A Study on the Localization of Overseas Game Titles From the Perspective of Transcreation

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With the development of the game industry and the expansion of the audience, the demand for the localization of overseas games has also been growing. Games are the products of culture, so artistry and creativity cannot be ignored. Introducing overseas games is so much more than simply converting one language to another. What matters more is localization—How to retain the entertainment energy of the source language in the target language to attract local players and satisfy their gaming experience. Achieving this requires a combination of various translation strategies, especially the appropriate use of transcreation. Translators should incorporate the elements of the target language country on the premise of retaining the original style. However, game titles are often the first parts audiences come into contact with, which plays a pivotal role in whether a game can sell like hotcakes. Therefore, translators have to make great efforts in the translation of game titles by using various translation skills flexibly. This article intends to analyze the expressive effects of translated titles from the perspective of transcreation.

Keywords: game localization, translation strategies, transcreation

Introduction

With the rapid development and popularity of the Internet, a large number of overseas games have flooded into the Chinese market. Many people think that game localization is all about converting the language of the game interface, but in fact, the translator's job is much more than that. In addition to the basic task of converting the language, in order to win the favor of local players and evoke empathy, translators must also deal with the cultural integration between the source and target language countries to ensure that players get a better playing experience. The first thing that makes a game attractive to players is whether it has an eye-catching title, and an attractive game title often makes people impressive. Therefore, this article will discuss the localization translation of overseas game titles and analyze their expression effects.

How to Define Transcreation?

Throughout the long history of translation development, it is not difficult to find that creativity lies in many translation works. The international translation circle defines this kind of translation as "transcreation", that is, the combination of "translation" and "creation". The scholar Salvador (2005) believed that transcreation is a kind of artistic discourse that allows language to be transformed in different cultures, and the key is to reproduce the

atmosphere and emotion contained in the original discourse and whether it can achieve similar expression effects. Mukherjee (1981, p. 6) believed that transcreation is to better combine interpretation and translation, and the core of transcreation is "seeking maximum readability on the premise of faithfulness", stressing that readability is extremely important. Xie (1992), a famous scholar in China, discusses "creative treason" in literature. He believes that when the translator cannot convey the meaning of the original text, he should adopt a flexible "re-creation" strategy of the source language, and the reader's acceptance must be taken into account. In this regard, the author believes that there is something in common between "creative treason" and "transcreation". Both of them aim at not restricting the translator's subjective initiative too much, so as to produce wonderful translations with more diversified forms of expression. However, this kind of creativity must be used in an appropriate way, because transcreation is fundamentally different from creation. Therefore, transcreation cannot be completely whimsical and free from the original text. Huang and Yin (2013) mentioned that there are many factors that need to be taken into account, such as the cultural background of the target language, target audience, cross-cultural communication effect, and so on. Therefore, Chen and Cao (2016) intended to regard transcreation as a translation strategy of adding appropriate translator subjectivity into the target text, the core of which is to extract the essence of the original text, and then carry out creative translation according to different cultural backgrounds.

The Application of Transcreation in Game Title Translation

Game is a product of culture and a carrier of spreading culture, which can make a country's culture and worldview exported to other countries, and realize cross-cultural communication. The localization of game titles usually uses various translation strategies, in which the translator not only has to break the language barrier to accurately relay the meaning, but also has to appropriately incorporate the background elements of the target language country to stimulate the interest of local players. In addition, game localization does not need to be completely faithful to the original language (Mangiron & Hagan, 2006, p. 14), but focuses on providing the target language players with a stronger sense of immersion, allowing them to participate in the virtual story and gain an empathetic interactive experience, so that the target language players can have almost the same emotional impact as the source language players.

An excellent translated game title can not only make players excited before entering the game formally, but also let them experience the echoing effect of "pointing" after playing. For some popular overseas games, the author found that the use of transcreation in game title translation is not rare. Here are two cases and brief explanations. The first case is a tactical first-person shooting game *Ready or Not*. The literal translation of "Ready or Not" is "准备好了吗", which obviously has nothing special. Actually, the game is a tactical shooting game with the theme of SWAT, in which the players can play as members of the SWAT force and experience the real SWAT work. The players can use various means to rescue hostages and suppress suspects to complete the task smoothly. In the process of localization, Chinese translators cleverly used the idiom "严阵以待" to translate the title. The four-character idiom familiar to Chinese players not only enhances the Chinese players' sense of game immersion, and makes them feel a sense of responsibility, but also renders the tense atmosphere of SWAT officers who are always ready to fight. The second case is *Injustice*, a fighting game, in which there are many characters including both superheroes and villains. Players can choose to be a certain character, and follow Superman to

fight together in pursuit of a peaceful world. The Chinese translators translated injustice as "不义联盟", using the translation strategy of transcreation; combined with the plot of the game, the word "联盟" was added to create a good atmosphere of fighting side by side.

Therefore, the author believes that using transcreation in game titles translation and integrating creativity in localization can have a good effect on the promotion of games; not only can players be curious to explore the game just through its title, but also can make the game better adapt to the target market and realize the cross-cultural communication. A good translation can instantly bring the game closer to the target language receiver. In addition, the author believes that in game localization from the perspective of transcreation, the translator should not only have solid language skills and the knowledge of the background and culture of the target language country, but also have a more detailed understanding of the game or experience, in order to truly translate the essence of a game, so that the translation can be both easy to comprehend and eye-catching.

Comparison of Popular Overseas Games' Title Translations

In this chapter, the author selects the translated titles of five popular overseas games in different versions, in order to analyze and discuss their different expression effects.

Example 1: *Borderland*

Version 1: 《无主之地》

Version 2: 《边缘禁地》

First, let's take a look at the RPG first-person shooting game *Borderlands*. The word "Borderlands", if translated literally, means "边界、边疆". However, in the context of the game, the story is set on an unknown planet where there is no order or law, but where dangerous aliens are lurking. So, the player's main task is to survive. Our Chinese translators translated the title into "无主之地", meaning "There's no jurisdiction". It is a place like this that will cause conflicts, which is consistent with the game. The four-character structure of "无主之地" is in line with the Chinese people's expression habits and aesthetics, and it implicitly reveals the smell of crises. Such transcreation successfully attracted a large number of players. In contrast, "边缘禁地" tends to be a literal translation with less artistic conception, which brings less expressive effect than the former.

Example 2: *The Last of Us*

Version 1: 《末日余生》

Version 2: 《最后生还者》

The second example is an action-adventure survival game called *The Last of Us*. The game was officially translated as "最后生还者" when it was released. But when the players had experienced the game, our Chinese translators came up with another translation, "末日余生". The background of this game is that the epidemic is about to trigger the extinction crisis, and people have to kill each other for survival. In such a chaotic world, there are full of selfishness and unrighteousness. However, the two brave protagonists gradually support and understand each other during this journey, and establish a life-and-death relationship. As a result, the title is a perfect fit for the game's content. "末日" speaks directly to the game's setting, while "余生" is a masterstroke, creative, and punningly literary. "余" not only has the meaning of leftover, but also can be used as a personal pronoun in ancient classical Chinese, which is equivalent to "我". The expression of "末日余生" leaves endless space for people to imagine. The four-character structure of "末日余生" is elegant, easy to read, and adds a touch

of classical Chinese, which blends the characteristics of the target language. It is because of the application of transcreation that such an impressive game title is output.

Example 3: *Far Cry*

Version 1: 《孤岛惊魂》

Version 2: 《极地战壕》

The third example is the game *Far Cry*, which is translated as "孤岛惊魂" or "极地战壕". The two titles may seem very different and confusing, with the former even having the feel of a horror game. However, the story of the game is set in the Stone Age, and the main character is the only survivor of the Great Migration, who arrives on an uninhabited island where more savage primitive creatures rule nature. The player's task is to tame those beasts, fight against other barbarian tribes, win glory, and restore the home of the Ungar clan. Therefore, from this point of view, the translation of "孤岛惊魂" is not very appropriate, which is to some extent divorced from the content of the game. Such transcreation is somewhat undesirable. By contrast, the latter expression "极地战壕" perfectly recapitulates the feeling of howling and fighting in the wilderness, and the author believes that it can better make the players immersed in front of the computer screen.

Example 4: *Counter-Strike*

Version 1: 《反恐精英》

Version 2: 《绝对武力》

Counter-Strike is also a first-person shooting game in which players are divided into teams of Counter-Terrorists and Terrorists, who complete their different missions in turns. As we know, the literal translation of Counter-Strike is to fight against attacks. However, in order to meet the theme of the confrontation between the game's anti-terrorism team and terrorists, and in line with the cultural background of the target language, the Chinese translators translated it as "反恐精英", which gives full play to the translator's subjectivity and blends into the Chinese consciousness of "反恐". It is a very appropriate translation. As for the version "绝对武力", the author has not consulted relevant background information, so there's no more content to analyze its translation.

Example 5: *Tomb Raider*

Version 1: 《古墓丽影》

Version 2: 《古墓奇兵》

The last example is *Tomb Raider*. The original meaning is "墓地入侵者", also known as "盗墓者". The two translations are "古墓丽影" and "古墓奇兵", respectively. The former gives a sense of mystery at first reading. When we know more about the setting of the game, we can acquire that is an adventure game, the hero is a beautiful female Laura, and she has to break through difficulties, to find the mysterious items buried deep in the legend of Peru's tomb. After understanding the background of the game, the author cannot help but sigh that the word "丽影" used is the finishing touch. It not only fits the plot of the game but also perfectly integrates with the character of the protagonist, which is really a good transcreation. However, "古墓奇兵" uses the strategy of corresponding translation, which is somewhat similar to the expression of the action-adventure film 夺宝奇兵 (Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Lost Ark). It is also creative and attractive too but still pales in comparison with "古墓丽影".

Based on the above analysis, the author believes that transcreation plays an important role in game translation, which can greatly improve the playability and acceptance of imported overseas. In game localization,

transcreation integrates some customary expressions and cultural elements of the target language region or tries to combine them with the game background on the premise of retaining the original style. The application of transcreation has produced many good game titles recognized by players. The author thinks that the translation of game titles can be done at the end of the localization process, because the translators must have a certain understanding of the character setting and background of the game, even have played the game personally, and be familiar with the cultural traditions of the target language region in order to avoid mistranslations or indiscretions. In the actual translation work, translators should strictly follow the three points of "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance" as the criteria to test the quality of the translation, choose the most appropriate translation strategy on the premise of ensuring the integrity of the content, and appropriately combine the characteristics of the game itself and the needs of players to add some creative content. However, the author believes that it is necessary to think twice when using the strategy of transcreation for game localization to avoid the inexpressiveness or glide the lily. At the same time, attention should be paid to the traces of the translator's subjectivity and should not be too obvious to cover the style of the original work, leading to negative effects.

Conclusion

Video games have become one of the hottest topics in the mainstream media. No matter its huge development potential and current mature industrial chain, as well as its global influence, the game industry should not be underestimated. Excellent overseas games often have fascinating plots and well-crafted environments, but if they are matched with an ordinary translated title, it is likely to lose part of the players and make a good game ignored. Therefore, for imported overseas games, the translated title should do as the Romans do, and the flexible use of transcreation is indispensable. For translators in the field of game localization, transcreation is an indispensable skill. The author believes that transcreation is the general direction of the translation strategy of game titles in the future, because it conveys information in a way that is closer to readers, and undoubtedly can create a more fascinating game environment and vivid characters. In addition, with the improvement of life quality and the continuous enrichment of spiritual life, people's requirements are also constantly improving. Only continuous creative innovation can truly attract the audience's attention. Finally, the author hopes that in the future, our domestic games can continue to go out, shine on the stage of cross-cultural communication, and undertake the mission of spreading culture. The author believes that more foreign players can also be familiar with our excellent Chinese culture through the strategy of transcreation.

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