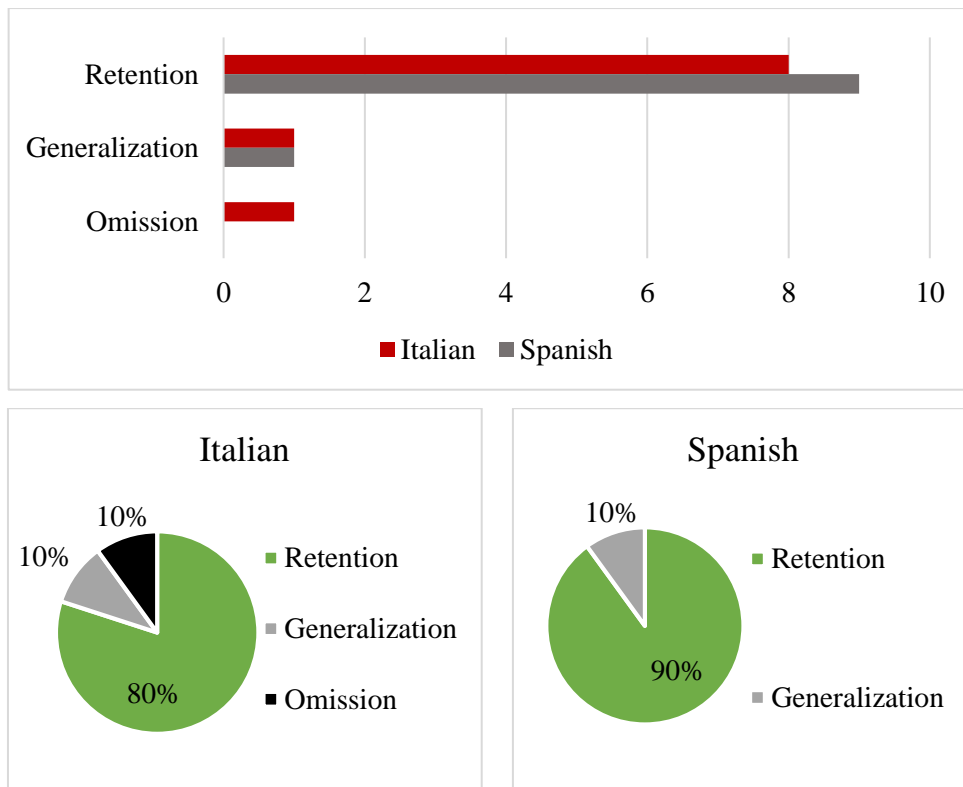


Figure 19. Translation strategies for *Battlefield 4* realia: sociopolitical references

Table 13. Example of alternate dialogues of *Battlefield 4* branching story paths

HANNAH: Only one of us needs to go. Recker. Do you have another\nnone of those C4 charges?

HANNAH: Good. Give it to me.

IRISH: You are not risking your life, Hannah. I'm Irish, remember?\nThe lucky one.

IRISH: Give it to me, Recker!

HANNAH: I risk my life for my country every day. Give me the charge.

IRISH: Your country needs you alive, Hannah. You are not\ngoing down, period. Come on, Recker!

**Ending (1):
"Valkyrie's gone"**

HANNAH: Everyone on that ship is dying as we argue. Give me the charge, Recker.

IRISH: It's my goddamn ship, Hannah! Come on, buddy. Do or die!

HANNAH: Make a decision, Recker.

IRISH: Come on, Recker. You decide.

IRISH: Oh my God. The Valkyrie's gone. We blew it.

HANNAH: Listen to me. You can sink ships, you can wipe out people, but you can't kill an idea. Okay?

HANNAH: We're survivors. We're survivors, Tombstone.

**Ending (2):
"Choose Irish"**

IRISH: When the detonator goes green, you push that button, Recker!

HANNAH: Irish! Dammit.

IRISH: It's set and ready to go! Come on Recker, push the button!

HANNAH: The blast could kill him!

GARRISON: Goddammit, Tombstone! Blow that ship now! Now!

HANNAH: We did what we had to do, Recker. His life was not in vain.

**Ending (3):
"Choose Hannah"**

HANNAH: When the detonator goes green, you push the button!

IRISH: Hannah!

IRISH: Motherfuckers!

HANNAH: It's set. Push the button, Recker!

IRISH: You're gonna kill her!

GARRISON: Goddammit! Tombstone! Blow that ship now! Now!

IRISH: Hannah!

IRISH: She gave her life, Recker.

IRISH: She gave her life for every fucking thing she believed in.

GATEKEEPER:
Tombstone, this is Gatekeeper. We have regained control over Suez. Have you found anyone down there?

IRISH: Negative Gatekeeper. No survivors.

IRISH: Correction, we are the only ones left.

BLOODHOUND: Fortress this is Bloodhound. Tombstone's on board.\nWe're bringing them back.

GARRISON: All are accounted for?

BLOODHOUND: One of them is missing in action, sir. Nothing we can do, we have to pull out immediately.

GARRISON: Shit. Understood. Now, get my marines back home.

Appendix C – Chapter 5 Tables and Figures

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Playable character						
Shepard	3,445	163	156	163	retention	retention
Non-playable characters						
Helpers						
Tali'Zorah	598	16	15	16	retention	retention
EDI	445	16	16	16	direct translation	direct translation
Liara T'Soni	423	10	9	10	retention	retention
Ashley Williams	353	25	25	25	retention	retention
Garrus Vakarian	309	8	8	8	retention	retention
James Vega	200	9	9	9	retention	retention
Villains						
Illusive Man	213	11	11	11	direct translation	direct translation
Kai Leng	69	4	4	4	retention	retention
Other characters						
Human characters						
Miranda Lawson	220	2	2	2	retention	retention
Jeff "Joker" Moreau	192	8	8	8	retention	retention
David Anderson	163	23	21	22	retention	retention
Steven Hackett	141	21	19 (+1)	21	retention	retention
Donnel Udina	132	9	9	9	retention	retention
Steve Cortez	102	5	5	5	retention	retention
Samantha Traynor	83	2	2	2	retention	retention
Armando-Owen Bailey	63	6	6	6	retention	retention
Kahlee Sanders	61	8	8	8	retention	retention
Diana Allers	54	1	1	1	retention	retention
Jason Prangley	26	6	6	6	retention	retention
Asari characters						
Aria T'Loak	202	7	7	7	retention	retention

Jona Sederis	29	3	3	3	retention	retention
Salarian characters						
Mordin Solus	179	10	7	7	retention	retention
Maelon Heplorn	74	10	10	10	retention	retention
Krogan characters						
Wreav	177	15	14	15	retention	retention
Eve	85	8	8	8	direct translation	direct translation
Quarian characters						
Daro'Xen vas Moreh	116	12	12	12	retention	retention
Zaal'Koris vas Qwib-Qwib	65	15	15	15	retention	retention
Shala'Raan vas Tonbay	53	3	3	3	retention	retention
Han'Gerrel vas Neema	45	12	12	12	retention	retention
Turian characters						
Tarquin Victus	73	7	7	7	retention	retention
Adrien Victus	31	1	1	1	retention	retention

Table 14. *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: individual references

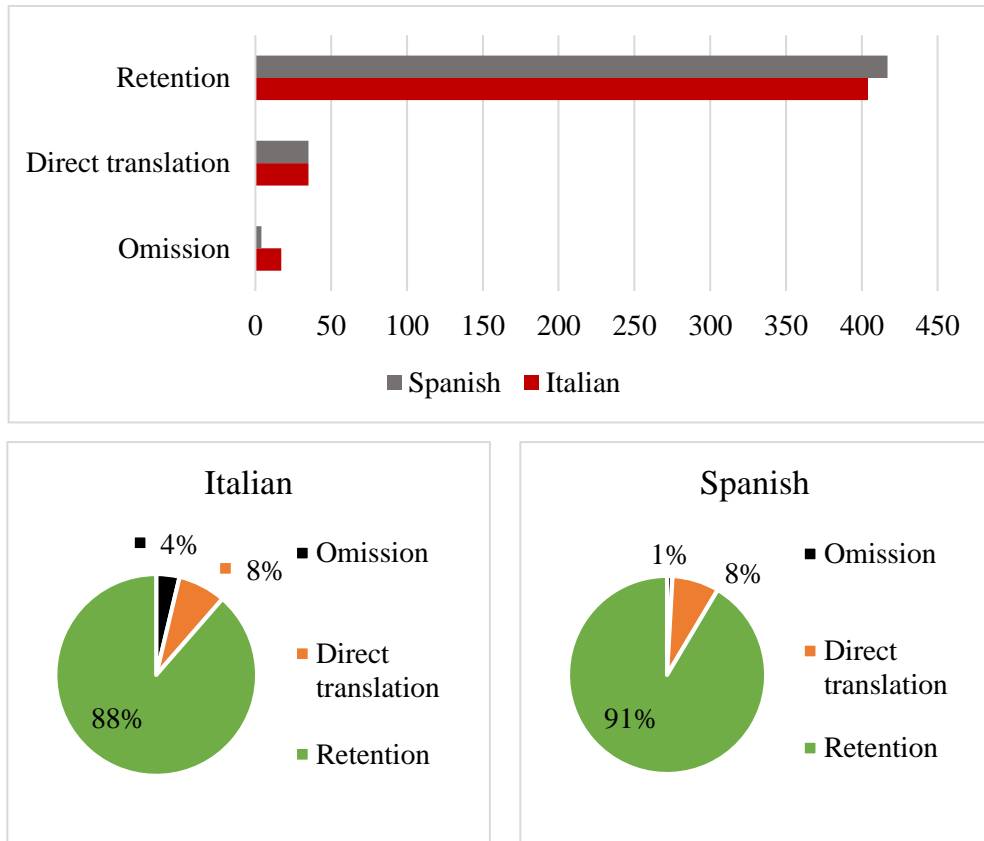


Figure 20. Translation strategies for *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: individual references



Figure 21. *Mass Effect 3* Shepard's physical resemblance to model Mark Vanderloo

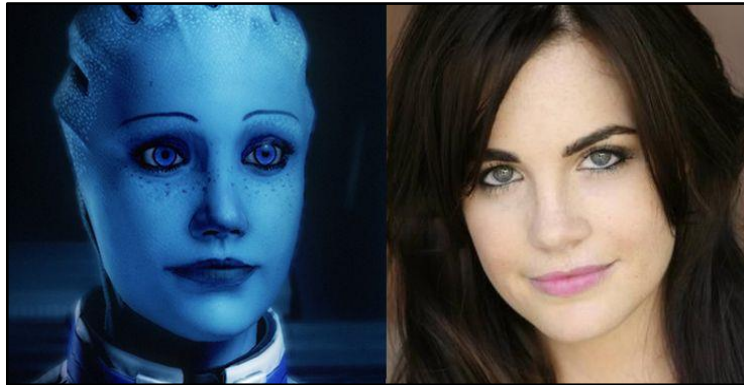


Figure 22. *Mass Effect 3* Liara's physical resemblance to actress Jillian Leigh Murray



Figure 23. *Mass Effect 3* Miranda's physical resemblance to actress Yvonne Strahovski



Figure 24. *Mass Effect 3* Joker's physical resemblance to actor Seth Benjamin Green

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Race-specific or multiracial gangs, clans and mercenary groups						
Blue Suns	203	4	4	4	direct translation	direct translation
Eclipse	158	3	3	3	retention	retention
Urdnot	129	1	1	1	retention	retention
Blood Pack	70	2	2	2	direct translation	direct translation
Weyrloc	17	1	1	1	retention	retention
Systems Alliance special forces units						
Hammer	150	17	17	17	retention	direct translation
Sword	12	2	2	2	retention	direct translation

Table 15. *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: collective references

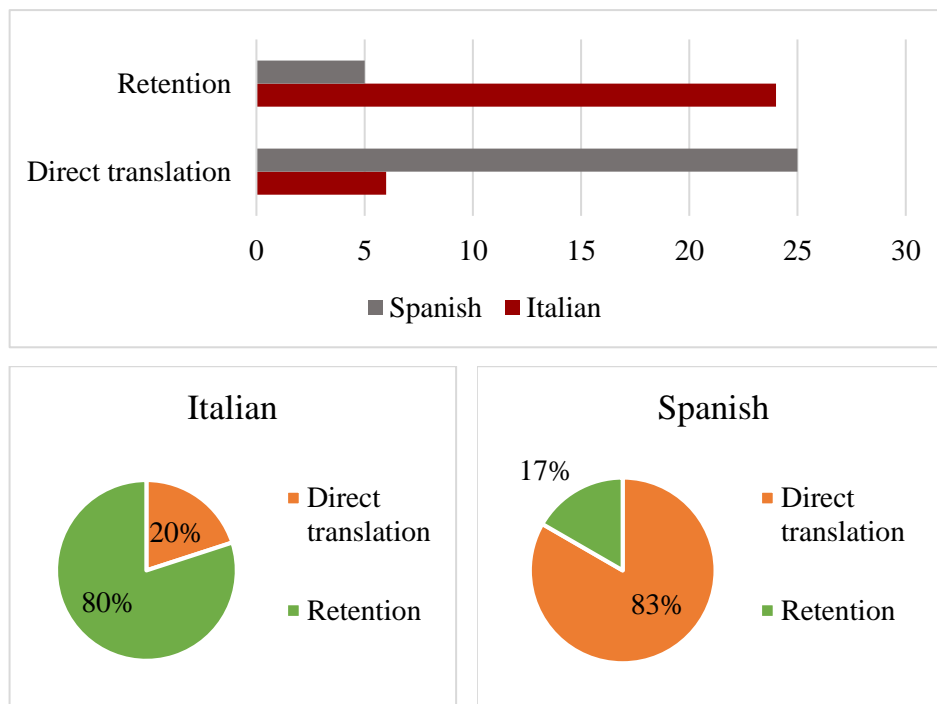


Figure 25. Translation strategies for *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: collective references

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Citadel	799	29	29	29	direct translation	direct translation
Tuchanka	232	9	9	9	retention	retention
Omega	217	6	6	6	retention	retention
Palaven	152	4	4	4	retention	retention
Thessia	127	3	3	3	retention	retention
Rannoch	110	10	10	10	retention	retention
Presidium	96	7	7	7	retention	retention
Wards	82	4	4	4	specification	direct translation
Purgatory	61	4	4	4	retention	retention
Sur'Kesh	39	1	1	1	retention	retention
Huerta Memorial Hospital	33	4	4	4	retention	retention
Benning	23	1	1	1	retention	retention
Perseus Veil	17	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
Kahje	16	1	1	1	retention	retention
Haestrom	15	1	1	1	retention	retention
Flux	10	1	1	1	retention	retention
Taetrus	8	1	1	1	retention	retention
Torfan	8	1	1	1	retention	retention
the Void	8	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
Ferris Fields	2	1	1	1	retention	retention

Table 16. *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: geographical references

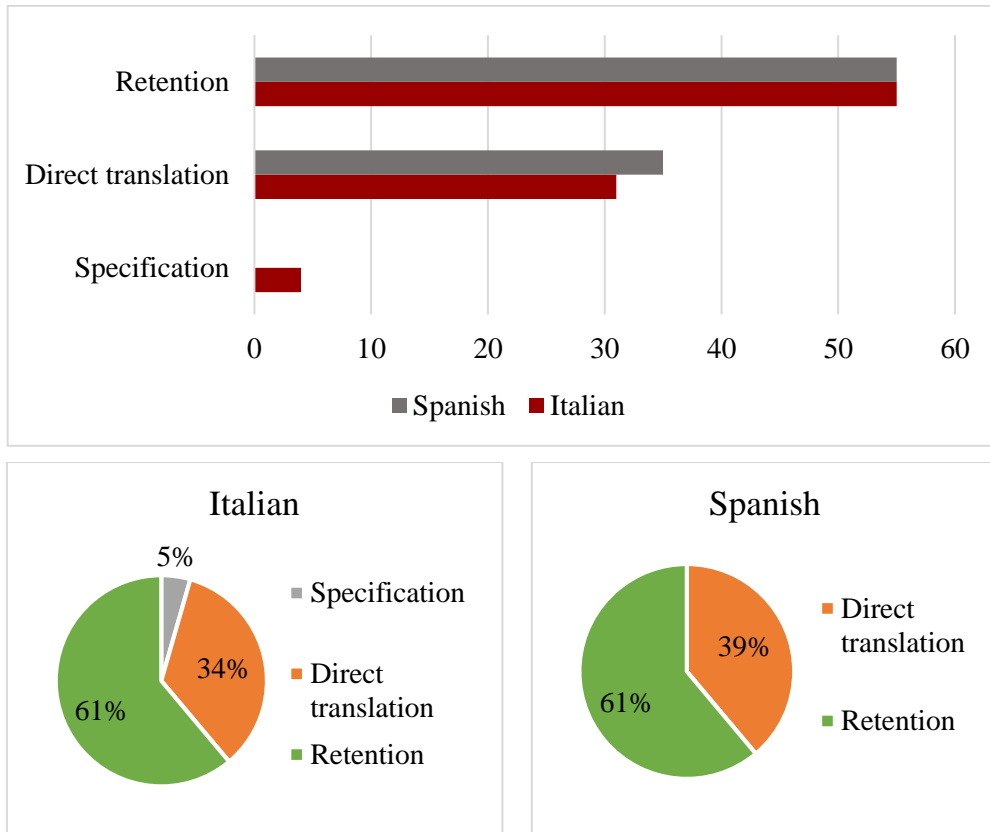


Figure 26. Translation strategies for *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: geographical references



Figure 27. *Mass Effect 3* Galaxy

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Reaper	2,236	146	146	146	transcreation	direct translation
harvester	79	8	8	8	direct translation	direct translation
“Old Machines”	41	11	11	11	direct translation	direct translation
geth	1,433	89	89	88	retention	retention
krogan	1,156	30	30	29	retention	retention
turian	706	22	22	21	retention	retention
asari	663	7	7	7	retention	retention
Prothean	541	11	10	11	retention	retention
“Enkindlers”	11	6	6	6	transcreation	transcreation
quarian	465	26	25	26	retention	retention
“creators”	49	6	4	6	direct translation	direct translation
salarian	432	6	6	6	retention	retention
rachni	346	6	6	6	retention	retention
husk	230	4	4	4	transcreation	direct translation
batarian	206	8	7	8	retention	retention
collectors	165	5	5	5	direct translation	direct translation
hanar	80	14	14	14	retention	retention
thresher maw	53	2	2	2	transcreation	direct translation
brute	49	2	2	2	direct translation	direct translation

Table 17. *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: ethnic references

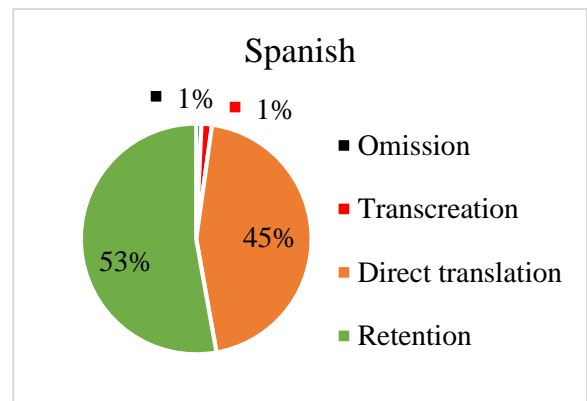
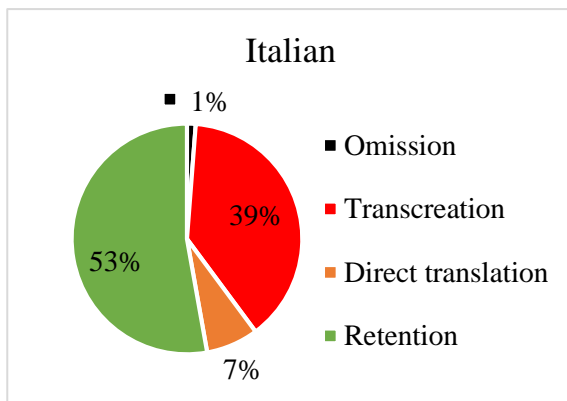
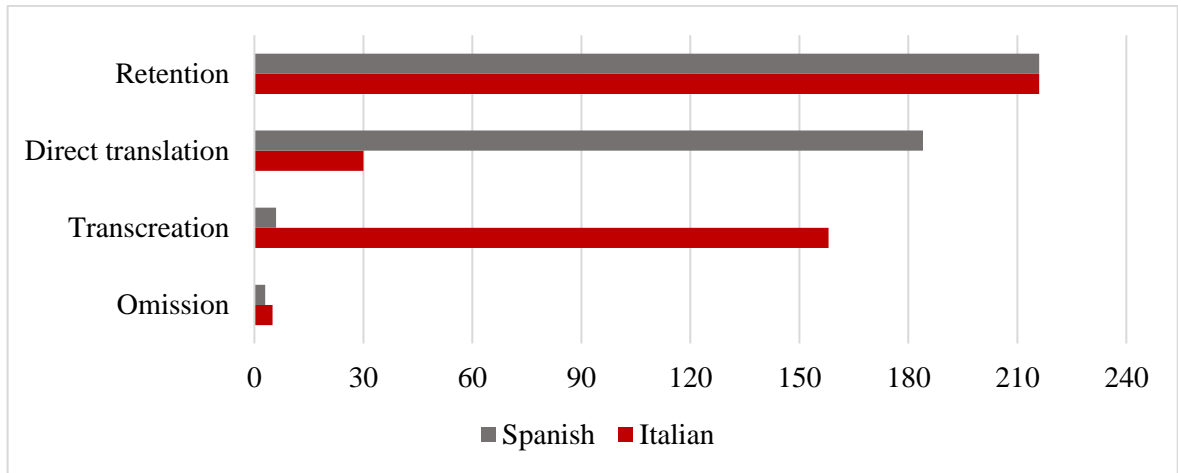


Figure 28. Translation strategies for *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: ethnic references

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
Cerberus	1,489	55	54	54	retention	retention
Alliance	822	24	24	24	direct translation	direct translation
Alliance News Network	23	1	1	1		
Alliance Navy	19	1	1	1		
Council	424	26	25	26	direct translation	direct translation
Councilor	163	8	8	8		
Spectre	257	8	8	8	direct translation	direct translation
credit	246	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
C-Sec (Citadel Security Services)	202	5	5	5	transcreation	direct translation
marine	70	1	1	1	retention	retention
defense committee	8	4	4	4	direct translation	direct translation
Admiralty Board	4	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation

Table 18. *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: sociopolitical references

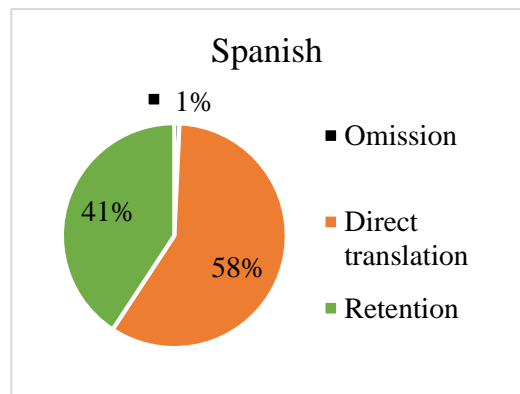
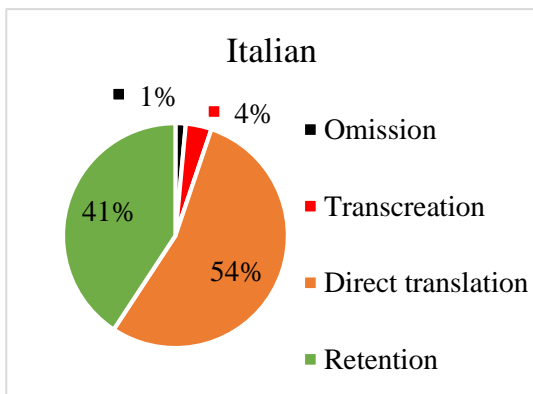
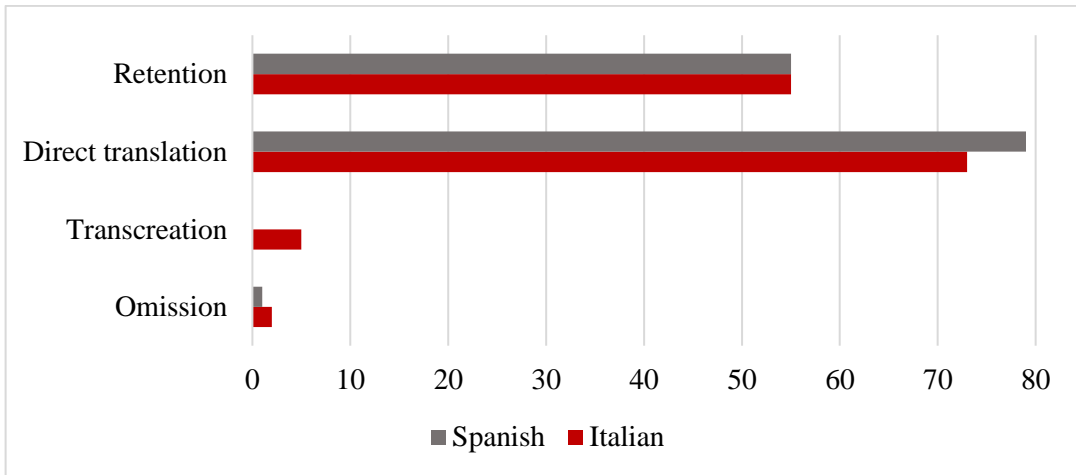


Figure 29. Translation strategies for *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: sociopolitical references

	Database	Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	IT TT	SP TT	IT	SP
VEHICLES						
Normandy	774	39	39	38	retention	direct translation
drone	451	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
shuttle	371	23	22	22	direct translation	direct translation
dreadnought	125	9	9	9	direct translation	direct translation
Sovereign	90	1	1	1	retention	direct translation
cruiser	77	4	4	4	direct translation	direct translation
frigate	61	3	3	3	direct translation	direct translation
liveship	47	13	13	13	transcreation	transcreation
Harbinger	32	3	3	3	direct translation	direct translation
flagship	29	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
M-44 Hammerhead	15	1	1	1	retention	retention
Konesh	4	4	4	4	retention	retention
M-29 Grizzly	1	1	1	1	retention	retention
M-35 Mako	1	2	2	2	retention	retention
WEAPONS						
Crucible	276	19	19	19	direct translation	direct translation
genophage	210	28	28	28	direct translation	direct translation
flashbang grenade	16	1	1	1	retention	direct translation
Thanix missile	6	3	3	3	retention	retention
syncing laser	3	1	1	1	generalization	direct translation
Hades cannon	2	1	1	1	retention	retention
EQUIPMENT						

medi-gel	143	4	4	4	retention	retention
omni-tool	80	1	1	1	transcreation	direct translation
Catalyst	64	5	5	5	direct translation	direct translation
NavPoint	31	3	3	3	retention	explicitation
Conduit	26	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation
Battlespace	19	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation

Table 19. *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: artefactual references

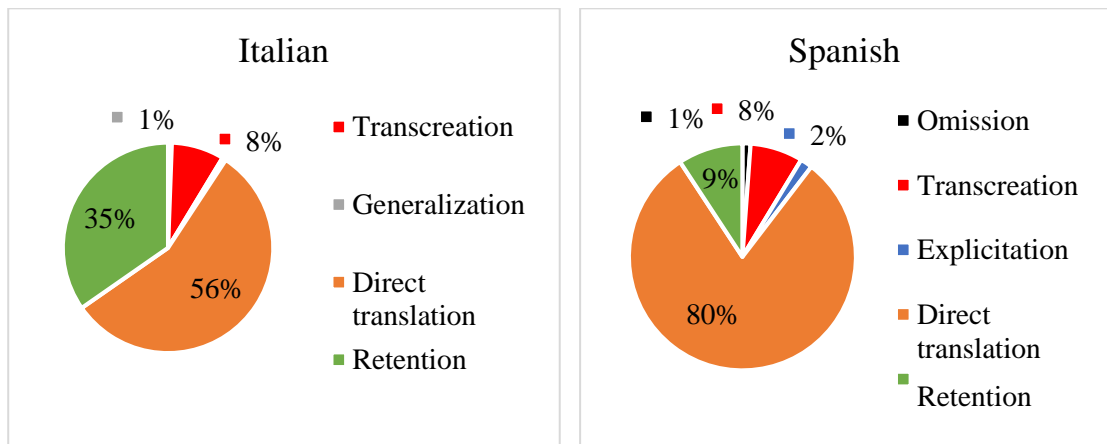
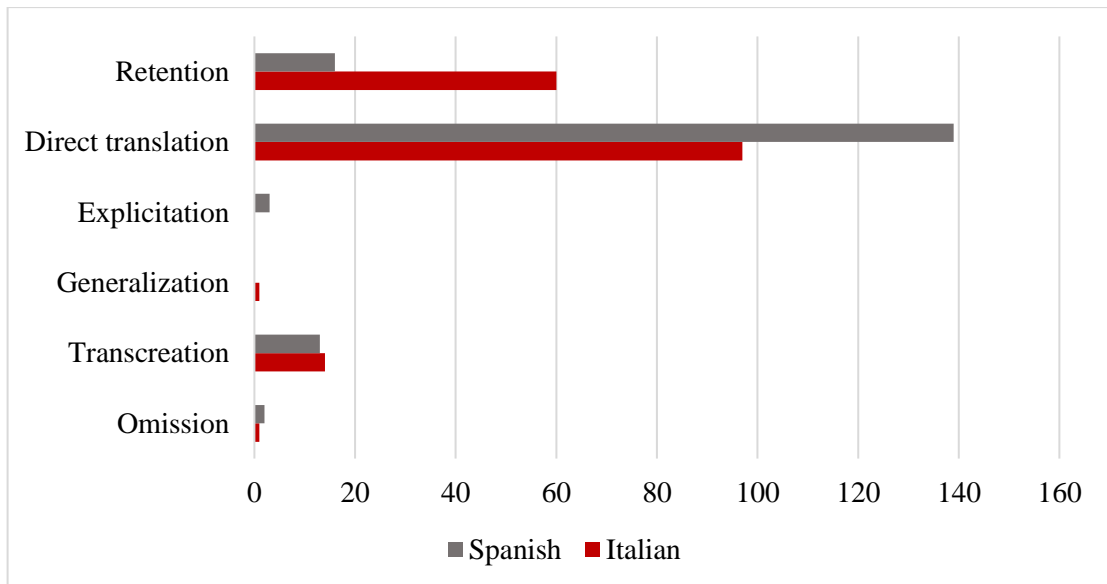


Figure 30. Translation strategies for *Mass Effect 3* irrealia: artefactual references



Figure 31. *Mass Effect 3* visual reference to Vancouver

Table 20. Example of a conversation containing dialogue tree branching options

	ST	IT TT	SP TT
Hackett	Commander Shepard. Something you need to talk about?	Comandante Shepard. C'è qualcosa di cui vuoi parlarmi?	Comandante Shepard. ¿Quieres hablar de algo?
Dialogue tree options	Investigate	Approfondisci	Investigar
	Goodbye.	Arrivederci.	Adiós.
	Reaper progress	Avanzata dei Razziatori	Progreso de los segadores.
	Galactic readiness	Reattività galattica	Estado de nuestras fuerzas
	Allied forces	Forze alleate	Fuerzas aliadas.
	Return	Indietro	Atrás
	Shepard	What's our state of readiness, Admiral?	Qual è il nostro stato di reattività, ammiraglio?
Hackett	I won't lie, Shepard. We're bogged down. Things aren't looking good in most sectors.	Sarò onesto, Shepard. Siamo affondando. Le cose non vanno bene in molti settori.	No voy a mentirte, Shepard. Estamos de rodillas. Las cosas no pintan bien en la mayoría de los sectores.
Dialogue tree options	We need to increase the tempo and chalk up some wins. Otherwise...	Dobbiamo aumentare il ritmo e iniziare a vincere, altrimenti...	Debemos aumentar el ritmo y conseguir algunas victorias. Si no...
	Investigate	Approfondisci	Investigar
	Goodbye.	Arrivederci.	Adiós.
Shepard	Nothing more, sir.	Nient'altro, signore.	Nada más, señor.
Hackett	Keep me posted. Hackett out.	Tienimi aggiornato. Chiudo.	Mantenme informado. Hackett, cambio y corto.

Table 21. Extract of the dialogue branching options depending on *Mass Effect 3* ending.

	ST	IT TT	SP TT
Catalyst	Why are you here?	Perché sei qui?	¿Qué haces aquí?
Shepard	What? Where am I?	[[M]Cosa... dove sono][F]Dove sono]?	¿Qué? ¿Dónde estoy?
Catalyst	The Citadel. It's my home.	Sulla Cittadella. La mia dimora.	En la Ciudadela. Es mi casa.
Shepard	Who are you?	E tu chi sei?	¿Quién eres?
Catalyst	I am the Catalyst.	Io sono il Catalizzatore.	Soy el Catalizador.
Shepard	I thought the Citadel was the Catalyst.	Pensavo che la Cittadella fosse il Catalizzatore.	Creía que la Ciudadela era el Catalizador.
Catalyst	No, the Citadel is part of me.	No, la Cittadella è parte di me.	No, la Ciudadela es parte de mí.
Shepard	I need to stop the Reapers. Can you help me?	Devo fermare i Razziatori. Puoi aiutarmi?	Necesito detener a los segadores. ¿Puedes ayudarme?
Catalyst	The Reapers are mine. I control them. They are my solution.	I Razziatori sono miei. Li controllo. Sono la mia soluzione.	Los segadores son míos. Yo los controlo. Son mi solución.
Shepard	The solution to what?	La soluzione di quale problema?	¿La solución a qué?
Catalyst	Chaos.	Il caos.	Al caos.
Catalyst	You bring it on yourselves.	Siete voi a provocarlo.	Lo lleváis con vosotros.
	The created will always rebel against their creators.	I creati si ribelleranno sempre ai propri creatori.	Los creados siempre se rebelarán contra sus creadores.
	But we found a way to stop that from happening. A way to restore order for the next cycle.	Ma noi abbiamo trovato il modo di impedirlo... il modo di ripristinare l'ordine per il ciclo successivo.	Pero nosotros encontramos una manera de impedirlo, de restablecer el orden para el siguiente ciclo.
Shepard	By wiping out organic life?	Far estinguere la vita organica?	¿Exterminando a la vida orgánica?

Catalyst	No. We harvest advanced civilizations, leaving the younger ones alone.	No. Terminiamo le civiltà progredite, lasciando intatte quelle più giovani.	No. Cosechamos a las civilizaciones avanzadas y dejamos en paz a las más jóvenes.
	Just as we left your people alive the last time we were here.	Come nel caso della vostra, alla nostra precedente mietitura.	Como dejamos vivos a los tuyos la última vez que estuvimos aquí.
Shepard	But you killed the rest...	A scapito di tutte le altre...	Pero matasteis al resto...
Catalyst	We helped them ascend so they could make way for new life. Storing the old life in Reaper form.	Le abbiamo aiutate a trascendere, per lasciare spazio a nuove forme di vita. Quelle antiche hanno preso la forma di Razziatori.	Los ayudamos a ascender para que dejaran paso a la nueva vida. Guardamos la antigua vida en forma de segador.
Shepard	I think we'd rather keep our own form.	Noi preferiamo mantenere la nostra forma attuale.	Creo que preferimos conservar nuestra forma.
Catalyst	No. You can't...	No, non potete...	No, no es posible.
	Without us to stop it, synthetics would destroy all organics.	Senza il nostro intervento, i sintetici distruggerebbero tutti gli organici.	Sin nosotros para impedirlo, los sintéticos destruirán a todos los orgánicos.
	We've created this cycle so that never happens. That's the solution.	Abbiamo creato questo ciclo in modo che questo non possa mai succedere. È la soluzione.	Hemos creado este ciclo para que nunca ocurra esto. Es la solución.
Dialogue tree options	You'll never understand.	Non capirete mai. ¹	Nunca lo entenderás.
	We don't want to be preserved!	Non vogliamo essere preservati! ²	¡No queremos que nos preserven!

¹ If the player selects this option of the dialogue tree, the blue ending called “Control” unfolds and the three blue lines follow. In the game narrative, it means that Shepard sacrifices himself/herself to take control over the Reapers’ fleet and fly away while saving the galaxy at the cost of his/her own life.

² If the player selects this second option of the dialogue tree, the red ending called “Destroy” unfolds and the three red dialogue strings follow. In the game narrative, it means that Shepard deploys the Crucible and eliminates all synthetic life in the galaxy. However, the galaxy eventually repairs the mass relays destroyed by the explosion and slowly recovers from the devastation caused by the Reapers.

Shepard	But you're taking away our future. Without future, we have no hope.	Così ci private del nostro futuro. [M]S[FE] senza futuro, non abbiamo speranza.	Pero nos estás robando nuestro futuro. Sin futuro, no tenemos esperanza.
	Without hope... we might as well be a machine... programmed to do what we're told.	[ME s][F]S]enza speranza... saremmo come macchine... condannate a una vita programmata.	Sin esperanza... no somos diferentes de una máquina... programada para hacer lo que nos dicen.
Catalyst	You don't need hope.	Non vi serve la speranza.	No necesitáis esperanza.
Shepard	The defining characteristic of organic life is that we think for ourselves. Make our own choices.	La vita organica si distingue per la capacità di autodeterminazione. Sappiamo scegliere per conto nostro.	La esencia de la vida orgánica es que podemos pensar por nosotros mismos... Tomar nuestras propias decisiones.
	You take that away and we might as well be machines just like you.	Altrimenti... non saremmo tanto diversi dalle macchine come voi.	Si nos quitas eso, podríamos convertirnos en meras máquinas, como vosotros.
Catalyst	You have choice. More than you deserve.	Voi avete scelta. Più di quanto meritate.	Podéis elegir. Más de lo que creéis.
	The fact that you are standing here, the first organic ever, proves it.	La presenza di un essere organico qui, per la prima volta, ne è la prova.	El hecho de que tú estés aquí, [M]el primer orgánico][F]la primera orgánica] en hacerlo, es prueba de ello.
	But it also proves my solution won't work anymore.	Ma prova anche che la mia soluzione non è più valida.	Pero también demuestra que mi solución ya no funcionará.
Shepard	So now what?	E con questo?	¿Y ahora, qué?
Catalyst	That depends on you.	Ora dipende tutto da te.	Eso depende de vosotros.
Shepard	What do you mean?	Che vuoi dire?	¿Qué quieres decir?
Catalyst	The Crucible changed me. Created new -- possibilities. But I can't make them happen.	Il Crucibolo mi ha cambiato. Ha creato nuove... possibilità. Ma io non posso concretizzarle.	El Crisol me ha cambiado. Ha creado nuevas... posibilidades. Pero yo no puedo hacer que sucedan.
	And I won't.	E non voglio.	Y no lo haré.
Shepard	Make what happen?	Concretizzare cosa?	¿Hacer que suceda qué?
Catalyst	What you came here to do.	Il motivo per cui sei qui.	Lo que has venido a hacer aquí.

Shepard	You want to destroy us.	Tu vuoi distruggerci.	Quieres destruirnos.
Catalyst	You can wipe out all synthetic life if you want.	Avresti la possibilità di spazzare via tutta la vita sintetica.	Podéis acabar con toda la vida sintética si queréis.
	Even you are partly synthetic...	Anche il tuo corpo è sintetico, almeno in parte...	Aunque tú eres [{M}sintético][{F}sintética] en parte...
Shepard	But the Reapers will be destroyed?	E i Razziatori saranno distrutti?	¿Pero los segadores quedarán destruidos?
Catalyst	Yes. But the peace won't last.	Sì. Ma la pace non durerà.	Sí. Pero la paz no durará.
	Soon, your children will create synthetics. And then the chaos will come back.	Presto i vostri discendenti creeranno nuove vite sintetiche... e ne deriverà un caos inevitabile.	Vuestros descendientes no tardarán en crear sintéticos. Cuando eso ocurra, volverá el caos.
Shepard	Maybe...	[{M}Ci sono alternative?][{F}Ma... forse...]	Es posible...
Catalyst	Or do you think you can control us?	O pensi di riuscire a controllarci?	¿O es que creéis que podéis controlarnos?
Shepard	Hmm.. So... the Illusive Man was right after all.	Mmm... allora l'Uomo Misterioso aveva visto giusto.	Mmm. Entonces... el Hombre Ilusorio tenía razón, después de todo.
Catalyst	Yes. But he could never have taken control, because we already controlled him.	Sì. Ma lui non ci sarebbe mai riuscito... era già sotto il nostro controllo.	Sí, pero él nunca habría podido controlarnos, pues ya estaba sometido a nuestro control.
	But I can...	Io invece sì...	Pero yo sí puedo...
	You will die. You will control us... but you will lose everything you have.	Morirai. Riuscirai a controllarci... ma dovrai rinunciare a tutto ciò che sei. Inclusi i portali galattici.	Morirás. Nos controlarás... pero perderás todo lo que tienes.
Shepard	But the Reapers will obey me?	Ma i Razziatori mi obbedirebbero?	¿Pero los segadores me obedecerán?
Catalyst	Yes.	Sì.	Sí.
	You know the risks if you continue...	Sei ben consapevole dei rischi...	Conoces los riesgos si continuas...

The paths are open.	Le strade sono aperte.	Los caminos están abiertos.
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But you have to choose.	La scelta spetta a te.	Pero debes elegir.
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Appendix D – Chapter 6 Tables and Figures

	MOHW Database	BF4 Database	MOHW Corpus			BF4 Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	IT	SP
VEHICLES										
UAV	26	(24)	1	1	1	-	-	-	retention	retention
RHIB	(13)	15	-	-	-	2	2	2	retention	generalization
Gladiator	5	(1)	3	3	3	-	-	-	retention	retention
WEAPONS										
AK	375	-	4	4	4	-	-	-	retention	retention
MG	300	(16)	2	1	2	-	-	-	retention, explicitation	retention
RPG	77	26	12	12	12	2	2	2	retention	(incorrect) explicitation (MOHW); retention (BF4)
LMG	65	(40)	1	1	1	-	-	-	explicitation	retention
P.E.T.N.	36	-	5	5	5	-	-	-	retention	retention
C4	(20)	29	-	-	-	5	5	5	retention	retention
claymore	(27)	20	-	-	-	1	1	1	retention	retention
stinger	(35)	14	-	-	-	3	3	3	retention	retention

EMP	-	8	-	-	-	1	1	1	retention	direct translation
Mark-19	3	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	retention	retention
EQUIPMENT										
GPS	60	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	explicitation	retention
LTLM	15	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	retention	retention
FLIR	14	(8)	1	1	1	-	-	-	retention	retention
NOD	8	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	retention	explicitation
MRE	-	3	-	-	-	1	0	0	omission	omission
TADS	3	-	1	0	1	-	-	-	omission	retention

Table 22. Military terminology in the corpus: vehicles, weapons and equipment

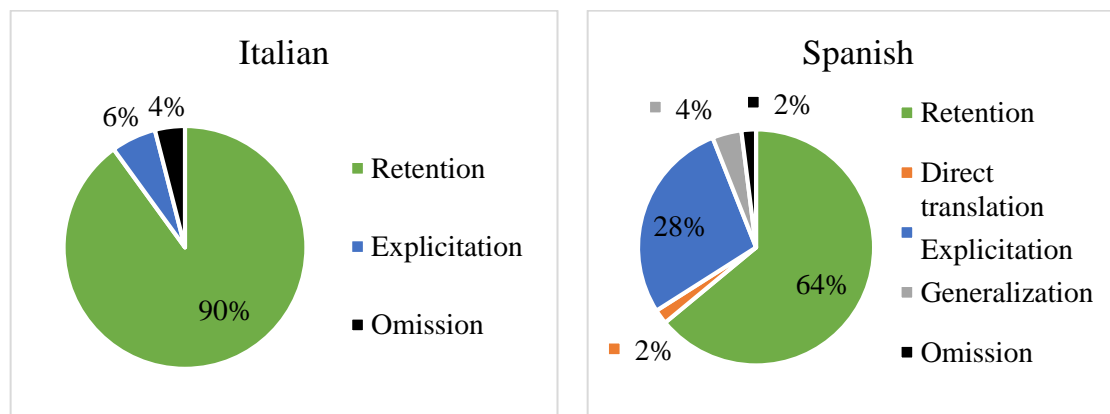
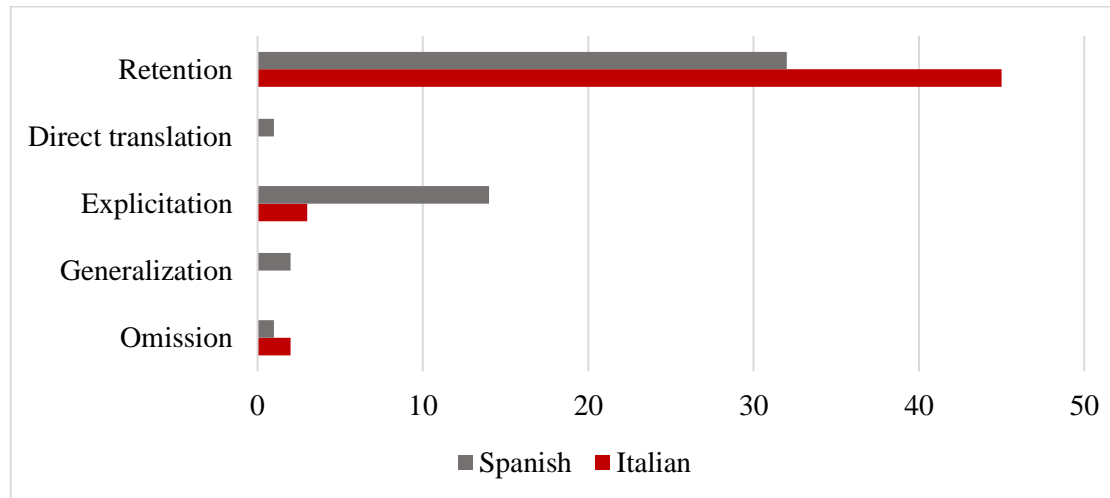


Figure 32. Translation strategies for military terminology: vehicles, weapons and equipment

	Realism-Fictionalism Corpus			MOHW Corpus			BF4 Corpus			ME3 Corpus			Translation strategies	
	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	IT	SP
commander	135	133	135	-	-	-	-	-	-	135	133	135	direct translation	direct translation
admiral	72	69	72	-	-	-	2	2	2	70	67	70	direct translation	direct translation
captain	16	13	16	5	4	5	5	4	5	6	5	6	direct translation, explicitation	direct translation, explicitation
sergeant	16	15	16	1	0	1	14	14	14	1	1	1	direct translation	direct translation, explicitation
lieutenant	15	13	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	13	15	generalization	generalization
lieutenant- commander	10	10	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	10	10	generalization	direct translation
general	6	5	6	3	2	3	-	-	-	3	3	3	direct translation	direct translation
staff sergeant	3	3	3	-	-	-	3	3	3	-	-	-	generalization, direct translation	direct translation
corporal	2	2	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	0	direct translation	direct translation
major	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	direct translation	direct translation

Table 23. Military titles in the corpus

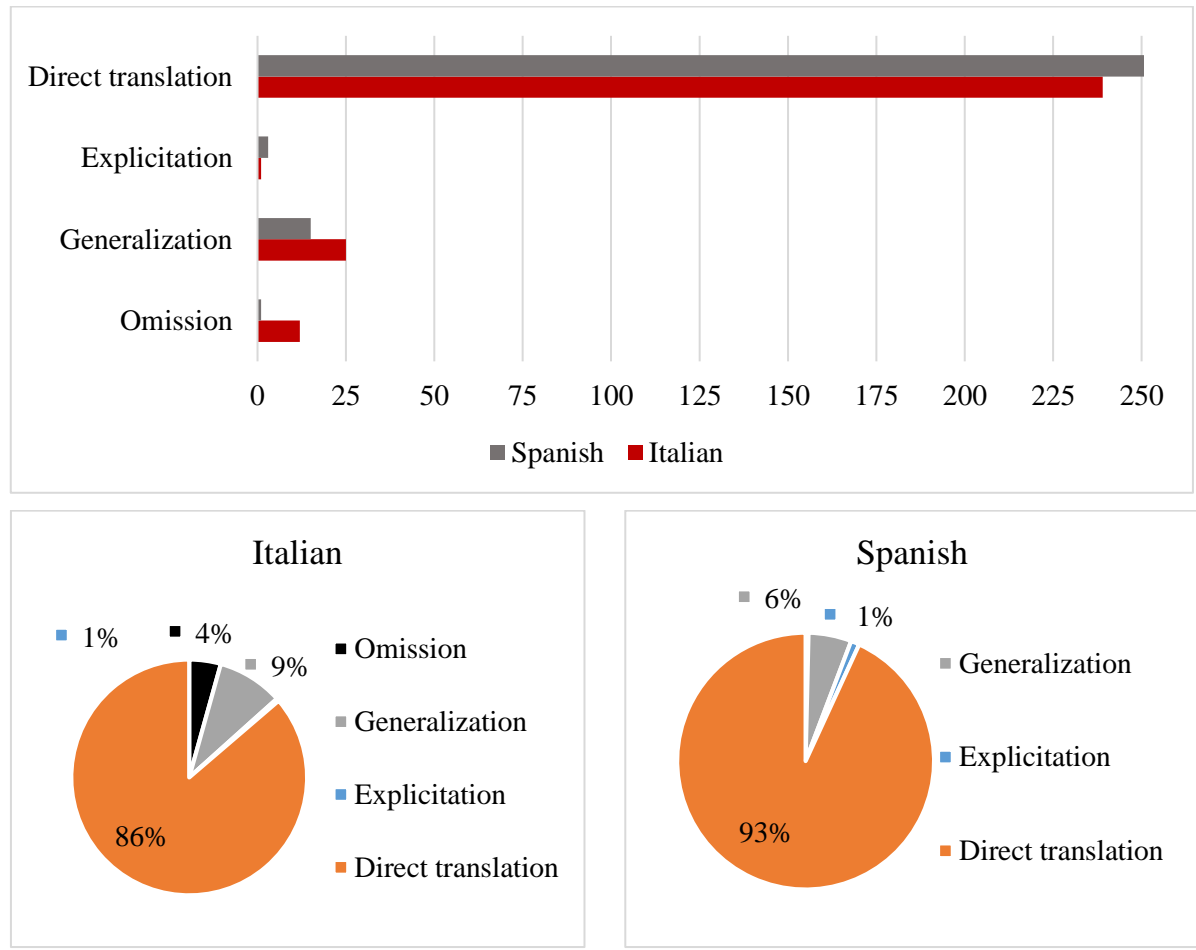


Figure 33. Translation strategies for military titles

	MOHW Database	ME3 Database	MOHW Corpus			ME3 Corpus			Translation strategies	
	ST	ST	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	IT	SP
Able	-	5	-	-	-	5	5	5	retention	direct translation
Alpha	55	(32)	11	11	11	-	-	-	retention	retention
Bravo	35	8	7	7	7	3	3	3	retention	retention
Charlie	19	3	1	1	1	3	3	3	explicitation, retention	retention
Delta	(31)	20	-	-	-	4	4	4	retention	retention
Echo	(4)	23	-	-	-	6	6	6	retention	retention
Foxtrot	(2)	5	-	-	-	3	3	3	retention	retention
Golf	(11)	2	-	-	-	2	2	2	retention	retention
India	(12)	6	-	-	-	1	1	1	retention	retention
Kilo	(2)	3	-	-	-	1	1	1	retention	retention
Lima	4	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	explicitation	retention
Mike	19	-	7	7	7	-	-	-	retention, explicitation	explicitation
November	(2)	3	-	-	-	1	1	1	retention	direct translation
Tango	27	(4)	7	7	7	-	-	-	retention	explicitation

Table 24. Military phonetic alphabet code words in the corpus

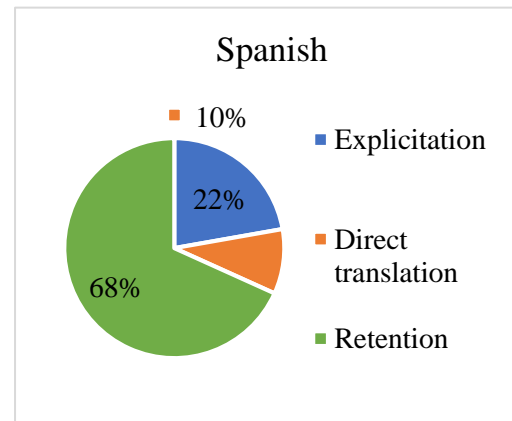
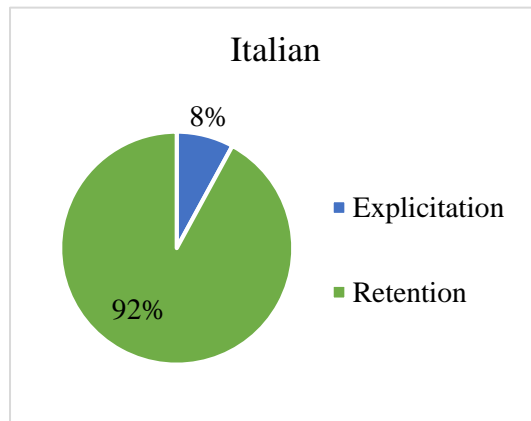
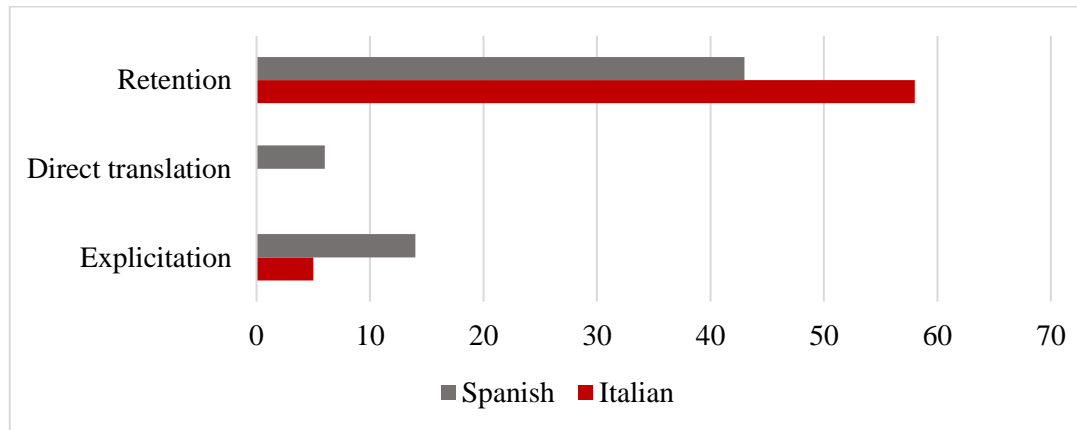


Figure 34. Translation strategies for military phonetic alphabet code words

	Realism-Fictionalism Corpus			MOHW Corpus			BF4 Corpus			ME3 Corpus			Translation strategies	
	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	IT	SP
roger	77	77	77	62	62	62	3	3	3	12	12	12	direct translation	direct translation
this is	42	40	40	9	9	7	13	12	13	20	19	20	direct translation	direct translation
copy	19	17	19	9	9	9	7	5	7	3	3	3	direct translation	direct translation
out	17	17	16	1	1	1	2	2	1	14	14	14	direct translation	direct translation
check	15	15	15	15	15	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	direct translation	direct translation
negative	11	11	11	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	5	5	direct translation	direct translation
over	11	10	11	4	4	4	7	6	7	-	-	-	direct translation	direct translation
20	2	2	2	-	-	-	2	2	2	-	-	-	explicitation	explicitation

Table 25. Radio communication procedures in the corpus

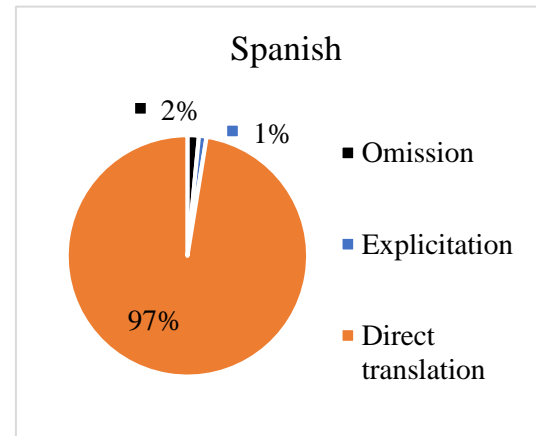
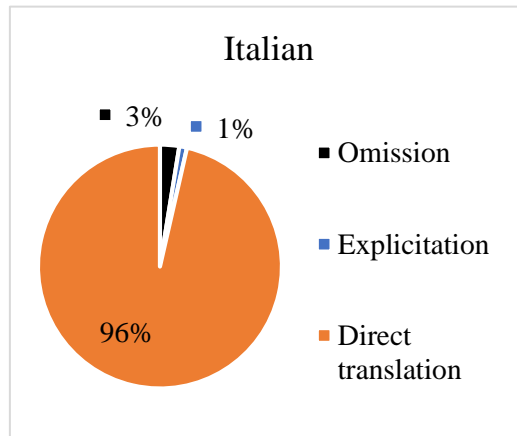
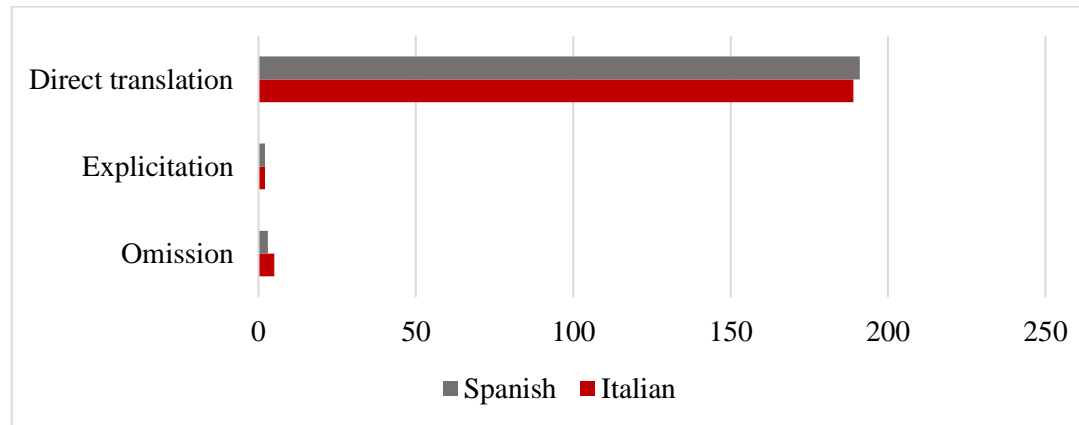


Figure 35. Translation strategies for radio communication procedures

	Realism-Fictionalism Corpus			MOHW Corpus			BF4 Corpus			ME3 Corpus			Translation strategies	
	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	EN	IT	SP	IT	SP
air	4	3	4	3	2	3	1	1	1	-	-	-	explicitation, generalization	explicitation
CAS	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	generalization	generalization
click	4	2	3	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	explicitation, generalization	explicitation, generalization
DZ	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	generalization	explicitation
ETA	3	3	3	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	2	2	explicitation, generalization	generalization
evac	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	explicitation	explicitation
FOB	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	generalization	generalization
IED	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	generalization	generalization
ID	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	retention	explicitation
intel	10	7	10	2	1	2	6	6	6	2	0	2	explicitation, generalization	explicitation
KIA	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	generalization	generalization
LZ	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	explicitation	explicitation
medical	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	explicitation	explicitation
medivac	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	generalization	explicitation

MIA	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	generalization	explicitation
op(s)	5	4	5	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	0	1	explicitation, generalization	explicitation, (incorrect) direct translation
PC	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	explicitation	explicitation
ROE	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	explicitation	explicitation
satlink	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	retention	explicitation
SIGINT	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	generalization	retention
SITREP	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	generalization, explicitation	explicitation, generalization
SOS	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	retention	retention
TOT	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	generalization	explicitation

Table 26. Military abbreviations in the corpus

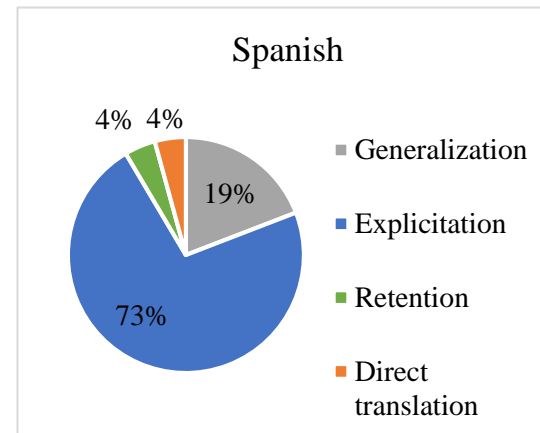
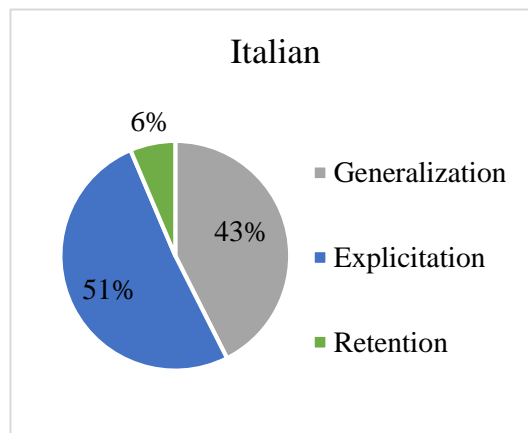
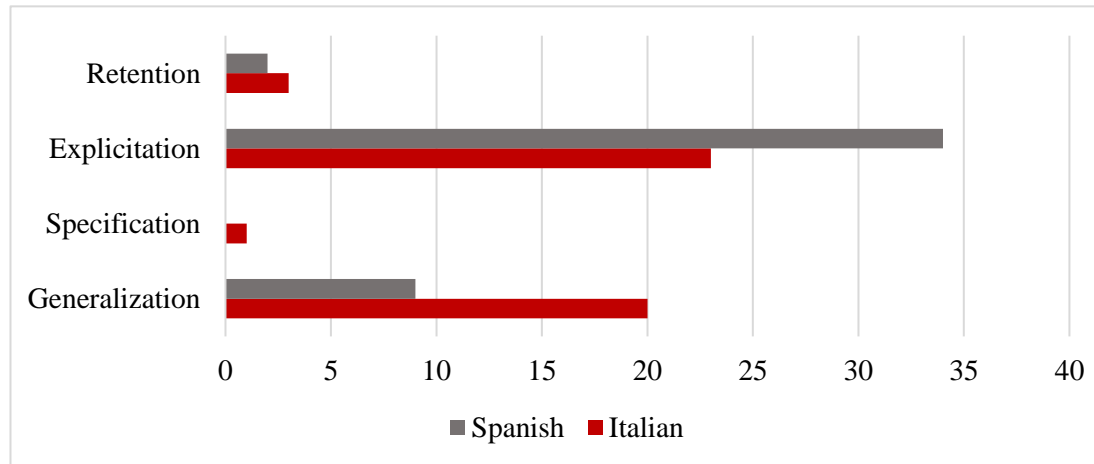


Figure 36. Translation strategies for military abbreviations