Cultural and linguistic challenges of video games translation with some examples from *Grey's Anatomy* by Ubisoft

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Abstract

The present article discusses cultural and linguistic challenges of video games translation. The starting point for these considerations is the nature of games as interactive software whose primary goal is to entertain. The cultural challenges touched upon are rooted in the fact that games not only reflect our existing cultures, but also become a foundation for new ones, which is best substantiated by online gamers' communities. The linguistic challenges stem in particular from the specificity of games as stories co-created by the gamers, a fact which entails the fragmentary character of the translated text and the common localization malady of insufficient context. Despite these challenges the translators taking part in games localization projects are expected to provide a natural and attractive translation, which is focused on the target audience. It is argued that this cannot be achieved without a creative and enthusiastic approach to the task. The article concludes with a short analysis of a few problems identified in the Polish translation of the *Grey's Anatomy* game.

Keywords

creative translation, cultural challenges, enthusiastic approach, game localization, game translation, Grey's Anatomy game, linguistic challenges, localization, translation

Les enjeux culturels et linguistiques
dans la traduction des jeux vidéo
avec des exemples de *Grey's Anatomy* de Ubisoft

Résumé

L'article est consacré aux enjeux culturels et linguistiques de la traduction des jeux vidéo. La spécificité des jeux vidéo, c'est-à-dire leur caractère interactif et leur objectif ludique, constitue le point de départ pour ces considérations. Les enjeux culturels de la traduction des jeux viennent du fait que les jeux reflètent les cultures existantes et, en même temps, servent de base pour en créer des nouvelles, ce qui peut être illustré par les communautés virtuelles des joueurs. Les enjeux linguistiques viennent surtout de la spécificité des jeux, qui sont aussi des histoires co-créées par les joueurs. Cela provoque la fragmentation du texte à traduire et le manque de contexte, un mal fréquent pour les traducteurs. Néanmoins, on exige une traduction naturelle et attractive, concentrée sur le destinataire, que l'on peut atteindre grâce à la créativité et à l'enthousiasme. L'article fini par une courte analyse des problèmes choisis dans la traduction du jeu *Grey's Anatomy* vers le polonais.

Mots-clés

approche enthousiaste, enjeux culturels, enjeux linguistiques, *Grey's Anatomy*, localisation, localisation des jeux, traduction, traduction créative, traduction des jeux

Kulturowe i językowe wyzwania tłumaczenia gier wideo
z przykładami z gry *Chirurdzy* wydanej przez Ubisoft

Abstrakt

Niniejszy artykuł jest poświęcony kulturowym i językowym wyzwaniom tłumaczenia gier wideo. Punktem wyjścia jest specyfika gier jako interaktywnego oprogramowania mającego na celu rozrywkę. Omawiane wyzwania kulturowe tłumaczenia gier wypływają z faktu, iż gry zarówno odzwierciedlają istniejące kultury, jak i stają się podstawą tworzenia nowych, których najlepszym przykładem są interne-

towe społeczności graczy. Wyzwania językowe z kolei wypływają zwłaszcza ze specyfiki gier jako historii współtworzonych przez graczy, co wiąże się z fragmentarycznością tłumaczonego tekstu oraz częstą bolączką w postaci niedostatecznego kontekstu. Mimo to od tłumaczy wymagane jest naturalne i atrakcyjne tłumaczenie, nastawione na odbiorcę, które można osiągnąć przede wszystkim dzięki zastosowaniu kreatywnego i entuzjastycznego podejścia. Artykuł kończy krótka analiza wybranych problemów w tłumaczeniu gry *Grey's Anatomy* na język polski.

Słowa kluczowe

entuzjastyczne podejście, gra *Chirurdzy*, lokalizacja, lokalizacja gier, kreatywny przekład, tłumaczenie, tłumaczenie gier, wyzwania kulturowe, wyzwania językowe

1. Localization and translation

Video games constitute interactive entertainment software (Bernal-Merino 2007a) and this fact defines the uniqueness of translation challenges for the industry. Secondly, since video games are software, the translation[1] of video games is not an independent or final activity, but constitutes only a single element within the software localization[2] process which encompasses such activities as software engineering and testing of the localized product. In general, localization is defined as adapting a product linguistically and culturally to the needs of the target audience (locale) and is itself correlated and dependent on processes such as globalization[3] and internationaliza-

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[1] **Translation** is only one of the activities in localization; in addition to translation, a localization project includes many other tasks such as project management software engineering, testing, and desktop publishing (Esselink 2000: 4).

[2] **Localization** involves taking a product and making it linguisticallyand culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold (Esselink 2000: 3).

[3] **Globalization** addresses the business issues associated with taking a product global. In the globalization of high-tech products this involves integrating localization throughout a company, after proper internationalisa-

tion[4] that consist in developing global products and providing possibilities for future translations already at the software development phase.

The fundamental characteristics of video games and one which differentiates them from utility software is the fact that they are meant to entertain a specified audience. Play and entertainment is heavily culture bound, since different cultures find pleasure in different things and laugh at different jokes (Bernal-Merino 2007b). So the first and most basic requirement of video games translation is that the localized version is as playable and entertaining as the original. This in turn brings us to the basic characteristics of video games translation, which is target and purpose orientedness, both of which are already inherent in the localization process. To localize a product is to adapt it to a new audience in such a way that it fulfils its purpose within the new cultural context, fits there naturally and passes itself as originally created for that audience (Mangiron, O'Hagan 2006).

Consequently, the entertainment purpose and target orientedness of games as such translate into localization requirements. The most prominent cultural dividing line in the video games industry is that between the West (USA, Canada & Europe) and the East (Asia – Japan, Korea, China) and there are a great variety of features which often get adapted, replaced or completely removed, when a particular game is to cross that border and appeal to a new audience (Mangiron, O'Hagan 2006). The adaptation is conducted on all levels of the game, starting from graphics, gameplay or even music and finishing at linguistic traits.

From a linguistic point of view, the two basic requirements of video games localization: the entertainment purpose and

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tion and product design, as well as marketing, sales, and support in the world market (Esselink 2000:4).

[4] **Internationalisation** is the process of generalizing a product so that it can handle multiple languages and cultural conventions without the need for re-design. Internationalisation takes place at the level of program design and document development (Esselink 2000:2).

target orientedness determine the demand for very creative translation, cross-linguistic adaptation (Mangiron, O'Hagan 2006), sometimes referred to as transcreation (Bernal-Merino 2006) – of the game's various cultural references and humor to the receiving culture's expectations. The translator has to maintain the tone and fun of the game (Chandler 2008), while at the same time making it appeal to a target audience and this can only be achieved by assuming a vastly creative, re-sourceful, sensitive and responsible attitude.

2. Cultures reflected in video games

In order to depict the challenges of this task we need to realize the amazing technology driven transformation that games have undergone in the last few decades. Since the first games which featured hardly recognizable dots on a black and white screen, games have transformed into a myriad of colorful three-dimensional virtual realms representing and modelling realistic or fantastic interactive worlds full of impressive graphical details (Mangiron and O'Hagan 2006). None of these worlds is a culturally neutral setting: the graphical design of space, especially architecture; the design of characters (both the player and the non-player characters) such as race, hairstyle, eyes, clothing; objects ranging from weapons and armor to flowers, candles or even food; the social rules of the simulated society reflected in non-player characters' reactions to player activities; names of objects, and, most importantly, the language in the game used by the non-player characters, the language of dialogs, the language suggested to the player character etc. Music and the graphical user interface similarly do not have to be culturally neutral.

The existence or absence of some of these elements within a given game depends on the game genre – but every modern 3D game will display at least a number of them. Additionally, there is quite often also a time setting and historical issues have a great prominence in numerous games which refer to

historic times, settings, objects and characters. A good example are strategy and society building games such as *Civilization*, *Age of Empires* or *Caesar*. History, as one might imagine, bears very strong cultural implications since it is the foundation of the identity of a society or nation. Different nations often view the same historical events in a slightly different manner, whereas the same historical characters may evoke very disparate reactions.

Games such as *the Sims* and *Second Life* simulate a contemporary Western (especially American) society and focus on everyday tasks which include having breakfast, making espresso coffee, going to work, abiding by or breaking social conventions, flirting, earning money etc. Such games are heavily culture bound in almost every aspect. Military games are either set in historical times such as World War II or in contemporary settings such as Iraq, Russia or Afghanistan. Action games or shooters may not refer to a specific historic era or political issue, but again the features listed before, such as weapons, characters and space design, not to say language, may also display culture bound features.

Other games in which fighting is also one of the main focuses are fantasy games referring to various mythologies and fantasy RPG (role playing games) systems such as AD&D[5] or Warhammer[6]. Apart from RPG inspirations fantasy games inherit much from various nations' culture, mythologies, literature and history such as Greek mythology, Arthurian legends, Tolkien's Middle-earth or the samurai culture. These inspirations constitute the core and the heart of the fantasy genre and are heavily culture bound, even though for example Elves have become an "international" race appearing in almost every fantasy massively multiplayer online role playing game (ex. Korean game *Perfect World*).

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[5] Advanced Dungeons & Dragons. A role playing game (RPG) system developed by Gary Gygax and David L. Arneson.

[6] A role playing game fantasy system developed by the British company Games System.

Fantasy games, be they single player or online massively multiplayer, are the ones that display almost all the possible features listed previously and, most importantly, contain large amounts of text such as dialogs, stories, task descriptions, object descriptions, character logs etc. Moreover, the language in role playing video games often features stylization and is characterized by a certain amount of literariness.

A feature which fantasy RPG games may not always possess are references to contemporary pop culture, i.e. references to films, TV series, celebrities, music etc. However, these abound in action games, shooters and especially in a whole range of adventure games set in contemporary times or the future, as well as in the society simulations mentioned previously. Some references of this sort might be found in fantasy games, these however are not fundamental for the gameplay, rather they are intended to be small funny surprises when found in the game.

Some of these features may be considered to a lesser or greater extent inappropriate in the context of the target audience and could require cultural adaptation (Bernal-Merino 2007b) on both the engineering/design level and on the linguistic level.

3. Cultures established through video games

However, video games not only reflect existing cultures, they also become foundations for establishing new ones (Johnson 2009). The first and most prominent culture is the culture of gamers as such, who frequently play a variety of games or only favorite genres, read and write game reviews, conduct discussions on forums, use and develop the gamers' jargon. This culture can be divided into fan groups of particular genres and fan groups of particular games whose activities are visible in official and unofficial internet forums. These cultures, or as they are more frequently called, gamers communities, are very important for the video games industry. They are also the most

active, demanding and influential target audience when it comes to a particular game's success or failure[7].

Another culture or community type exists within the games themselves: these are player communities of massively multi-player online games usually set in fantastic and sometimes more futuristic worlds. The players gather in guilds, clans or other organized groups, have a leader, a special codex, play a variety of different roles within the community, and advance in official or guild ranks etc. The guilds or clans fight and compete with one another to gain dominance over a particular region or castle or fight one another just for fun. Similar communities exist beside other online games such as shooters, action games or strategies, this time focusing more on rank, experience and individual achievements.

The gamers' communities share a special jargon related to gaming itself, a particular genre and then a particular game. An inexperienced player entering an online virtual world is overwhelmed not only by the game's technicalities, but especially by the language used by players as well as by the player rules observed in the game. These communities constitute a very conscious and demanding audience scrutinizing translations and picking up any inadequacies in the localized game.

All this means that the translator of video games needs not only to be extremely creative, confident, sensitive and knowledgeable in the source and target cultures in order to address and adequately adapt various cultural references residing in games, but also needs to be aware of the gaming culture and conventions related to particular genres. Consequently, a professional games translator cannot be a person who is not himself or herself part of that virtual culture, who does not play games regularly, understand particular genres as well as gameplay rules (Chandler 2008), visit forums and consider his or her audience in a most serious manner despite the fact that

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[7] An mmp fantasy game *Dark and Light* developed in France around 2008 experienced complete economic failure despite beautiful graphics and promising gameplay features due to bad publicity from the gamers community.

games do constitute "play". On the contrary, the translator has to be a person who is aware that entertainment belongs to the most specific and sensitive cultural phenomena (Bernal-Merino 2007b).

4. Lack of context

Apart from cultural challenges, the translator of video games needs to deal with unique linguistic challenges. The fact that games constitute software products first of all means that translation is conducted as part of a greater and more complex localization process. Localization engineers extract translatable content from the game and prepare a localization kit for the translator containing the files to be translated and any reference materials. The localization engineers later insert the translated text into the game and then comes time for technical and linguistic testing, which may still change the text considerably. As a result, the translator's work is not final and the translator rarely has contact with the localized product (Chandler 2008).

One of the greatest difficulties of games translation is lack of context (Chandler 2008) resultant for the most part from the game's interactivity. The actual instantiated "game" is player dependent and the interaction is based on choosing from a multitude of possibilities. This means that the translator needs to work with a text containing variables (Bernal-Merino 2007a) for things such as character, place or object names. Variables apart from darkening the context, often pose grammatical problems in the case of inflected languages such as Polish and require creative and well-thought out solutions.

Moreover, interactivity also means that the event order is arbitrary and unpredictable, hence the text received by the translator has no clear beginning or ending. Due to text fragmentation (Bernal-Merino 2007a) the translator frequently encounters unclear pronoun references or unpredictable plurals, which additionally complicate the task. Dialogs often have op-

tions of different answers leading to yet different continuations and results. If this is unclear in the file the translator receives to work with, the game risks being badly translated and may require costly corrections during the testing phase and some mistakes might not be eliminated. Lack of context needs to be compensated by the translator's knowledge of the gameplay type, the translator's imagination as well as an ability to ask localization engineers or developers appropriate and concise questions as well as the skill to notice potential problems. When resources such as screenshots, a playable demo version of the game or detailed instructions within the file for translation are limited or non-existent, the translator needs to rely on making educated guesses (Chandler 2008) and asking the developer many questions to confirm them.

5. Multitextuality

Apart from interactivity, another feature that differentiates video games from utility software on the one hand and audiovisual products on the other is multitextuality (Bernal-Merino 2007a). Multitextuality of games means that the translator has to deal with a great variety of texts from highly specialized technical content to literary dialogs and narration featuring stylization, each of which poses special difficulties and serves a different purpose.

The game itself comprises typical software elements such as the graphical user interface with buttons and options, dialog boxes, pop-up windows and messages. These require skills in translating software and often feature text limitations demanding creative solutions. There may also be multilayered graphic art with words such as the name of the game or place names. On top of typical software elements there is the content of the game which can consist of story descriptions, character names and descriptions, object names and descriptions, place names and descriptions, dialogs, narration, player logs, task descriptions, books, notes, documents and even poems as well as in-

game instructions and tutorials. Complex games also often contain short films, which are either narrated or feature interacting characters. These require either subtitling or dubbing. Most of these gaming software elements may also involve a character limit constraint, which adds to the difficulty of the translator's task.

Collateral materials of video games comprise the game manual featuring disturbing promotional language combined with game descriptions and technical instructions, legal texts such as the EULA (end user license agreement), the Readme file which is mostly a technical text, packaging consisting of catchy promotional material and technical specifications. Official games websites similarly combine promotional text, instructions, descriptions, specifications, updates summaries etc.

Consequently, as far as text genres are concerned the translator has to be skilled with translating promotional texts, software products, legal materials, subtitling and dubbing script writing, translating instructions, descriptions, narration, dialogs and a range of other unpredictable text types which may be found in the game such as official announcements, jokes or even poems.

All of these text types need to be translated professionally and with the greatest care, since games are highly visible mass products, but perhaps one of the most challenging text type are dialogs. Dialogs are not easy to translate as they are an example of spoken language and need to be very natural. A single inadequate word can spoil all the game's atmosphere and realism. Moreover, games feature a multitude of registers in dialogs. We can imagine, therefore, the different approaches that need to be employed while translating a Mafioso and an old wizard's speech. Apart from registers, the speech of many characters departs from standard speech to enhance realism and sometimes provide a certain amount of exoticism. Speech impediments or drunken speech are frequent examples of such departures, which are also meant to compensate for the fact

that the dialog is not heard but read by the player. These departures and stylizations can be extremely difficult to translate since different languages need slightly different solutions to achieve certain effects. Consequently, translating dialogs demands a great amount of creativity, a good ear and linguistic imagination on the part of the translator.

As one might imagine humor is also an extremely important element of video games. It is not something that is immediately visible, but it is one of the features which builds the atmosphere of the game, makes it entertaining and playable. Of course, not all games possess humorous texts, but many which do depend on it heavily as regards player reception of the game. That is why translating humor is a very important linguistic challenge for video games translation and similar to dialogs, it is frequently included in tests for games translators. Translating humor constitutes equally a cultural challenge, because humor usually concerns very specific cultural references and may prove to be untranslatable, sometimes requiring a resourceful compensating solution that will be similarly appealing to the target audience. To adequately translate humor, next to cultural awareness, one needs some amount of literary aptitude and an uncompromised sense of fun (Chandler 2008). Unfortunately these are not skills easily learned or trained and are generally considered a given individual's special ability. Poems and versed fragments can be humorous or not, but nonetheless require a similarly highly creative attitude in order to achieve a naturally sounding and attractive result.

6. Genre related language types

This is not the end of linguistic challenges, however, since games feature a multitude of genres, which require different translating skills (Bernal-Merino 2007a). A different language type, style and register need to be employed when translating a sports game, a contemporary adventure game, a role playing fantasy game, a historical strategy game, a science fiction ac-

tion shooter, a military game, a casual life simulation, a funny children's puzzle or an arcade/platform game. Every genre has its own linguistic requirements: from highly specialized technical terminology found in vehicle simulations, through specialized military jargon, names of historical buildings, weapons and devices, epic fantasy style to modern informal and slang expressions.

7. Platform dependent terminology

Last but not least, every game is developed for a specific platform and/or operating system and needs to comply with platform-specific technical terminology. There will, therefore, be considerable differences in translating the technical fragments of PC games for Windows or Mac OS and games developed for particular consoles such as PlayStation, Xbox, Wii, Nintendo or mobile phones.

Overall, a professional video games translator needs to combine cultural awareness with sensitivity, and simultaneously the flexible and versatile linguistic skills of a technical, specialized and literary translator; information and terminology mining skills with a sense of fun; real gaming experience with knowledge of game genres, gameplay rules, the gaming culture and game genre-related linguistic conventions. On top of that, the video games translator is expected to employ a highly creative, entertainment purpose and target oriented approach to provide the game with natural and appealing texts, which will not be recognized as "translations".

8. Some examples of cultural and linguistic translation challenges in *Grey's Anatomy* by Ubisoft

The game *Grey's Anatomy* by Ubisoft is an adventure game based on a popular TV series about surgeons working in Seattle Grace hospital and contains mini-arcade games, in which players conduct a variety of medical and surgical tasks. Apart

from the mini-games the main focus in Grey's Anatomy is to help the main characters from the Seattle Grey hospital make decisions concerning their private life, relationships and work. The players watch a series of scenes organized into 5 acts divided by episodes. Player interactions with the game lead to different outcomes.

The translator's work with *Grey's Anatomy* consists mainly in subtitling dialogs and translating menu options. Dialogs in the game contain a great deal of humor, irony and mix informal language with specialized surgical terminology. The game features a contemporary American hospital and contains cultural references specific to Western culture. The game was translated into Polish and the translator had to reference the game screenplay. The translator also had all the subtitled scenes available, so there was no problem with lack of context, even though the actual files to translate contained scene fragments in a jumbled order. Before translating the game, the translator also had to become acquainted with the TV series to get to know the characters and the typical humor present in it. In order to illustrate the task of translating cultural references, humor, informal language and specialized terminology in Grey's Anatomy I have chosen a number of short dialog fragments from the game.

The opening scene of Episode 1 Act 1 Scene 1 contains a reference to pop culture, mainly to the actor Joe Pesci and the films he has starred in:

Meredith:	Big plans after work?
Derek:	Oh, hours and hours of excitement. The chief invited me over for a Joe Pesci marathon. Goodfellas, Casino, Gone Fishin'...
Meredith:	Well, I certainly can't compete with Joe Pesci.
Derek:	I don't know, I bet you look pretty sexy when you say 'Am I a clown? Do I amuse you?'

Meredith: Am I clown? Do I amuse you?[8]
Derek: A lot more so than the chief, anyway.

Poland is a central European country quite well acquainted with American culture and the films referenced in the dialog. For this reason the translator could leave the pop culture reference in place. As far as the quote from the film 'Am I a clown? Do I amuse you?', the translator referenced the Internet for existing translations and found a number of inconsistent versions, which means that the dialog in Poland is not recognized for the words of a particular translation, but more for Pesci's acting and a general message, unlike some famous quotes from Polish films. Consequently, the translator chose to provide her own translation of the fragment, which also allowed her to fit the quote better into the whole context of the dialog.

Another example of a cultural reference is the reference to the book *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, which is also well-known in Poland, so the reference could similarly be left intact. The reference appears in a scene when preparations are made for a lockdown of the hospital due to the spread of a highly infectious disease. A CDC agent Damon Birger says: "Once I lock those doors it'll become "Lord of the Flies" in here".[9] The utterance and the reference is humorous and provides a signal for future events, when patients and staff locked away from the rest of the world will start to behave irrationally and sometimes aggressively.

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[8] Polish translation:
Meredith: Jakieś plany na wieczór?
Derek: Zabawa na całego... Szef zaprosił mnie na maraton filmów z Joe Pescim... Chłopcy z ferajny, Kasyno, Przygoda na rybach...
Meredith: No, jeśli w grę wchodzi Joe Pesci, to raczej nie mam szans.
Derek: Czy ja wiem... Wyglądałabyś całkiem sexy, mówiąc... „Przypominam klauna? Tak cię rozśmieszam?"
Meredith: Przypominam klauna? Tak cię rozśmieszam?
Derek: W każdym razie bardziej niż Szef.
[9] Polish translation:
Jak zamknę te drzwi, szpital zmieni się we „Władcę Much".

Another cultural reference can be found in Episode 3 Act 1 Scene 3. This time the reference is to a typical American food item: the hot dog. The characters are looking at the serious 3rd degree burns of a patient and one of them makes a humorous comment characteristic for the TV series:

> Lexie: Wow. You see his arm? It's like a burnt hot-dog... I've never done a burn debridement before. You think it's going to be messy?
> George: Dunno. Probably.[10]

The characteristic dark humor found in the TV series consists in relieving the tension of a surgeon's work by making funny comments. Here a burnt arm is compared to a hot dog, bringing about a very humorous result due to the contrast between food and something apparently disgusting or horrifying. Lexie's excitement adds to the humorous effect of the scene and is also typical of young surgeons in the TV series. George's seemingly indifferent comment suggests something routine with horrific views and provides another funny contrast, this time with Lexie's reaction. The whole fragment could be translated close to the original, since the fast food type is also well known in Poland and the dark humor of the surgeons would not be considered offensive as might be the case with other non-western cultures.

A similar example of a cultural reference with dark humor is found in Lizzie's utterance, when she faces the challenge of treating a patient's eye. She says, "The ophthalmologist at Mercy walked me through the procedure, but I can't promise I won't slip and make him a cyclops".[11] This time the cultural

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[10] Polish translation:
Lexie: Rany. Widzisz jego ramię? Wygląda jak spalony hot dog... Nigdy nie pracowałam przy oparzeniach. Myślisz, że będzie makabra?
George: Czy ja wiem. Pewnie tak.
[11] Polish translation:
Chirurg okulistyczny w Mercy pokazał mi tę procedurę, ale nie obiecuję, że się nie potknę i facet nie zostanie cyklopem.

reference does not evoke American culture, but Greek mythology, which is known to all western cultures. Again, the reference was suitable for a Polish audience as Poles are well acquainted with Greek mythology, which may not be the case with other non-western languages.

Next to the cultural references the dialogs in the game also contain many informal expressions, which have no direct correspondence in Polish. In general the translator took great care to maintain the naturalness of informal speech envisaging analogous utterances in Polish informal language, which required creative adaptation.

A good example of this is the following short fragment of dialog from Episode 1 Act 1 Scene 4, in which the young surgeons are late for a debriefing.

> Bailey: Karev, Grey, you better have an excuse that doesn't involve hanky panky.
> Izzie: Do you have a thing for Lexie Grey?
> Izzie: Oh, that's a really good idea, George. Go after Alex's sort-of girlfriend, so he can sort-of kick your ass, then I'll have to sort-of kick his ass for sort-of kicking your ass. Not that I mind. Kicking ass, I mean.[12]

Lizzie's utterance is humorous due to the use of the informal expression "sort of". This effect was impossible in Polish even though there is an equivalent expression "tak jakby", which, however, would be completely unsuitable in this context, since there is no convention for such use in Polish informal language. The humorous effect had to be limited to the use of the informal expression "to kick somebody's ass", which does have

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[12] Polish translation:

Bailey: Karev, Grey, lepiej żebyście mieli inną wymówkę niż małe bara-bara.
Izzie: Czujesz coś do Lexie Grey?
Izzie: To naprawdę świetny pomysł, George. Uganiaj się za dziewczyną Alexa, żeby ci skopał tyłek, żebym ja mu skopała tyłek za skopanie tyłka tobie. Nie żebym miała coś przeciw. Kopaniu tyłków.

a Polish equivalent, although not so popular and slightly reminiscent of the English equivalent, suggesting that the expression is more a popular translation than an originally Polish informal expression. As a result the utterance lost some of its humorous characteristics.

Another example contains linguistic humor and can be found in Episode 1 Act 3 Scene 1. Meredith and Christina talk about a handsome male nurse, who is trying to win Christina's attention:

Meredith: Who's that?
Cristina: I don't know, but creepy nurse guy is starting to freak me out. He's always lurking around.
Meredith: Creepy nurse guy? Nevermind. What are you doing in the pit?[13]

The humorous effect of the scene is built on the use of the words "creepy", "freak out" and "lurking around", which are associated with scary horror films and evidently marked in the context of talking about someone who only wants to win somebody's attention. The translator had to very carefully choose words and use some creativity in order to naturally translate these expressions so that the humor of the scene would be maintained.

Another, and the last dialog to be analyzed here, is very characteristic for Grey's Anatomy's mixture of humor, cultural references and specialized terminology. The dialog is a manly talk between two surgeons conducting an operation (Act 1 Episode 1 Scene 3) :

Derek: Is there anyone in this hospital you're not trying to sleep with?

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[13] Polish translation:
Meredith: A to kto?
Christina: Nie wiem, ale ten dziwak zaczyna mi działać na nerwy. Nic tylko się czai po kątach.
Meredith: Dziwak? Nieważne. A co ty robisz na SORZE?

Mark: When you're top rooster, you gotta keep all the hens happy.

Derek: Just don't blind my patient, OK?

Mark: You OK?

Derek: I told something to someone in confidence, and she told her best friend.

Mark: That's how women operate. It's the divine secrets of the sisterhood of the pants.

Mark: Or something.

Mark: But if it bugged you, tell her.

Derek: OK, I will. If you tell your new crush how you feel.

Mark: What is this, high school?

Derek: Ok, you can insert the implant. Just watch the lateral edge where the infraorbital neurovascular bundle runs.[14]

The humor of the scene is built on Mark's ironic comments and sexist remarks. More interesting than the humor in the scene are the cultural references concerning the male–female relationships and stereotypes. First of all, on being accused by Derek of promiscuity, Mark ironically answers that he is a typical male "rooster". This reference similarly could be left in Polish, because the Polish also associate males with roosters and females with hens, although this connotation is heavily sexist. The reference to high school is also a cultural one and

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[14] Polish translation:

Derek: Jest w tym szpitalu choć jedna, której nie zamierzasz przelecieć?

Mark: Jak się jest kogutem, trzeba dbać o wszystkie kury.

Derek: Nie oślep mi pacjentki, OK?

Mark: Wszystko w porządku?

Derek: Zwierzyłem się takiej jednej, a ona wygadała się przyjaciółce.

Mark: Kobiety. Tajne przymierze solidarności jajników.

Mark: Czy jak tam.

Mark: Jak cię to gryzie, powiedz jej.

Derek: Zrobię to. Jak powiesz swojej nowej sympatii, co do niej czujesz.

Mark: A co to, liceum?

Derek: Możesz wprowadzić implant. Tylko uważaj na podoczodołową wiązkę naczyniowo-nerwową.

suggests that expressing one's feelings is a teenage habit inappropriate for a typical adult "macho".

Specialized terminology in turn is a linguistic challenge of the game demanding that the translator references the appropriate dictionaries, specialist websites or a professional in the field and there are many fragments containing specialized surgeons' jargon in the whole game.

9. Conclusions

The given examples illustrate that the video games translator needs to be prepared for a great variety of cultural and linguistic challenges. The basic requirement in the task of translating *Grey's Anatomy* consisted of understanding the cultural references in the game and how they added to its humorous effects, as well as their maintenance if they are suitable for the target audience as was the case with Polish, or their adaptation and replacement if they were to be found meaningless or offensive.

The ever present male-female relationships, male and female stereotypes and sexual references in the game, constitute a delicate cultural issue and the translator needs to pay great attention as to whether or not they are acceptable to the target audience. We might therefore imagine a situation in which a particular game, in this case *Grey's Anatomy*, might prove completely unacceptable for a given culture. This only exemplifies the statement that video games reflect their culture and society and do it to a greater extent than may be acknowledged. This is because the various culture bound features are often not visible until cultures meet in the event of localization and translation.

Another crucial challenge in translating *Grey's Anatomy* was to translate the dialogs in such a way that they would remain natural and informal since their linguistic humor and word-play are one of the strongest features of both the TV series and the game. This task demands a good understanding of contemporary American informal youth language combined

with a good knowledge of Polish informal youth language. In addition, due to the great amount of humor and irony, the task cannot be accomplished without a real sense of fun and linguistic imagination.

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