

Always a Lighthouse, Toujours un homme: Exploring Non-Literal Translation Techniques in  
Video Game Localizations or the Purposes of Second Language Acquisition

by

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## Abstract

Many recent video games feature complex narratives that contain increasing amounts of written and spoken language. There has thus been growing need for them to be localized into other languages; that is, translated and adapted for markets where languages other than the video game's language of development are spoken. While the localization process shares many similarities with other projects of translation, because the primary goal of a video game is to be entertaining, video game localization teams are allowed certain creative liberties in translating video games in order to maximize entertainment for players in target markets. Non-literal translation techniques, including transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation, are used to avoid mistranslating in-game language. However, Mangiron and O'Hagan identify in their 2006 analysis of the English localization of *Final Fantasy X* certain "transcreation" techniques that are used by localization teams in order to make video games more entertaining for players in other markets. These transcreation techniques include the addition of linguistic variation, the re-naming of in-game terminology, the re-creation of wordplay, "contextualization by addition", and the deliberate use of regional expressions. These transcreation techniques not only serve to make the localized version of a video game more entertaining for a target market, but also make the gameplay experience more original for players in these markets. This study will analyze non-literal translation techniques and "transcreation" techniques in the French localization of *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea Episode 2* to determine how these translation techniques may be used to maximize entertainment and to create a more original gameplay experience for francophone players, followed by a discussion of how video game localizations may be implemented in second language acquisition contexts for the purposes of exploring certain L2 linguistic and cultural phenomena.

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

With the increase of both written and spoken language in recent video games, there has been growing need for them to be localized; that is, translated and adapted for markets where languages other than the video game's language of development are spoken. Localization allows video games to reach a broader audience, which could lead to more sales of a certain game and to increased revenue for developers. It is generally the goal of localization teams to prepare a gameplay experience that maximizes entertainment for the target market (Mangiron and O'Hagan 2006, O'Hagan 2009). Thus the game's language may not only be translated, but also altered in ways that differ from the original version in order to make the game more enjoyable for players of different regions and cultural contexts, as if the game had been originally developed with the target region's language and cultures in mind.

However, though localization teams may strive to create a gameplay experience that feels authentic to the target market, does that truly make it so in the context of language teaching? Authenticity can be outlined as a cultural phenomenon that is naturally occurring within a culturally context and one that is valued by a large population within said context (Carlo 1998, Bucholtz 2003, Coupland 2003). Additionally, authentic language is regarded as language that is produced within certain cultural contexts and that is largely uninfluenced by cultural contexts and languages that are considered external to the contexts in question (Bucholtz 2003). "Authenticity" is often used to describe media that are developed within particular cultural contexts that provide genuine representations of the people, customs, and prevailing discourses of said contexts (Carlo 1998, Coupland 2003). These authentic materials offer numerous benefits in teaching a language because not only do they frequently expose students to native language use reflective of how they are used in the communities where the target language is

spoken, allowing students to practice using said forms themselves, but also because these authentic materials offer teachers an opportunity to discuss the cultural contexts in which these works were made to engage students in prevailing cultural discourses. Becoming aware of such factors that influence and manipulate language is called language awareness and authentic materials are often used to promote language awareness in the classroom (Kumaravadivelu 2001). Literature written in the target language is an authentic material frequently used to situate students in the target cultural milieu, although other media like film or advertising may also be included because they provide opportunities to explore the norms, notions, and, sometimes, the stereotypes that emerge through cross-cultural interaction.

Because languages evolve and cultural practices develop through interaction between peoples, language teachers frequently strive to make use of media with which students may interact and engage to develop a more personal understanding of the target language and cultures. More recently, certain teachers and researchers have used video games and computer software as tools to teach language, citing the interactivity of video games as a boon in furthering students' proficiency in their target language (Dehaan 2005, Neville 2010, Rama, Black, Van Es, & Wershchauer 2012, Sykes & Reinhardt 2012, Berns, Gonzalez-Pardo & Camacho 2013, Chen & Yang 2013). These studies, however, see students playing these games in the language in which they were developed or interacting in online communities with native speakers of the target language. But if the video game localization process truly seeks to deliver to players an authentic gameplay experience, there may be potential to use localizations of video games as virtually authentic materials in second language (L2) classrooms to teach students both native-like linguistic forms, as well as introduce prevailing discourses in the cultural contexts where the target language is spoken.



In order to determine how video game localizations may be used as media in SLA contexts, this study will analyze the French localization of the video game *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea Episode 2*, an expansion to the critically acclaimed *BioShock* series, which features narrative and gameplay elements inspired by French cultural phenomena and draws heavy inspiration from real-world historical events, art, fashion, and music in its narrative and gameplay experiences. In the following section, I will explore previous research in the areas of non-literal translation and video game localization to provide a foundation with which one may consider the implementations of French video game localizations in a French L2 classroom.

## Chapter 2 - Translation vs. Transcreation

As is the case for any project involving translation, one of the primary concerns of video game localization teams is that of translating in-game language to reflect its source in a way that can be readily understood by players in the target market who have certain geographically and culturally influenced conventional expectations (Gee 2003). Localization teams may employ non-literal translation techniques in order to avoid mistranslations in video game localizations and to make them more relatable to players in the target market. In her book *The Beginning Translator's Workbook: Or the ABC of French to English Translation*, Michèle Jones identifies four techniques of non-literal translation that translators use to avoid mistranslations and make a translated work more readily and easily understood by individuals in the cultural contexts for which the work is being translated (Jones 1997). These non-literal translation techniques will be described in the following paragraph.

The first non-literal translation technique Jones identifies is called transposition. Transposition describes the transposing of a part of speech in the source language into another in the target language (for example, a noun-adjective transposition in the translation of French *tu as raison* to the English *you're right*). The non-literal translation technique of modulation describes when the source language and target language differ in categories of thought (with the color *red* in the French *poisson rouge* being the equivalent to the English *goldfish*). The technique of equivalence is used when an equivalent expression in the target language must replace one in the source language that would be used in a similar context (an example of this can be seen in the French greeting *bonjour*, which literally means *good day*, frequently being translated into English as *hello*). Finally, adaptation is a non-literal translation technique used when a cultural phenomenon in the source language does not exist in the same way in the target language (The

French term *le rez-de-chaussée*, which roughly translates to *ground floor*, is often translated to *first floor* in North American English speaking contexts). These non-literal translation techniques can be found in many projects of translation (technical, literary, or otherwise) in order to make the translated work more easily understood by individuals in the target market.

While it is true that non-literal translation techniques appear in most projects of translation, just as literary translation differs from technical translation, each genre of video game requires its own localization strategies depending on the varying level of realism in each genre. For example, simulation games such as *FIFA* or *Call of Duty* often strive to present a realistic gameplay environment that resembles the real-world events on which the games are based (soccer games in the case of the former and significant historical events like World Wars I and II in the case of the latter). In order to maintain these games' simulated portrayal of a realistic phenomenon, localization teams frequently employ techniques of technical translation during the localization process to ensure that the terminology used to describe in-game elements reflects the terminology used in the target market to describe their real-world equivalents (Dietz 2006). In these instances, localization teams are not at liberty to create new terminology during the localization process, as it would compromise both the verisimilitude of the game as well as players' understanding of the in-game elements (Gee 2003, Dietz 2006).

However, the more fantastic a video game's setting, the more likely it is to contain elements that do not have real-world equivalents and are frequently named using terminology contrived by the original developers of the game (Dietz 2006, Mangiron et al 2006). Frequently, adventure games or role-playing games (RPGs), such as the *Final Fantasy* or *Mass Effect* series, see more fantastical elements in their gameplay and narrative, the names of which are not easily translated into other languages. Generally, localization teams employ more techniques of literary

translation when localizing a video game with a science fiction or fantasy setting, taking inspiration from the folklore and mythology of the target market when developing names for these in-game elements (Dietz 2006, Mangiron et al 2006, O'Hagan 2009). It is in these instances where the names of characters, places, items, and the like original to the game's setting would likely be modified from their names in the original game in order to provide players in the target market a gameplay experience that feels inspired from their own history and culture.

Obviously, the localization process is concerned with far more than using correct terminology. Localization teams are also tasked with translating games' narration and dialogue, and it is here where these teams see even greater creative freedom in translation. Localization teams frequently receive this freedom from developers because of space or software limitations; it is often the case that in-game text must fit within a previously designed user interface or that dialogue be spoken in a speed that keeps pace with already rendered animations (Dietz 2006, Mangiron et al 2006). Mangiron and O'Hagan discuss these limitations in their study of the English localization of *Final Fantasy X*, a game originally developed in Japanese. Because Japanese is a language that makes simultaneous use of syllabaries and logographs, video games developed in Japanese are frequently capable of containing a larger amount of information in smaller spaces than languages that are written with alphabets.

In instances where information must be condensed to fit into a user interface, Mangiron and O'Hagan describe localizers employing techniques of "transcreation" where they invent words or phrases that capture the relative idea of the original in-game element in a way that will be understood by players in the target market without confusion, even when no element of the source remains (they cite the example of a sword in *Final Fantasy X* named something approximate to "strong as the wind, forest, fire, and mountain" in Japanese being translated to

“Conqueror” in English) (Mangiron et al 2006). It is often in transcreation where localizations are made distinct from the original game, establishing the localization as a unique product within its target market. Additionally, while transcreation techniques share certain similarities with non-literal translation techniques, transcreation describes more the insertion of language into a localization that is not present whatsoever in the original version. The transcreation techniques identified by Mangiron and O’Hagan will be described in the following paragraphs in order to better explain how they are different from more traditional non-literal translation techniques.

Mangiron and O’Hagan identify five techniques of transcreation that localization teams use to further align the dialogue and text of a video game with the culture of a target market. The first is the use of linguistic variation in the localization when such variation was not present in the original version of the game. Certain accents, lexical items, and idioms that index different things in different cultures are sometimes exploited by localization teams to better situate the localized version of the game in the culture of players of the target market (Lippi-Green 1997, Mangiron et al 2006, Queen 2013). The second transcreation technique is that of re-naming key terminology and character names. An example of this was provided with the sword from *Final Fantasy X* having to be renamed due to space limitations in the game’s user interface. Other times, game elements are renamed to avoid confusion with preexisting terms and names in the target market (for instance, a *Final Fantasy IX* character Jitan is localized as Zidane in the English localization, but sees a variety of different names in the game’s European localizations to avoid comparisons to the French athlete Zinedine Zidane) (Mangiron et al 2006).

Thirdly, Mangiron and O’Hagan list “contextualization by addition” as another technique of transcreation. This technique sees localization teams deliberately adding dialogue and/or text to a game that is completely nonexistent in the original version. This is done when the language

of the original version does not convey enough information when translated into the language of the target market. In these instances, localization teams insert additional dialogue or text that further contextualizes gameplay elements to enrich the gameplay experience for players in the target market (Mangiron et al 2006). Similarly, the fourth technique of transcreation is the re-creation of wordplay. As languages differ, so do the possibilities to make puns and jokes with their words. When parts of speech differ in a pun found in the original version of a game, localization teams will rewrite the scenario with a pun using the parts of speech of the language of the target market, maintaining the humor of the original game to present it in a comprehensible way for players of the target market (Mangiron et al 2006).

The last transcreation technique described by Mangiron and O'Hagan is the deliberate use of regional expressions in localizations of a video game. In these instances, localization teams insert mention of cultural phenomena specific to the target market, further contextualizing the localization within the culture of the target market. The insertion of these cultural references will likely be completely absent in all other localizations of the video game and further serves to make each localization of a video game unique to its target market (Mangiron et al 2006).

While it is impossible for a translation of any media to be authentic by the definition that the source text be created by and made for native speakers of a language, the transcreation techniques outlined above suggest that there may be aspects of video game localizations that make them a possible tool to use to discuss the cultural practices salient to the cultural contexts of a target language in the L2 classroom. In the following section, I will discuss previous studies that explore how video games have been used to promote the learning of language and culture in second language acquisition settings to better contextualize how video game localizations may be used as a tool for teaching components of the target cultures.

## **Chapter 3 - Language Manipulation in Performed Media**

As described above, knowing how and when language is being manipulated is called language awareness. Language teachers frequently employ authentic materials, such as literature, film, and advertising, during activities designed to raise students' language awareness in the L2 because these materials provide a native perspective on the institutions that govern and influence the target language (Carlo 1998, Kumaravadivelu 2001). In these authentic materials, language is manipulated by their creators in order to convey a specific message to an intended audience. Creators of written, scripted, or performed media frequently exploit features of language varieties (such as accents, idioms, and the like) that they believe carry with them certain cultural connotations that will convey their intended message in the least ambiguous way (Queen 2013). In these instances, language teachers may encourage students to explore the reasons why the creator of a specific media may have used a certain language variety in their work so that the student may come to understand how these language varieties index certain perceived traits within the cultures of the target language.

One example of a study on linguistic varieties of English and their indexical associations is Lippi-Green's 1997 study on character accent in Disney films. She discovers that protagonists, the admirable, youthful heroes in Disney films, speak with Standard American English accents, aligning them with the hegemonic idea that Standard American English is morally good. Their opponents, however, tend to speak with British Accents, instantly distinguishing them from the protagonists by speaking in an accent geographically and historically separate from that of Standard American English. Many North Americans associate British accents with intelligence, and Lippi-Green posits that this choice of accent for a villain is done to make the villain appear more intimidating to the audience. Finally, Lippi-Green notes that accented English is used

mainly for comic relief, as well as that accented English was mainly spoken by animal or otherwise nonhuman characters (Lippi-Green 1997). Lippi-Green argues that the use of these accents is a calculated manipulation of the English language that perpetuates certain unfavorable stereotypes among speakers of Englishes other than Standard American English.

The associations between moral quality and accent are not reserved for fictional media. Studies show that perceptions of socioeconomic class, gender, national citizenship, and even gang membership are frequently made based solely upon hearing a speaker's accent (Mendoza-Denton 2008, Campbel-Kibler 2009, Chand 2009, Rahman 2009, Walters 2011). Though accent is inherently a product of phonology, accents are frequently indexical of social meanings that affect how speakers with certain accents are perceived within certain cultural contexts. It seems that an important aspect of acquiring a second language would be for learners to become critically aware of the institutions that manipulate language so that the learners themselves are aware of how the language affects its speakers' lives, even the life of the second language learner.

Seeing how scripted and performed media make use of real-world language varieties to convey their messages may introduce second language learners of the prevailing discourses of the cultures where the target language is spoken depending on how these media are implemented. Moreover, as explained earlier, many video games today contain narratives that are inspired by real-world cultural phenomena that may also engage players with certain discourses within their own culture. The *BioShock* series of video games includes critiques of political and philosophical ideologies in its narrative and thus may be a worthwhile series to consider using to teach language awareness in an L2 classroom. In the next section, the *BioShock* series will be described to provide the reader some context of the games' gameplay, narrative,



and setting. Then, localization differences between the English script and the French localization of *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea Episode 2* will be identified and analyzed to assess how techniques of non-literal translation and transcreation are used in video game localizations to deliver an original gameplay experience to French-speaking players by respecting certain geographically and culturally influenced expectations.

## Chapter 4 - *BioShock*: A Series Overview

*BioShock* is a series of video games, originally developed in Standard American English, which contains several features that make it seem viable to analyze how localizations of video games may be used to teach language awareness and francophone cultural contexts in a French language classroom. The series is comprised of three main installments: 2007's *BioShock*, 2010's *BioShock 2*, and 2013's *BioShock Infinite*, as well as multiple downloadable content games that, while shorter than the main-series games, expand on each installment's setting and story.

The first two games in the series, set during the 1960's, have players in control of protagonists Jack Waynard (*BioShock*) and Subject Delta (*BioShock 2*) as they try to escape the underwater city of Rapture, built by objectivist Andrew Ryan to escape the dominant political regimes on the surface. *BioShock Infinite*, set in 1912, sees the player controlling Booker DeWitt as he escapes with a woman named Elizabeth from Columbia, a city founded on fundamentalist Christian principles and held in the sky through a clever implementation of quantum physics. The two episodes of the *Burial at Sea* DLC expand on *BioShock Infinite*'s exploration of the multiverse theory by having the player take control of Booker DeWitt once again in episode 1 and Elizabeth in episode 2 – an alternate timeline where the two of them lived in the city Rapture before its downfall. The character of Elizabeth displays a keen interest in Parisian culture throughout *BioShock Infinite*, as well as both episodes of *Burial at Sea*.

The series overall has received critical acclaim for its fusion of first-person shooter and role-playing game mechanics, its creative and immersive settings, and its commentaries on extremist philosophical and political ideologies (Electronic Gaming Monthly 2007, Adam 2010, Morrison 2013). Additionally, the series has received positive critical reviews, with the first game in the series frequently being named as one of the greatest video games ever made

(Metacritic 2007, 2011, 2013, WhatCulture Gaming 2017). Additionally, the series may be played across a variety of consoles and computer systems, thus increasing its accessibility to players.

The mechanics of the *BioShock* games share many similarities between each installment. They are first-person shooters where players maneuver a character through the in-game cities of Rapture (*BioShock* and *BioShock 2*, and *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea* episodes 1 and 2) and Columbia (*BioShock Infinite*) to fight enemies with an arsenal of firearms and melee weapons, collect supplies to regain health and ability points, and immerse themselves in the setting through interacting with in-game characters and props. The games offer scaling difficulty (easy, medium, hard) and players may adjust this difficulty during gameplay to adjust the challenge to their individual preference. Players who prefer exploration may prefer to keep the game's difficulty on easy to avoid excessive confrontation with enemies, while players who want to be challenged in combat may set the difficulty to hard to put their skills to the test. As previously stated, it is important that a game remain challenging enough to engage a player but not so punishing as to instill the belief that that the games' objectives are impossible to achieve (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, Juul 2009). It is likely that second language learners of any gameplay experience would find success in playing *BioShock* since it allows players to adjust difficulty to suit their individual play styles; those with little to no experience could play through on the easiest setting so that they do not become frustrated, while those with more experience could choose another difficulty setting so that they do not become bored.

Narrative information in *BioShock* is also usually presented to the player without interrupting the gameplay with cutscenes. Other than the cutscenes at the beginnings and ends of each game that situate and finish the story, there are very few instances where players must halt

gameplay in order to receive information about the games' stories. Most story information is presented either during gameplay, with characters speaking to each other while players take action, or in the form of audio diaries that the player may find during exploration and listen to while they continue gameplay. These audio diaries are pre-recorded messages made by other characters in the game that further elaborate on the games' settings and plots and often serve to further develop the political and social atmospheres of Rapture and Columbia. Players then have the option to return to the game menu and listen to these audio diaries again should they choose. Additionally, all dialogue is subtitled (though this feature may be deactivated). Because gameplay is not interrupted to deliver narrative elements to the player, it is highly likely that each player will experience language within the *BioShock* games that contains elements (such as accent or idioms) inspired by real-world language varieties. In these instances, intermediate-and-above French-speaking players would likely be able to make assessments on the language varieties used to further navigate the games' settings, as well as consider the reasons why the games' developers chose specific language varieties to characterize or contextualize certain in-game elements (Queen 2013).

When different language varieties are used for purposes of characterization in a video game, the game's virtual world serves to situate how these language varieties are meant to be interpreted, as well as to immerse players within the context of the game and to facilitate player interaction with in-game elements (Neville 2010, Rama 2012, Schwienhorst 2013). The *BioShock* games' settings are largely inspired by real-world historical aesthetics of the 1910s and 1940s, 50s, and 60s. In-game fashions, architecture, advertisements, and the like greatly resemble those of the eras from which the games' settings are derived. Additionally, music of each era (specifically American music) plays from phonographs and jukeboxes located

throughout the games' environments. Players have the option to interact with the music players to turn the music on or off. Player characters and non-player characters may comment on the advertisements and environments that they explore. These features serve to further immerse players in the games' worlds to facilitate interaction with the game mechanics and narrative.

## Chapter 5 - Methodology

In order to assess how the French localization of *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea Episode 2* (BAS2) may be used as a tool to raise language awareness of French in French L2 classrooms, I will explore how techniques of non-literal translation and transcreation are used to render the French localization of BAS2 a more original experience for French-speaking players. BAS2 is a downloadable content expansion to *BioShock Infinite* that takes approximately two hours to complete and includes elements from each of the main games in the *BioShock* series, connecting each of them together. In BAS2, the player takes control of Elizabeth as she attempts to escape from the underwater city of Rapture and rescue an orphaned girl that she exploited to find and eliminate the antagonist of *BioShock Infinite* and the first episode of *Burial at Sea*. In one level of BAS2, Elizabeth explores Columbia by entering a tear (a sort of interdimensional gateway), where she learns how the cities of Rapture and Columbia are related to each other. Because BAS2's inclusion of features of each main-series *BioShock* game, it seems to be a justifiable starting point to determine if the series as a whole could be later studied as a possible material to use in French L2 classrooms.

In regard to the French language and cultural phenomena of French-speaking cultural contexts, the first level of BAS2 takes place in a simulation of an interpretation of Paris during the Belle Époque. During this level, all non-player characters speak French regardless of the game's localization and an adaptation of Edith Piaf's *La Vie en Rose* plays throughout the entirety of the level. Because of Elizabeth's interest in Parisian culture and the French language, BAS2 could be useful for teachers and students who themselves are interested in Parisian (and francophone) culture in general by exploring how the character of Elizabeth maneuvers through an environment that takes inspiration from environments inspired by real-world cultural

phenomena. This study seeks to analyze how this game that features explicit reference to French-speaking cultures might be localized for French-speaking markets and how scenes where characters in-game discuss real-world cultural phenomena might be used by language teachers to teach language awareness in a French L2 classroom.

To conduct this analysis, this study will compare the English source script of BAS2 to its French localization, including all instances of in-game dialogue that occurs during gameplay and cutscenes. However, this study will not consider dialogue spoken by the common enemies in the game, Splicers (Chrosômes), Columbia Police, and the Vox Populi, as well as dialogue found in audio diaries that are hidden throughout the game's environments. This exclusion seems justified because much of the dialogue spoken by in-game enemies is not guaranteed to play during each gameplay session. Additionally, searching for each audio diary hidden in the game would require a player to stray from the main objective of the game as a whole. As the *BioShock* series was originally developed in North American English, the English script of BAS2, transcribed by Patrick Summers, will be the control sample in this study. The script will then be compared to the equivalent scenes in the French localization of *BioShock Infinite*, transcribed from my own playthrough of BAS2 in French.

In this comparison, any instances of the transcreation techniques as identified by Mangiron and O'Hagan in their 2006 study on the English localization of *Final Fantasy X* will be identified to determine how transcreation may or may not be used to make BAS2 more culturally authentic for a French-speaking market. Instances of the aforementioned techniques will be counted and displayed in Graph 1. These instances will then be compared to each other to determine which transcreation techniques, if any, are most frequently employed when localizing a game from English to French. Each category of transcreation techniques will then be further

delineated into different possible variations of each (for example, contextualization by addition could be divided into the addition of entire sentences or expressions, the addition of a possessive adjective in place of a definite article, etc.). Should any of these transcreation techniques be found between the English script and French localization of BAS2, I will first consider the reasons why the localization team used the technique in question. Then, I will determine how these instances of transcreation are used to contextualize the French localization of the game for French-speaking players.

Additionally, because character accent and linguistic variation was a feature identified by Mangiron and O'Hagan as a component of transcreation, character accent will be compared in the English and French versions of BAS2. The *BioShock* series frequently includes immigrant characters in their casts to further develop the game's setting. For example, the character Atlas from *BioShock* speaks with an Irish accent and Brigid Tenenbaum in *BioShock* and *BioShock 2* with a Yiddish one. The antagonist of *BioShock 2*, Sophia Lamb, even speaks with a British accent, which directly aligns with the findings of Lippi-Green's 1997 study on character accent in Disney movies. In *BioShock Infinite*, the city of Columbia is strictly segregated by race, thus it is possible that character accent would be used to differentiate characters based on their national origin. In order to determine if such differentiations do exist, I will first identify the accent of each character that appears in the analyzed scenes in the English version of *BioShock Infinite*. Then, the character accents in the French localizations will be compared to the English accents. If there are differences in how linguistic varieties are employed for purposes of characterization between the English and French versions, I will discuss the potential cultural reasons why the localization team chose to add or remove a linguistic variety where one was or was not present in the original English version of the game. Additionally, since linguistic variation in character



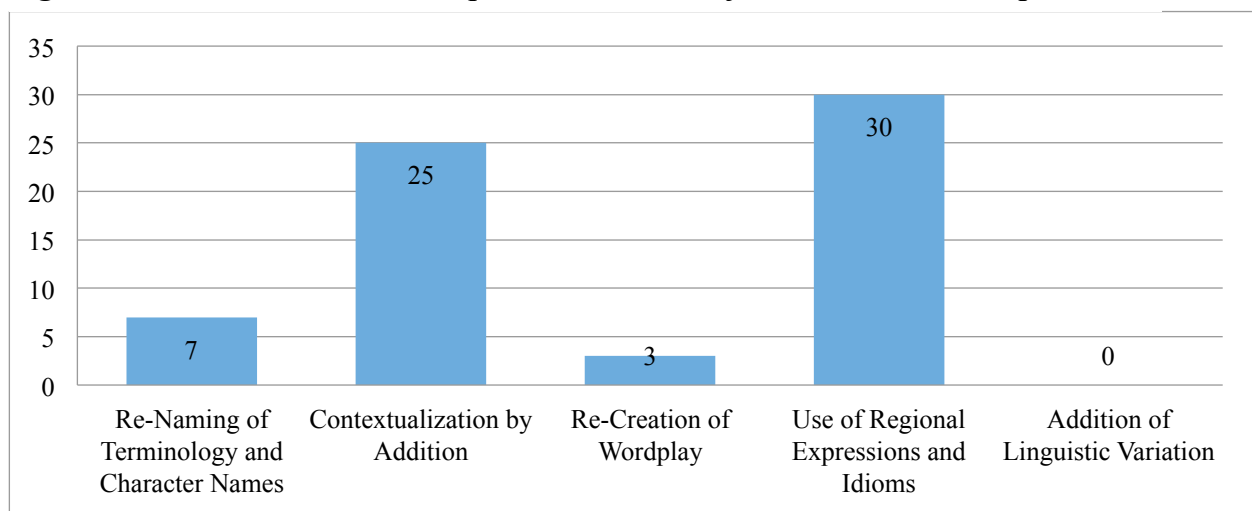
accent would not occur in instances like other lexical items would but instead be apparent in characters' voices, the transcreation technique of addition of linguistic variation will be compared separately from the other transcreation techniques.

Following this analysis of non-literal translation techniques and transcreation in BAS2, I will discuss the potential implications of using video game localizations in L2 classrooms. This discussion will focus on potential linguistic items players may be able to gain from playing a video game in an L2, as well as the possibility to engage students in cross-cultural analyses and introduce them to prevailing discourses in L2 cultural contexts.

## Chapter 6 - Results

In a comparison of the English source script and the French localization of *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea Episode 2*, there exist seven instances of the re-naming of terminology and character names, 25 instances of contextualization by addition, three instances of the re-creation of wordplay, and 30 instances of the use of regional expressions, with 65 instances of transcreation techniques in total. There were no instances of additions of linguistic variations; however, where certain linguistic variations (such as accents) were present in the source script, the French localization characterized these variations through other linguistic means. These findings will be discussed in further detail in the following sections.

**Figure 6.1. Transcreation Techniques in *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea Episode 2***



### 6.1 – Re-Naming of Terminology and Characters

Of the seven instances where in-game elements were re-named, none of the elements re-named were human characters. However, many of the terms that have been used throughout the *BioShock* series were re-named to match localization decisions that were made in previous games or when an equivalent name did not already exist in French. For example, the Big Daddy,

an enemy character from *BioShock* and the main character from *BioShock 2* is renamed *Protecteur* in the French localization. The Big Daddy is best described as a man who is outfitted to live permanently in a diving suit to make repairs to the underwater city of Rapture and chaperone what are known as “Little Sisters” (*Petites Sœurs* in the French localization) around the city to collect ADAM (a type of drug that allows the human body to regenerate at a rapid pace and can create new cells, granting super-human abilities). Clearly, the familial quality in the relationship between the Big Daddy and the Little Sisters is lost in this re-naming, as well as the sexual connotation of the word *Daddy* (BAS2 even exploits this sexual connotation in an advertisement found in-game for a pornographic magazine that features a muscular man half-dressed in the uniform of a Big Daddy). However, because the name *Protecteur* rhymes with *Petite Sœur*, it is likely that the localization team deliberately chose to rename the Big Daddies in the French localization to *Protecteurs* in order to exploit this rhyme, a rhyme that is unique to the French localization of BAS2 and the French localizations of the *BioShock* series as a whole.

The aforementioned super-human abilities are called “plasmids” in Rapture of *BioShock* and *BioShock 2* and “vigors” in Columbia of *BioShock Infinite*, but vigors are re-named “toniques” in the French localization. The re-naming of the vigors to *toniques* is an interesting one. While *vigor* implies strength and gusto, the title *tonique* in the French localization has more of a medicinal quality. It is also with regard to “plasmids” and “vigors” where the greatest quantity of re-naming occurs in BAS2. Since *BioShock Infinite*, plasmids and vigors have been named after cultural items of cultural contexts where English is spoken: for example, a vigor that allows the player to create a burst of air that suspends enemies in midair is called *Bucking Bronco*, and another that allows the player to summon crows to attack enemies is called *Murder of Crows*. Though many of the English names of vigors and plasmids do not share an idiomatic

equivalent in French, the localization team of BAS2 makes an effort to maintain these names inspired by cultural phenomena in English-speaking cultural contexts while still re-naming them with titles that would be quickly understood by French-speaking audiences.

The plasmid *Peeping Tom*, which allows Elizabeth to see through walls and turn invisible, is renamed *Petit curieux (Little curious one)* to maintain the voyeuristic insinuations of the English expression. *Old Man Winter*, which allows Elizabeth to fire ice from her hands, is renamed *Hiver d'antan (Winter of yesteryear)*. Though “man” is lost in translation, *antan* conveys a similar sense of nostalgia that is found in the English title with the adjective *old*. *Ironsides* is a plasmid that allows Elizabeth to surround herself with a protective magnetic field to collect ammunition and is renamed *Cercle de fer (Iron Circle)*. The term *Ironsides* refers to the nickname of English general Oliver Cromwell, as well as several naval ships, such as the USS *Constitution* and the HMS *Britannia*. *Cercle de fer* does not make the same references to these figures, but instead more accurately describes how the vigor is portrayed in-game as a magnetic vortex that surrounds Elizabeth during combat. Finally, *Hypnotize Big Daddy*, a plasmid from *BioShock* that makes a hostile big daddy fight on the player’s side, is only mentioned by Elizabeth when she sees an advertisement for it in BAS2. It is renamed *Protecteur sous le charme (roughly Protector under your spell)* in French to follow the re-naming of *Big Daddy* to *Protecteur* in French localizations of the series and, just like *Cercle de fer*, more accurately describes the function of the plasmid; the player does not truly hypnotize a Big Daddy, but instead lobs a projectile that causes the Big Daddy to obey the person who threw it, be it the player or a Splicer. *Possession*, a plasmid that grants Elizabeth the power to take control of enemies and hostile machines, is the only plasmid not to undergo a name change in the French localization; however, this is not surprising, as *possession* is a cognate in English and French.

The last instance of re-naming to identify is the re-naming of the “tears”, interdimensional portals that allow Elizabeth access to the multiverse, to “*failles*” (*rifts*). These “tears” received their name because they truly resemble a tear in tissue or fabric that hovers in midair. While there are semantic equivalents for the word *tear* in French (*un accroc*, *une déchirure*), it is likely that the word *faille* was used because it, like *tear*, contains only one syllable and more quickly evokes the semantic quality of these interdimensional portals. Additionally, the word *faille* may also be translated into English *loophole*. As tears are frequently used throughout *BioShock Infinite* and both episodes of *Burial at Sea* to circumvent certain events, *faille* may likely have been chosen in order to accentuate the role that they play in the games’ narratives.

## 6.2 – Re-Creation of Wordplay

The first instance of a re-creation of wordplay that will be discussed is also somewhat an instance of re-naming: the air-grabber from *BioShock Infinite*, a tool that allows the player character to ride along suspended railings, is called a *Capt’air* in French and is a portmanteau of the verb *capter* (*to capture*) and the noun *air*. Here, this is less a *re-creation* of wordplay and more the *addition* of one, though this addition does not contextualize any supplemental information in-game, as both air-grabber and *Capt’air* have roughly identical semantic meanings. This type of addition is also unique to the French localization, as, while it would have been possible to create a portmanteau in English of the words *capture* and *air*, the phonological form of *Capt’air* more closely resembles that of *capter* in French than it does *capture* in English. It is likely the localization team took this opportunity to add wordplay to the French localization

where it does not exist in English in order to make the game feel more authentic to French-speaking players.

Another instance of a re-creation of wordplay comes during a conversation between the characters of the Lutece twins. Robert calls his sister Rosalind a fatalist, but she mishears him and asks if he had instead called her a physicist in reference to her occupation. While *fatalist* and *physicist* share similar phonological forms in English, such is not the case in French, the equivalents being *fataliste* and *physicien*. Instead, the French localization sees Rosalind asking “J’ai fait ma liste?” (*I’ve made my list?*). *Fait ma liste* shares a much closer phonological shape with *fataliste* and maintains the play on words present in the original English script, though it does characterize Rosalind more so as meticulous rather than reinforce her occupation as a quantum physicist.

The third instance of re-creation of wordplay in BAS2 comes during a scene where the antagonist Atlas interrogates Elizabeth as she convinces him not to kill her at the start of the game. She is instructed by her companion Booker to tell Atlas that she is the assistant of a geneticist Dr. Yi Suchong and that she can provide Atlas with information that will help him achieve his goals. As Atlas is meant to be characterized as insensitive, his insensitivity is underlined when he refers to Suchong with a racial slur, calling him “the slant-eyed wonder”. Later, when he asks Elizabeth how she plans to bring him the information he needs from Suchong, she parallels Atlas’ earlier slur, saying that said information is between her “and the slant”. Though Atlas uses the adjective *bridé* (*slanted*) in the French localization, Elizabeth says instead “et le jaune” (“and the yellow”). It is unclear why “the slant” was changed to “the yellow” in the French localization, as it is possible to translate “the slant” as “le bridé” and both *slant* and *yellow* convey deeply racist connotations in this context. The change may then be

stylistic on behalf of the localization team, though this change is somewhat out of character for Elizabeth, who frequently criticized the racist policies of Columbia during the events of *BioShock Infinite*. In the English script, Elizabeth simply mirrors Atlas' racist comment, likely to build trust with him but to avoid making a racist comment of her own. This change in Elizabeth's dialogue adds somewhat of an unsympathetic quality to her character in the French localization, one that goes against much of her characterization as a young and naive girl at the beginning of *BioShock Infinite* who matures into a capable and steadfast woman by its end.

### **6.3 – Contextualization by Addition**

In the French localization of BAS2, I identified four distinct ways in which the localization team added content to the script that further contextualized the game's characters within its setting and narrative. These four types of contextualization by addition are as follows: four instances where a definite article in the English script was changed to a possessive adjective or one was added before a noun in the French localization, 13 instances where sentences were rephrased or interjections were inserted that offered more information on a character's perspective or understanding of the unfolding events of the game, four instances where an adjective, adverb, or prepositional phrase was added to further describe an in-game character or prop, and four instances where a noun was inserted or changed to one more specific in the French localization that was not as specific or was not present in the English version. Examples of each of these types of contextualization by addition will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The insertion of possessive adjectives in place of definite articles or where no article was present in the English script seems an interesting one from both a grammatical and narrative

perspective, as they appear to make more explicit how a player should maneuver an in-game task. An example of possessive adjectives further contextualizing in-game tasks can be found during a gameplay segment where Elizabeth prepares to defend herself from a hoard of Splicers sent by Andrew Ryan to kill her. In the English version, Elizabeth says that she “can use *the* plasmids as traps”. In the French version, she says “*mes* plasmides” (*my plasmids*).

Grammatically, the definite article *les* (plural *the*) is used before a noun in French to refer to an antecedent and would thus imply that Elizabeth will use plasmids that she has previously discussed or that during this gameplay segment she will have access to any of the plasmids available in the game. But, because it is not required that the player collect each of the four plasmids available in BAS2, *les* would not accurately describe the current in-game situation. Additionally, the indefinite article *des* (approximately *some*) might not prompt the player to make use of their own plasmids. Thus, *mes* seems to be the most pragmatically precise article to use in order for players to understand which plasmids they have available to use. Narratively, it feels as though the use of the possessive adjective *mes* adds a sense of desperation or improvisation to the situation since, as previously mentioned, it is not required for the player to collect each plasmid in the game and may have overlooked certain ones that could be a boon in overcoming the current gameplay challenge.

The most frequent type of contextualization by addition in the French localization of BAS2 is the addition of interjections or the rephrasing of sentences that insert additional information of character perspectives or interpretations of in-game events. Examples of this can be found in (1) and (2), with the additions in the French localization in bold and an English gloss provided beneath each example. The first is from a scene where Elizabeth and Booker discuss the whereabouts of Dr. Suchong:



- (1) Original English:  
Elizabeth: Think we found our man.  
Booker: No sign of him now.
- French localization:  
Elizabeth: Je crois qu'on tient notre homme.  
Elizabeth: *I think we have our man.*
- Booker: **Je crois** qu'il a disparu.  
Booker: ***I think*** he's gone.

Not only does this addition supply more information on Booker's perception of the situation, his repetition of the structure *Je crois que* adds a sort of rapport between himself and Elizabeth, further characterizing their camaraderie as being playful and somewhat teasing, a quality not present in the original English script. Example (2) is from a scene where Booker reassures Elizabeth that she is capable of repairing the Lutece device, a machine that allows travel between the two separate realities of the cities of Rapture and Columbia:

- (2) Original English script:  
Booker: Elizabeth, you saw yourself make this repair. You can do this.
- French localization :  
Booker: Elizabeth, tu t'es vue la réparer. **Je sais que** tu peux le faire.  
Booker: *Elizabeth, you saw yourself repair it. I know* you can do it.

While short in length, these expressions serve to further characterize the relationships between the characters in BAS2, as well as adding an agentive quality to Booker's character. This characterization is not present in the original English script and thus adds a unique element to the French localization and makes the gameplay experience more original for French-speaking players.

The four instances of contextualization by addition where an adjective, adverb, or prepositional phrase that were added to the French localization of BAS2 serve to more deeply develop the settings of Rapture and Columbia and character actions that are completely unique to

the French localization of BAS2. For example, the Lutece device, a machine capable of opening portals to other dimensions, is personified in the French localization with a prepositional phrase:

(4) Original English script:

Elizabeth: I broke your code, didn't I? Now, just give me the one to open that door and we'll see what your creation can do.

French localization :

Elizabeth: J'ai décrypté votre code, non ? Donnez-moi celui qui ouvre cette porte, et on

Elizabeth: *I cracked your code, no? Give me the one that opens this door, and we'll*

Elizabeth: verra ce que votre création a **dans le ventre**.

Elizabeth: *see what your creation has **in its gut**.*

Just as possessive adjectives were added in the French localization of BAS2 to further interconnect its characters, adjectives and adverbs serve a similar function in further contextualizing relations between them. An example of an adjective being used to add elements of characterization comes during the finale of BAS2, antagonist Atlas berates Elizabeth for bringing him a coded message that he cannot interpret without her help. In the English script, he calls her a “little whore”. In the French localization, the adjective *sale* (*dirty*) is added to the insult (*sale petite garce*, “dirty little whore”), which reveals Atlas as a misogynist in addition to his racist comments towards Dr. Suchong at the beginning of BAS2.

The addition of more specific nouns in the French localization of BAS2 appears to serve a similar function as the addition of adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases in the sense that they further characterize the settings and narrative of the game. The first instance occurs during a scene where Rosalind Lutece explains to Elizabeth that, by returning to Rapture in a universe where she has already died, she will lose her ability to travel freely between universes and will also forget that she ever possessed this power at all. In the English version, she says “She’ll forget.” In the French localization, however, she says “Elle oubliera tout,” (*She’ll forget everything*).

The second instance of an addition of a more specific noun occurs when Elizabeth reminds Atlas that, without her, he has no hope of lifting the sunken Fontaine's Department Store to the rest of the city of Rapture so that he can commence his attack against Andrew Ryan:

(5) Original English script:  
Elizabeth: If you kill her, I hope you are truly happy living down here.

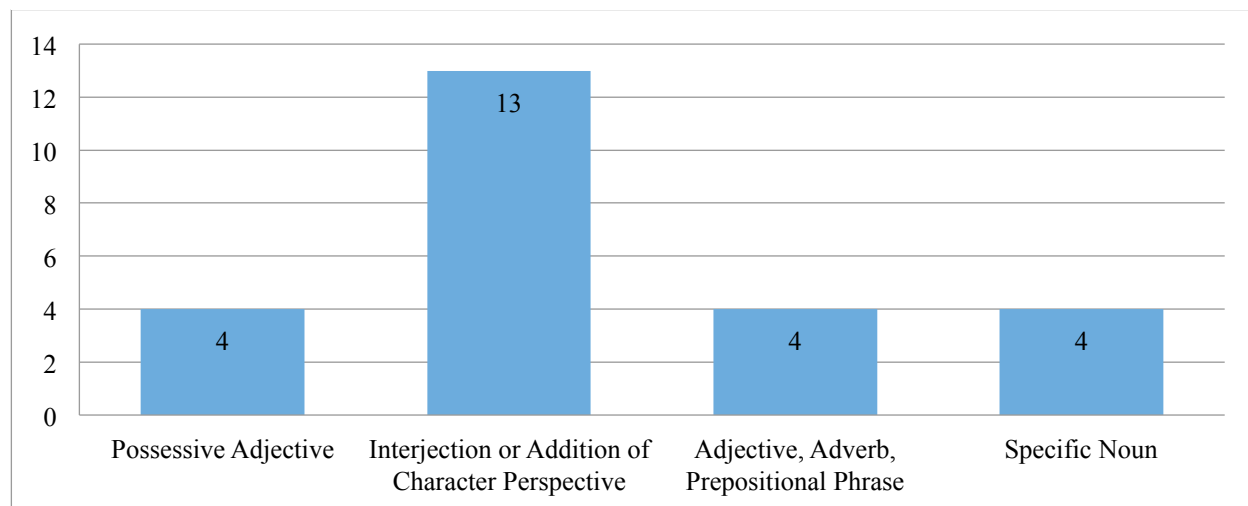
French localization :

Elizabeth: Si vous la tuez, j'espère que vous êtes heureux **du trou** dans lequel vous vivez.  
Elizabeth: *If you kill her, I hope you're happy **with the hole** you live in.*

In referring to Fontaine's Department Store as a hole, Elizabeth not only mocks Atlas's inability to escape from the store on his own, but also unknowingly insults his property, as Atlas' true identity is Frank Fontaine and is thus the owner of his eponymous department store.

The third instance occurs during the climax of the game. In the English version, Atlas insults the doctors that he hired to provide him with the equipment to perform a transorbital lobotomy on Elizabeth by calling them "monkeys", whereas in the French localization, his insult is changed to the French "chimpanzés". This change was likely made because chimpanzees are frequently used in French media to depict foolishness. Additionally, while the use of the word *monkey* as an insult prototypically evokes such depictions in English, the French equivalent *singe* more accurately refers to the entire taxonomical order Primates and would not evoke depictions of foolishness for French-speaking audiences. And while the French word *singerie* refers to general tomfoolery (similar, but not necessarily equivalent to the English expression *monkey business*), because Atlas is discussing the incompetence of his henchmen and his desire to hire ones that are more adept, his use of the countable noun *chimpanzé* more accurately describes his employees, rather than his evaluation of the situation as a whole.

**Figure 6.2. Contextualization by Addition in *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea Episode 2***



The fourth instance is perhaps the most interesting. The character Brigid Tenenbaum is the scientist accredited for discovering the supergene ADAM and for devising the method for harvesting it by implanting the sea slugs responsible for producing the ADAM in the bellies of the Little Sisters who collect ADAM from the corpses of Splicers that litter the streets of Rapture. In the English version of BAS2, Elizabeth finds a message in Morse code that refers to Tenenbaum as “the foreign bitch scientist”. However, in the French version, all vulgarity is seemingly lost, as she is called only “la scientifique allemande” (*the German scientist*). However, given that France and Germany share a complicated history between each other, and considering that Rapture was constructed in the aftermath of World War II and that scenes in Rapture take place during the year 1959, it is possible that *allemande* (feminine *German*) carries with it certain negative connotations that alienate Tenenbaum from the rest of the citizenry of Rapture, thus evoking similar dismissive and insulting meanings that the word *bitch* does in English. This is further reinforced by the fact that many characters mock Tenenbaum throughout the series for her German heritage; thus, it is likely the word *allemande* was used in place of traditional insults in order to evoke the same insulting quality that references to her heritage have

in other parts of the game. The addition of these adjectives, adverbs, prepositional phrases, and more specific nouns create an element of uniqueness to the French localization that makes the gameplay experience a more authentic and original experience for French-speaking players.

## 6.4 – Use of Regional Expressions

It is perhaps unsurprising that use of regional expressions composes the greatest number of the transcreation techniques found in BAS2, considering that idioms and regional expressions are often prevalent in literary works and, when these works are translated, must be properly represented by an equivalent expression in the target language. For example, the English idiom *old as the hills* is *vieux comme Hérode* (*as old as Herod*) in the French localization of BAS2; the expression *by the dozen* is *comme s'il en pleuvait* (approximately *as if they fall like rain*); *tit for tat* is *donnant donnant* (literally *giving giving*). An interesting example of this can be found in (6) from the voiceover for a children's educational video prepared by the character Andrew Ryan that is played at the *Ryan the Lion Preparatory Academy* to teach children of the objectivist values of Rapture.

(5) Original English script:  
Ryan: If I bake a pie, isn't it mine to enjoy?

French localization :  
Ryan: Si je fais un **gâteau**, n'est-il pas à moi seul ?  
Ryan: *If I make a **cake**, isn't it mine alone?*

The change from *pie* to *cake* is not an arbitrary one. The French equivalent of the English idiom *take a piece of the pie*, suggesting that one take a share of some kind of economic resource, is often translated using *gâteau* (*cake*) in place of *pie*. This change not only honors this distinction between French and English, but also underlines Ryan's character as a staunch capitalist.

Out of the 30 instances where French idioms and expressions were used, four of them occurred where the English script contained no equivalent idiom or expression. For example, “What’s the hold up” is translated as *C’est quoi ce bordel* (*What is this mayhem* [note that *bordel* also means *brothel*]); “if I see fit” is *si ça me chante* (*if it sings to me*); “You haven’t been around here long” is *Toi, t’es une petite nouvelle* (*You’re a freshman/You’re a newbie*); and “if we run into ourselves” is *qu’on tombe nez à nez avec nous-mêmes* (*that we fall nose-to-nose with ourselves*). The addition of each of these idioms and expressions serves to make the French localization more unique for French-speaking audiences.

### **6.5 – Addition of Linguistic Variation**

As stated in the results section above, there were no instances of the addition of linguistic variation in BAS2. This came as somewhat of a surprise, as the *BioShock* series frequently makes use of regional accents for characterization purposes. However, considering that the linguistic variation of one language usually does not resemble that of another (as British accents vs. Standard American English accents, African American Vernacular English, and the like are all inherently unique of the English language), it is understandable that the localization team of BAS2 and of the *BioShock* series as a whole make use of other translation techniques in order for these elements of characterization to be salient in French localizations of the series.

The most apparent use of a linguistic feature other than accent in characterization is found in the character Atlas, who is in reality an alias of Frank Fontaine: while disguised as Atlas, Fontaine speaks with an Irish brogue, whereas Fontaine himself speak with a noticeable Brooklyn accent. During the finale of BAS2, Fontaine commands Elizabeth to explain a coded message to him (what he refers to as his “ace in the hole” [“carte maîtresse” in French]). He

becomes increasingly frustrated with Elizabeth and, in his anger, forgets to speak with an Irish accent and speaks two lines of dialogue in his Brooklyn accent (the game even signals the switch between accents by showing Fontaine's name in place of Atlas's in the subtitles when those lines of dialogue are spoken). In the French localization, however, Atlas's accent does not change. Rather, in order to mimic this switch in character in the French localization, the pitch of Fontaine's voice is lower when speaking as Fontaine, while it is consistently higher and spoken with a slower cadence when disguised as Atlas.

While the deletion of the linguistic variation between Atlas and Fontaine removes an element of their characterization and makes them harder to distinguish, it is possible that this was done in order to avoid offending populations of French speakers that may not speak the standard variety. As there exist large populations of French speakers in regions other than France (such as Quebec, Belgium, Switzerland, and many parts of Africa and Southeast Asia), the localization team may have been concerned that associating a regional accent with the villainous characters of Atlas and Frank Fontaine may have offended speakers in francophone regions that do not speak the standard variety of French.

## Chapter 7 - Conclusion

### 7.1 – Non-Literal Translation in BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea Episode 2

While it appears that the localization team of *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea Episode 2* employed techniques of non-literal translation in order to avoid mistranslations in the French localization of the game, the results suggest that the localization team exploited certain non-literal translation techniques, as well as techniques of transcreation, in order to make the game a more original experience for players in francophone cultural contexts. The implications of the use of these translation techniques will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

As previously explained, the plasmids and vigors used as power-ups throughout BAS2 (and the *BioShock* series as a whole) frequently make allusions to cultural phenomena in English-speaking cultural contexts; English idioms are frequently used as titles for these power-ups. However, rather than employ the non-literal translation technique of equivalence, the localization team instead uses titles for these power-ups that carry the connotations found in the English titles that will be easily understood by francophone players. For example, though the French equivalent of the English expression “Peeping Tom” is “voyeur”, the French equivalent does not convey the same sexual and predatory nuances as its English counterpart; thus, the plasmid *Peeping Tom* is instead re-named *Petit curieux*, a title that conveys a similar perverted and infantilizing quality as the plasmid’s English title. This similar process of re-naming occurs in the titles of the other plasmids and vigors in the game in order to allow French players to more readily understand the power-ups’ use in gameplay, as well as its use in the contexts of the in-game worlds of Rapture and Columbia.

The re-naming of characters and in-game tools is done for similar reasons as is the re-naming of plasmids and vigors; however, in instances where in-game characters and tools are re-



named, wordplay is frequently added to the French localization where wordplay is not present in the English version. This is apparent in the re-naming of the Big Daddies to *Protecteurs* in order to exploit a rhyme with the French names of the Little Sisters (*Les Petites Sœurs*). Additionally, the re-naming of “tears” and “air-grabber” to “failles” and “capt’air” each add wordplay in that the former contains the definition of “loophole” in addition to “rift”, adding a quality to the tears that is not present in the English version, while the former is re-named to create a portmanteau of the verb *capter* (to capture) and *air*. These examples of wordplay are not present in the English version of BAS2 and serve to make the game a more original experience for francophone players.

Furthermore, the non-literal translation techniques of modulation and equivalence are frequently employed in instances where certain idioms and colloquial expressions are used in the English version in order to make reference to certain cultural phenomena in francophone cultural contexts that equally serve to make the gameplay experience more original for francophone players. As seen in the Ryan the Lion educational video, the translation from “pie” to “gâteau” (*cake*) evokes similar images of capitalism in francophone cultural contexts as the word *pie* does in English due to both desserts’ associations with money and capital in their respective languages. This type of contextualization for francophone cultural contexts can also be seen in the addition of other idioms discussed in the previous sections, as well as in the addition of certain expressions in character dialogue that add or develop qualities in character relationships that are not present in the original English version of the game.

The use of non-literary translation techniques in the French localization of BAS2 is perhaps unsurprising, as most projects of translation employ them in order to avoid mistranslating units from the source language into the target language. However, there were far

fewer instances of pure transcreation techniques; that is, while there were certainly instances that resembled the five transcreation techniques described by Mangiron and O'Hagan, most of these instances (such as the transposition of differing parts of speech between the source and target language or the use of an equivalent expression in the target language to replace one used in the source language) more closely resembled non-literal transcreation techniques because, rather than add something not present in the English version of the game, they simply translate what is already present in the English source language into French. It is important to remember that Mangiron and O'Hagan compare *Final Fantasy X*, a game originally developed in Japanese, to its English localization, and that Japanese and English are not as linguistically similar as English and French are to each other. It is likely that Mangiron and O'Hagan find more transcreation techniques between Japanese and English due to the fact that Japanese is written using logographs and syllabaries and can convey more semantic meaning in a smaller physical space than languages, such as English or French, that are written with alphabets. It is possible, then, that the transcreation techniques identified by Mangiron and O'Hagan may be more prevalent in the French localization of a game originally developed in Japanese.

## **7.2 – Implications for Second Language Acquisition**

It appears that the localization team of *BioShock Infinite: Burial at Sea Episode 2* employed techniques of non-literal translation and transcreation in order to avoid mistranslations and to add qualities to the narrative and terminology of the game that make the gameplay experience one that is more original for players in francophone cultural contexts. Additionally, the use of these techniques serves to make its narrative a more authentic experience for francophone players by employing equivalent expressions and adaptations of cultural phenomena

in English-speaking cultural contexts in the French localization of BAS2. Because authentic materials are frequently used in the contexts of second language acquisition to introduce second language learners to cultural phenomena of L2 cultural contexts, it seems that video game localizations may be used in SLA contexts to teach L2 learners certain L2 phenomena.

One of the central components that separates video games from other media often used in SLA contexts is their interactive quality. A video game cannot progress without player interaction and players are frequently motivated to surmount the challenges presented in the game to feel the sense of accomplishment that stems from their completion or achievement. Game developers frequently take great care to design their games in a way that will be difficult enough so that players feel as though they had to make an effort to progress through them, but not so hard that players believe them to be unbalanced and impossible to complete (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, Juul 2009). In fact, a certain level of failure has been identified as an integral part of the gameplay experience to maximize the sense of accomplishment players feel when finally overcoming a difficult gameplay segment (Juul 2009, Rama 2012). Each time a player fails to complete a gameplay task, they are able to learn from their previous mistakes and adjust their gameplay style in a way that may lead the player to success.

The relationship between failure and players adjusting their gameplay styles is parallel to certain aspects of functionalist approaches to second language acquisition. These functionalist approaches posit that one way that second language learners increase their proficiency in a second language is when they identify a communicative need to do so (Saville-Troike 2012, Mitchell Myles and Marsden 2013). Communicative need describes when second language learners' current linguistic proficiency does not equip them to interact with pertinent text or speech in their target language with complete success. Second language learners must then

address these gaps in their linguistic proficiency if they are to increase their level of success in interaction in the target language. In video games, communicative need could be seen as players' desire to overcome particularly difficult challenges within video games and adjustments in their play styles are similar to second language learners studying their target language in order to become more adept with the games' controls (Rama et al 2012).

Video games such as BAS2 provide players with meticulously designed virtual worlds to explore and navigate, as well as complex narratives that serve to develop the world and the characters that exist within it. It is possible that exploring in-game virtual worlds that are designed to offer players specific experiences would introduce players to specialized vocabulary used to describe the world. In SLA contexts, this may allow L2 learners who play the game to acquire specialized vocabulary in the L2 that they may not encounter in classroom settings (Dehann 2005). And while it is possible for L2 learners to be introduced to specialized vocabulary in literature and cinema, video game localizations are yet another with which learners may interact and explore in the L2 in an interactive medium (Rama et al 2012).

Another way that video game localizations may be implemented into SLA contexts is in activities that encourage L2 learners to engage in cross-cultural analyses of their own cultures and cultural contexts of the L2. Cross-cultural analyses allow L2 learners an opportunity to study the phenomena of their own cultures and how they may be similar or different to the phenomena of cultural contexts of the L2 (De Carlo 1998). As several idioms or expressions that are used in francophone cultural contexts appeared in the French localization of BAS2, L2 learners may have the opportunity to explore how these expressions emerged within francophone cultures, as well as compare these expressions to those of their L1. Additionally, because the localization team makes deliberate use of certain expressions during the translation process from English to

French, L2 learners may be introduced to certain widespread cultural norms in L2 cultural contexts, since developers of performed media frequently employ language that will carry the most broad cultural associations to be understood by the widest possible audience (Queen 2013).

### **7.3 – Potential Complications**

Though video game localizations provide learners a variety of opportunities to explore L2 cultural phenomena, there are certain drawbacks to using video games in the classroom setting. One such drawback is that video games are an expensive medium, as one must not only purchase a console or computer in order to play them, but also purchase each game and expansion individually. To make the purchase of video games, consoles, and other operating systems a mandatory component of a curriculum would likely place a significant financial burden on students. While it would be possible for students to share consoles and video games, this would then require extensive cooperation and coordination between students to ensure that each might have time to complete gameplay segments in conjunction with classroom projects or assignments that require students to play the games in order to complete them. In order to maximize accessibility to any video games that may be used in an L2 classroom, L2 teachers may do well to search for video games that are either inexpensive or even available to be played for free on Internet browsers or freeware video game platforms, such as Steam or One Play.

Additionally, certain affective issues may complicate the use of video games in classroom settings, as there would likely be students who are simply uninterested in video games as a medium. A great deal of attention and cognitive energy is required to succeed at certain gameplay tasks, and certain students may become frustrated if they are unable to progress through the video game due to repeated failure. In these instances, L2 teachers may do well to

advise students to reduce the difficulty of the game to allow the student to progress at a faster pace and to maximize students' entertainment in order to minimize their frustration (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, Juul 2009). L2 teachers may also develop group activities around gameplay tasks, with students who would prefer not to engage in gameplay instead making requests to the student player on what in-game action to do next. It is likely that, through L2 teacher intervention or through the organization of group activities with video games, L2 teachers may mitigate affective issues in classroom activities, projects, and assignments that employ video games.

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