

**A LOCALIZATION TALE:
LOCALIZATION OF A VIDEOGAME NAMED *SOFIA AND THE BARBARIAN – A KID’S TALE***

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, the practice of videogame development, translation and localization is explored, taking as a case-study an independent videogame created through a collaborative family project - *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid’s Tale*.¹ The paper explores the possible relation between the translation approaches used in the field and the promotion of a videogame on social networks, websites and platforms (*itch.io*). The findings are likely to be of interest not only to videogame lovers, but also independent videogame creators, translators, and translator trainers.

KEYWORDS: Videogame, Localization, Translation, Promotion and Creation

1. Introduction

The design and development of videogames is one of the largest and fastest-growing areas of the entertainment business, so it is not a surprise that it is also attracting attention in Translation Studies. Videogames have been studied by translation scholars from a variety of different perspectives, for example by Bernal-Merino (2006, 2011), O’Hagan and Mangiron (2006), Sánchez, M. (2008) and O’Hagan (2007, 2009). Indeed, localization is perceived as a subfield of Translation Studies, reflecting the extent to which technology and the digital world have impacted translation and language research.

With the surge of new programming tools enabling the creation of a small prototypes by independent teams, videogames are no longer created exclusively by computer programmers in big videogame companies. This article explores a small-family-based localization project for a videogame called *Sofia and the Barbarian – A Kid’s Tale*, looking at the possible relation between the translation approaches used in the field and the promotion of this videogame on social networks, websites and game platforms. As such, it provides insights that should be relevant not only to videogame lovers, but also to independent videogame creators, translators, and translator trainers.

The article will first describe the localization process in general terms, including a brief overview of the history of game localization, before zooming in on the particular videogame that is our object of study to examine the specific stages of game development, translation and promotion.

2. The localization process

Videogame companies tend to publish their videogames in several languages to maximize their returns on investment (Dietz, 2006, p. 125) and as a result, the demand for localization is growing and is expected to continue to do so in the forthcoming years (Chandler and

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¹Source: *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid’s Tale*:

http://www.fluxogramadigital.pt/project_sofia_barbarian.html (Accessed: 21 January 2022).

Deming, 2012). Many games are sold in over 30 countries and are translated into more than a dozen languages (Melnick and Kirin, 2008). Thus, effective game localization plays a big role in selling games in specified regions or cultures.

The Globalization and Localization Association (GALA) defines localization as “the process of adapting a product or content to a specific locale or market” (Carrillo, D. and Sauberer, G., 2019, pp. 633-646). In addition to translation, this may include: converting currencies and units of measurement; reformatting dates, addresses, phone numbers, etc; amending content to increase its appeal to the target audience (such as by adapting, adding or removing text, or being creative when translating idioms or wordplay); modifying graphics to suit the target market (different cultures interpret colors and images differently, so it is necessary to make sure they're appropriate); adapting the layout, and changing domain names². Besides the technical development of videogames and the addition of new visual and audio features, game production has developed ever more complex plots and narrative techniques to create compelling stories and atmospheres. Consequently, the translation strategy needs to be specifically customized to the product, theme and platform, taking account of the target audience and the distinct purpose of each individual game.

2.1 Brief history of game localization

During the 1970s, videogames would normally be released in their original versions to the few foreign markets that were ready for this type of entertainment, and as a result, trade took place mainly in English between the United States of America, United Kingdom and Japan. The priorities in those days tended to be establishing a brand and customizing the product for more immediate markets; consequently, there was little awareness of how minor adjustments could be made to help boost sales abroad. Most videogames relied on intuitive gameplay and simple instructions, so there was little text to be read and indeed, to be translated. It was during this early period that English terms such as ‘arcade’, ‘joystick’, ‘score’ and ‘game over’ were directly introduced into most languages without any need for translation.

One of the earliest examples of game localization was the popular “Pac-Man”, brought to the US market from Japan in 1980. The original Japanese name was initially transliterated into English as ‘Puck Man’ [from パックマン], a coinage inspired by the Japanese onomatopoeic ‘/pakupakutaberu/’, a phrase normally used to indicate that someone is eating greedily, in imitation of a fish-like opening and closing of the mouth (Bernal-Merino, 2011, p. 13). The initial transliteration into Latin script characters sounded like ‘/pakkuman/’ to the Japanese, but when localizing the product for the USA, marketers decided that ‘Puck’ was too close to a certain coarse four-letter word and decided to go for a similar but less troublesome spelling, ‘Pac’. The final solution, ‘Pac-Man’, was a

² Source: <https://www.sure-languages.com/what-is-localization-2/> (Accessed: 21 February 2022)

successful choice, emphasizing that one of the principles of good practice in localization is respect for the language and culture of the players of each importing country.

In the 1980s, the so-called “digital revolution” brought a rapid growth in the demand for hardware and software from many countries around the world (Cooke, 1992), leading to a new demand for internationalization. At the same time, videogames were becoming more appealing, featuring more creative and better-developed plots that improved the gaming experience and involved the players more in the story. The need for games to appeal to the users’ own reality now made it essential for companies to adapt them to different locales and target markets.

This meant that large teams of writers and translators were increasingly required for each language version, something that videogame companies could not possibly undertake without more cooperation. Consequently, they started outsourcing the work to translation providers. It was thus that the process of adapting the software to different locales became known as localization.

Today, localization represents a “lucrative, dynamic and interprofessional field, often involving marketing, design, software engineering, as well as linguistic processes” (Windle and Pym, 2011, p. 410). The process encompasses not only the socio- cultural aspects of the game, but also the technical, ideological, ethical, and representational aspects (Pym, 2004), helping the software engineer and creators focus on the end users and their total satisfaction and enjoyment of the game.

2.2 The process of game localization

Due to the wide spectrum of players for which games are designed, the localized game must be innovative and exciting, but at the same time, it has to be easy to play and understand. For this reason, translators are often given *an unusual degree of independence* to modify, adapt, and remove any cultural references or wordplay that would not work in the target language. With videogames, fidelity takes on a different meaning, in that the translator does not have to be loyal to the original text, but rather to the overall game experience.

Localization engineers will first extract all the linguistic assets³ from the game and present them to the translators in a format that is convenient for all the parties involved in the team (primarily the localizer, programmer, and quality assurance department).

³ The most common linguistic assets to accompany a videogame are: the game itself, which is made up of a variety of texts in need of translation, encoded in a variety of formats depending on the information; the documentation manual (usually produced with software applications such as Word); user interface and pop-up help captions (often designed with proprietary tools in XML or binary code); audio files (encoded in .wav, .mp3 or a unique proprietary format); and video files (encoded in .avi, .mov, .mp4, or with more restricted proprietary tools). Other features may include: the official website of the game, developed in HTML or Java Script; the promotional texts in general which are distributed on the Internet, mainly on social networks; game patches (small downloadable programs that fix existing bugs missed in the testing process); the game-updates demo (a periodical downloadable modular augmentation demo of game chapters, features, storylines, and characters).

Some developers may employ amateur translators and localizers, as part of an 'inner circle', while others use freelancers or translation agencies.

At the root of many of the problems connected with game localization lies the fact that the various language versions need to be released simultaneously (or almost simultaneously), necessitating parallel development. Thus, there is pressure to produce the translations in good time in order to permit revision and editing before the game is released onto the market.

The videogame production chain encompasses different stages (O'Hagan and Mangiron, 2013, p. 129). This localization process entails three of stages: pre-localization (encompassing the development of the original game, the preparation of the localization kit,⁴ and the launch of internationalization), localization proper (translation), and post-localization (the distribution of the game).

The main aim of game localization is to adapt the contents in order to achieve an appropriate game experience in the target audience, while retaining loyalty to the original source. In fact, in the globalized marketplace, the acceptance of the product by the receiving culture is often perceived as more important than its provenance (Bernal-Merino, 2014), which in any case may be difficult to determine, as production is often spread over various countries. The fact that interactivity is part of the very essence of videogames means that a basic game design can also accommodate technical, cultural and linguistic transformation in order to bring the product closer to the local taste and expectations of the territory of release. According to this principle, almost everything in a videogame is open to change in order to meet the needs of specific territories, especially if it will bring a potential increase in sales. In other words, games may look different and be played differently depending on the country where they are purchased.

The culturalization of games also involves consideration of legal issues. In reality, the marketing departments of publishers are typically involved in decisions affecting changes at macro level, such as the title or visuals of a game. In many titles developed in the US or UK, a strategy of non-translation is the norm: that is, the name is kept in English in the different locales, so that big titles like *League of Legends* or *World of Warcraft* are easily recognizable all over the world. Interestingly, countries with protective policies like France also uphold this general tendency.

The localization department is usually behind cultural adaptation at the micro level. Successful localization goes beyond technical and linguistic adaptation to include the customization of the cultural content of a game when this is required to facilitate the gameplay and performance for target players. For example, it will involve careful attention

⁴A well-organized localization kit should contain all the final resources needed by localizers in order to create a localized version of the software without assistance from the original development team. Therefore, a localization kit should contain the files to be localized and prepared for translation (the binary files and the resource files), as well as the control panel, instructions, guidelines, indications, marketing texts and texts used for audio files and notes from the developers. It should also provide background and contextual information about what is being localized. A fully functional version (at least a beta version) of the running software should be included. Finally, a localization kit should contain all the tools required to work with the file.

to idiomatic speech, which changes not only from language to language but culture to culture (many expressions found in England sound strange to Americans and vice versa), and to local sensitivities (in Germany, representations of Nazism cannot be shown, while in Korea, sexual content is heavily censored). Ultimately, it is attention to such details that will determine the success of the product in a specific locale.

The translation of video games into different cultures shares most of the stages to be found in any localization process (e.g. of a software, an app or a website) but it also incorporates additional challenges like those faced by translators working in the audiovisual domain (time and space constraints, such as the number of characters per line; lip synchronization, etc.) or even literary translation (for example the use of slang, wordplay or tongue twisters). In the following section, the process is described in more detail within the context of a specific case study.

3. Case study: *Sofia and the Barbarian – A Kid's Tale*

Sofia and the Barbarian – A Kid's Tale is a 2D-platform independent⁵ videogame of the action genre.⁶ It is a family-based venture, which counts on the cooperation of a child (who is the artist, author, voice, and sound-effect creator), a software engineer and a translator/localizer. Development began on it in 2018 (on a part-time basis) and is still ongoing, with a launch planned for early 2023. The idea of going ahead with the localization process was born in 2020 with the desire to promote it at a worldwide level with the help of a crowdfunding campaign.

The software engineer wrote the code, developed the content, and tested the internationalization, and is also in charge of the art adaptation, project coordination, and promotion. The translator not only works with the transfer of information from UK English into European Portuguese and German, but also cooperates directly with the software engineer to create the best possible options in terms of translation and localization. The developer is always open to new suggestions made by the localizer or the fan base, whether involving technical or linguistic aspects.

Developing a game based on the creative skills of a child is not an easy task. When the process of creating the game started, most of the drawings had already been done, so there was a need to digitally adapt the illustrations to create frames for the characters, animations, objects and scenarios.

The story of the game was imagined by the child and is based on many drawings that she drew when she was between 3 and 5 years of age. It is a story of our universe and its planets which are ruled by the Sun Sorcerer and his two faithful servants, AI and UI. One

⁵An 'independent game' is one created by an independent developer or team of developers without the financial support of publishers, as the big mainstream videogames have. These games depend on the cooperation of various gaming communities that offer their experience and expertise in gaming to support the project. The growth of the worldwide web and modernization of software and localization tools have made it possible for independent games to flourish within the global market.

⁶The player needs to overcome various obstacles, while accumulating power (power-up).

day, the Ice Witch captures the Sun Sorcerer and, because of this, the whole universe is plunged into complete darkness. The universe is now in danger and its only hope is a little girl named Sofia and her friend, the Barbarian.

The game was originally written in UK English, but there are plans to translate it into European Portuguese, European Spanish, German, French, Russian, Chinese, Hindi, Arabic and Japanese. As the game is still under development, the translation and localization stages are still undergoing changes and adaptations. At this moment, the localizer is checking whether the main characters, their physical appearance and the game's settings are suitable for global audiences and cultures without having to undergo major changes and looking into culturalization issues relating to aspects of the content, such as the animals and the sounds they make, types of food, the use of children's songs and nursery rhymes, and the restrictions on content by age.

In accordance with usual procedures for videogame localization, *Sofia and the Barbarian- a Kid's Tale* is undergoing the following stages: 1. Development of the original game; 2. Determination of project content and specifications (i.e., the core gameplay and innovative selling points are discussed); 3. Creation of the concept art created, including the basic game mechanics and storyboard; 4. Identification of the engine and development tools to be used; 5. Organization of the localization kit; 6. Edition and revision of texts.

3.1. Game development

The development of the prototype is often regarded as the core phase of the project, and it is at this stage that developers take the decision about whether to create a game that is internally different from almost every other game or not. They will also decide issues related to the internationalization of the product (for example the integration of Unicode and the design of a generous or resizable user interface).

In our case, the programming language used was *GDScript*, which is based on the language *Python*, for the game engine *GODOT*. Figure 1, below, shows an example from the tutorials, illustrating how even a simple user interface requires many lines of code to tell the hardware what and when to do things. These are often rather confusing for the translator.

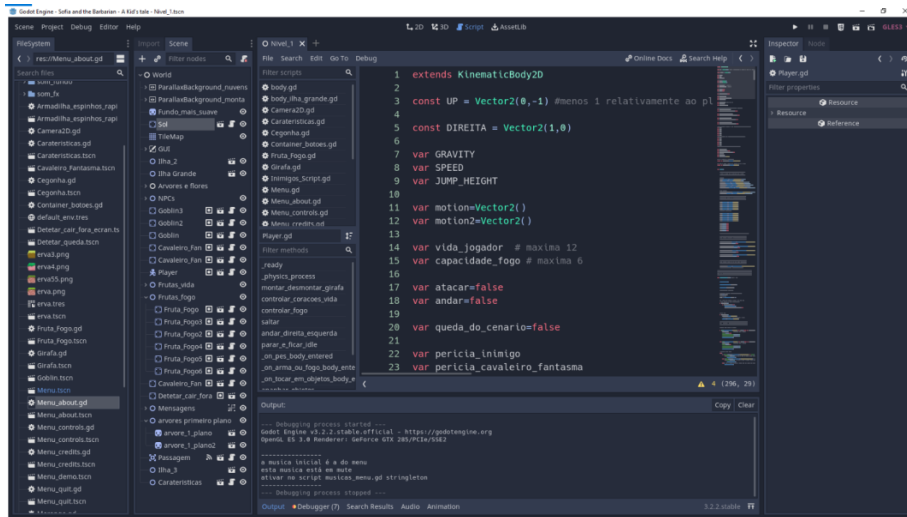


Figure 1. Coding on Godot game engine from the game *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid's Tale*.

Figure 2 illustrates game code and how working with it could be complex for both translators and engineers. Words/commands appearing as part of the user interface have not been highlighted, which can become more difficult for the translator to identify correctly, leading to possible errors.

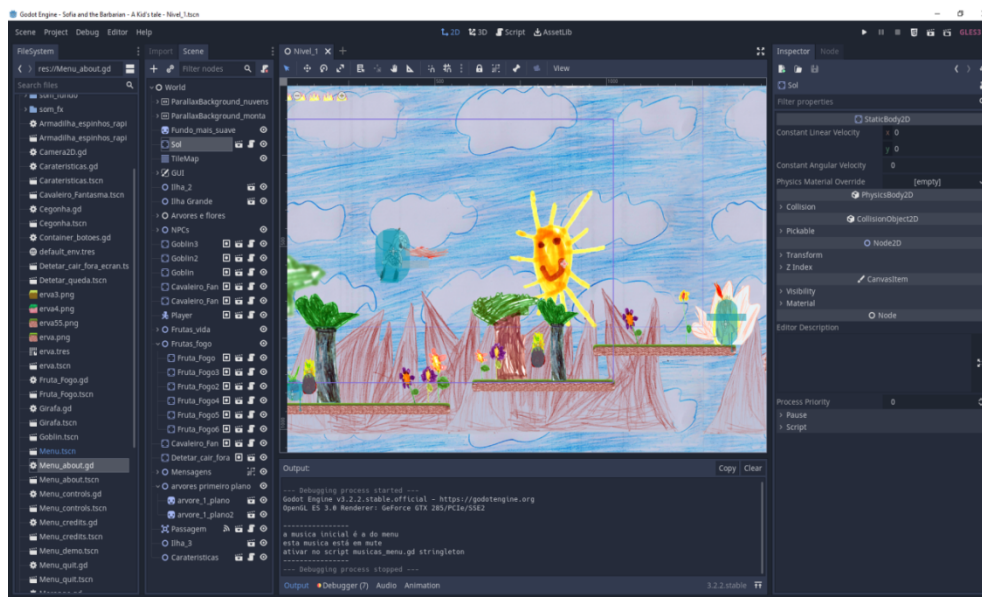


Figure 2. User interface programmed on Godot game engine from the game *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid's Tale*.

The user interface (UI) is also often referred to as the menu. This is made up of short text labels that trigger specific computer behaviors. This is a functional text type that can take the form of a reader-friendly version such as play, as seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3 - User Interface from the game *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid's Tale*

The user interface text needs to be short, clear, and precise in terms of the information displayed, because its main purpose is to facilitate play without creating confusion, while maintaining the mystery and magic of the game. In this case, the user interface was designed with available space, so the labels of other languages could fit in without any problem, even if they are visually longer.

As regards the controls panel (Figure 4), the Z key may cause confusion in many parts of the world because the letter z is a part of the Latin-script alphabet. On the Latin keyboard the z key was chosen (by default) because of its strategic location on the keyboard. Nonetheless in different keyboards the same may represent different letter. However, it is planned that the player may choose the keys that they wish to play with.

At this stage of the game's development, the following is yet to be implemented: after the user chooses which language they want, the keys that appear in this menu will adjust to the user's keyboard. In the future, another option will also be implemented, which will allow the user to reset the keys to be used in the game.



Figure 4. Controls panel from the game *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid’s Tale*.

3.2 The translation process

In order to localize this game, the team used the valuable support of the Game Engine Localizer Tutorial Guide, produced by Juan Linietsky, Ariel Manzur and the Godot community.⁷ The preferred format for the presentation of this material is the spreadsheet (Chandler, 2005), as in Table 1, because it is a simple, rational structure that can be reduced to numerical values – the true language of machine code. Informative texts and characters’ dialogue are presented in columns, which is a fragmented, but easy and effective way to locate specific details. By attributing a separate line and column to each piece of information, programmers and localization teams can then automatically and safely insert the relevant strings back into the game code, avoiding the potential creation of errors in the source code by translators or localizers. This is based on whichever language the player chooses to use. For instance, in our case, the word “stronger” remains in the coding, but the script will be presented in the language that the player chose in the first place.

Keys	PT	EN	DE
<i>STRONGER</i>	<i>Agora estou mais forte</i>	<i>I’m stronger now</i>	<i>Ich bin jetztstärker</i>
<i>WEAK</i>	<i>Estou demasiado fraco para montar</i>	<i>I’m too weak to ride...</i>	<i>Ich bin zuschwach um zureiten ...</i>
<i>FIRE</i>	<i>Agora consigo cuspir fogo</i>	<i>Now I can breathe fire</i>	<i>Jetztkann ich Feuer speien</i>
<i>DISMOUNT</i>	<i>Para cuspir fogo eu tenho de desmontar</i>	<i>To breath fire I must dismount</i>	<i>Um Feuerzuspeien, mussichabsteigen</i>

Table 1. Language spreadsheet from the game *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid’s Tale*.

⁷Juan Linietsky, Ariel Manzur and the Godot community (CC-BY 3.0). Revision e43d99b8. In https://docs.godotengine.org/en/stable/tutorials/i18n/internationalizing_games.html

This method can be very useful for adjusting words to space constraints, encoding variables, mobilizing obligatory pre-established terminologies and identifying potentially ungrammatical constructions generated by software automatic juxtapositions, as well as the possible lack of context.

The translation of all these assets leads to the perennial dilemma of localization: what is to be localized and for whom? As regards this particular game, the main target audience consists of children, young teenagers and their parents, which makes the localization process relatively easy; this is because the creative aspect of the game is based on a child's imagination (a surprising vision of the world in many ways), which is to be maintained. On the other hand, the game's narrative may stir up a completely different debate since the main plot is based on a friendship between a child and a barbarian (Figure 5). This might engender some puzzlement/debate since cultural references around the notion of 'barbarian' suggest everything that is far from childlike and innocent.⁸ However, the visual imagery throws it into a new light, as the character of the "barbarian" is envisioned and described as a child, and we learn that his main goal is to help his friend save the universe. The game thus inspires a sense of friendship and comradeship towards an otherwise fearsome character.

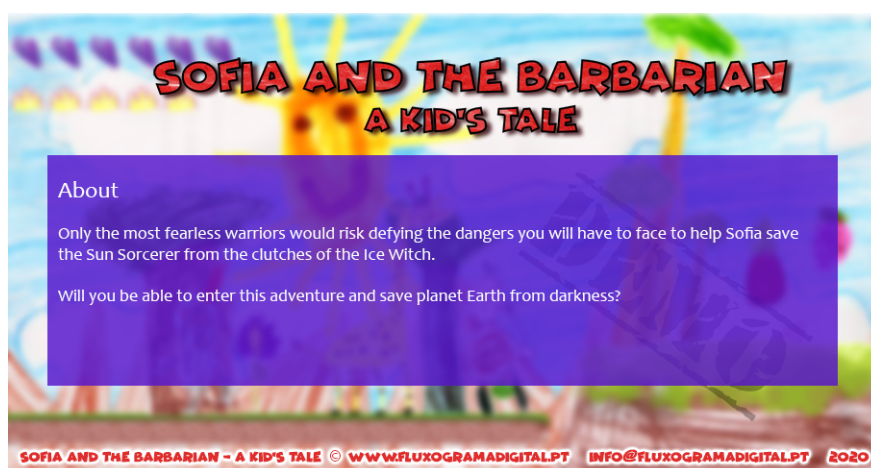


Figure 5. "About" interface from the game *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid's Tale*.

The narrative load is actually lower in this game than in some other genres, which means that the margin for creativity in translation is relatively narrow; indeed, a fairly literal strategy would seem to be indicated to keep the game experience in the destination locale. This does not signify that the translation is an easy process, though, as expertise relevant to the specific genre and subject matter are still required (Dietz, 2007).

One of things that needs to be considered in the localization process is the preferred language variant for localization. There may be reason to differentiate between variants of

⁸In many cultures, the word "barbarian" carries a negative charge of violence, brutality, exploitation, and destruction, precisely in opposition to the more positive notions of culture, humanism, and particularly civilization. In this case, these associations are less well defined, as the term is seen through the eyes of a child, who does not have the knowledge of the historical factors underpinning it.

the same language when player communities are large enough to justify the investment, and in some cases, games are now being localized into Canadian French, Brazilian Portuguese and Latin-American Spanish (Giné, 2009). In our case, the team has decided to localize *Sofia and the Barbarian* into the European variants only, at least for the moment. Depending on the game and the target audience, register may also be an issue. For example, formal German is more refined, but can feel dated or distant, and might even seem confusing for smaller children to use; informal German, on the other hand, may seem impolite to some players, although it is becoming increasingly common as cultural norms shift. In our game, we have generally opted for the informal or neutral variant, such as “Quit” (EN), “Spiel verlassen” (DE) or “Sortir” (FR).

The following table pinpoints some aspects of the localization process into English, Spanish and French in terms of formatting, punctuation, grammar and formality (Table 2). These can quickly become challenges: for example, different modes of address (such as the choice of “tú” above the more formal “usted” in Spanish) may bring other grammatical implications. The text and narrative have to acknowledge the player, as well as their age and dialogue responses.

Language	Formatting	Punctuation	Grammar	Formality
English	Shorter words/sentences/strings	Use of ""	No distinction between gender in nouns	you
French	Longer words/sentences/strings	Use of « »	Gender in nouns	tu /vous
Spanish	Longer words/sentences/strings	Use of inverted question (¿) and exclamation (¡) marks at the beginning of the sentences as well as the regular ones in the end. The letter "ñ"	Gender in nouns	tu/usted

Table 2. Translation and Localization process from the game *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid's Tale*.

As we have attempted to demonstrate above, game localization seems to grant a high degree of freedom to the translators, which is closely linked to the nature of this medium. The choice by the translator of a particular linguistic solution in the target game cannot be explained simply on the basis of the relationship between the translation and the source

text alone. For example, the phrase “breathing fire” in English refers simultaneously to the literal act of producing a stream of fire from the mouth, but also to the little Barbarian’s temperament, in that he is intimidatingly or violently aggressive towards his enemies in speech and manner.⁹ In Portuguese and French, the terms “cuspir fogo” “cracher du feu” tend to be associated with creatures like dragons, though there are also interesting examples of idiomatic expressions with the word ‘fire’ to represent the idea of anger and violence in other languages, such as “deitar fogo pelas narinas” (PT) or “echar fuego pelos ojos” (SP).

Certain names, terms, places or expressions may be subject to a wider foreignization strategy. In this case the title of the game remains the same in any language in order to retain the overall “feeling” of the game.

3.3. Game promotion: getting the idea

Marketing was not included in the main stages of the production chain described above, since it can begin at any moment during a project. In this particular case, the game developer began promoting the game even before he actually started programming the software, since the game design and child’s drawings had already been completed. This section discusses the various aspects of the game’s promotion, namely the promotional videos, website, crowdfunding campaign, and fan-based suggestions. The game manual and promotional book of illustrations, which will also be subject to localization, are still being developed.

3.3.1 Promotional videos and drawings

Multimedia support was used to launch the initial idea and create an aura of mystery and suspense around the game, a strategy that appeals to the adult users of the game. Marketing has to take into account how the different game assets are being localized: for instance music is perceived differently among different cultures, as using different music genres to promote a child’s game should be considered a strategy. Thus, a videogame is both a product designed for mass consumption and an artistic creation at the same time. By doing this for different audiences in other countries it is more effective in a sales perspective.

⁹Retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fire-breathing> (Accessed: 12 February 2022).

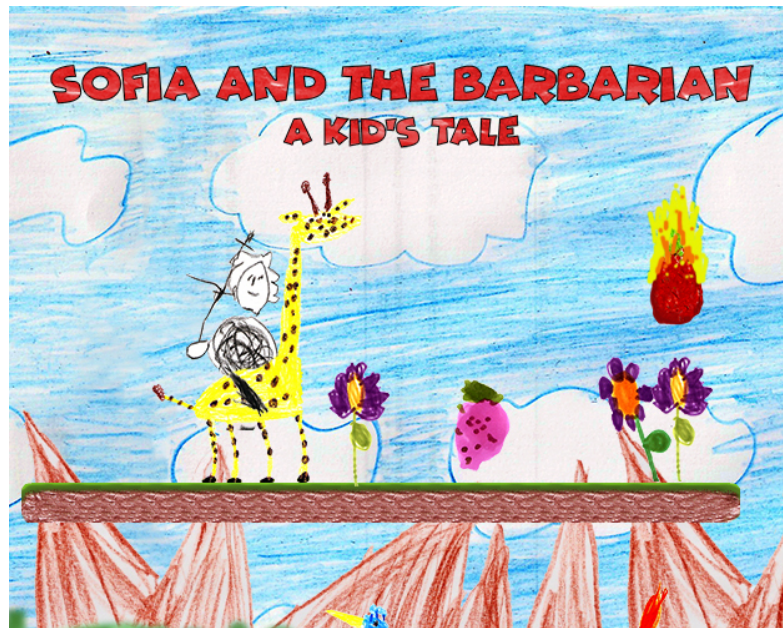


Figure 6. Game Design of *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid's Tale*.

The promotional video, for example, aims to show the gameplay of the video game. Therefore, the scenes presented are as diverse as possible, in a way of introducing different environments and levels in a fast and dynamic way. It is intended to make a general presentation of what the players can expect out of the game, but without revealing situations that will be important for the player to witness when playing the video game. Each video is a part of a sequence of promotional videos that is released as the development of the game progresses and can be seen on the Youtube channel, game website and social networks of the project¹⁰.

3.3.2 Website

The website was created in order to launch additional information such as previews and reviews of the product, notice boards, forums, customer support details, and expansion packs with new chapters and language versions, as well as screenshots, game play clips of the actual videogame, and information on the crowdfunding campaign (Figure 7).

¹⁰ Link to social networks - <https://linktr.ee/sofiaandthebarbarian> (Accessed: 22 June 2022)

Fluxogramadigital [Home](#) [About](#) [Projects](#) [Contacts](#)

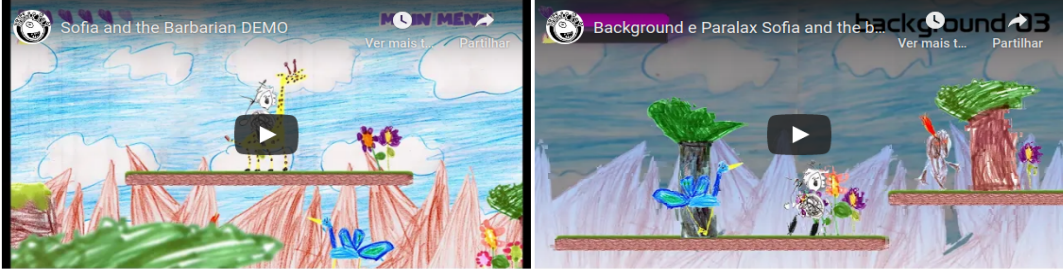
Sofia and the Barbarian: A Kid's Tale

Only the most fearless warriors would risk defying the dangers you will have to face to help Sofia save the Sun Sorcerer from the clutches of the Ice Witch. Will you be able to enter this adventure and save planet Earth from darkness?

Sofia and the Barbarian: a Kid's Tale is a 2D platform game that is currently under development.

All illustrations are created based on child's drawings. The idea and the story script were also based on a story created by this child. All the voices and the sound effects of the game were also some of the other things that this 5 year old child created.

Developing a game based on the creative skills of a child is not an easy task. When the process of creating the game started, most of the drawings were already created, so there was a need to digitally adapt all the illustrations to create the frames for the characters, animations, objects and scenarios.



A prototype level has been already developed and some game concepts are already implemented. More illustrations are being developed, so

Figure 7. Website.

The main aim of the website is to actively involve different language-specific fan communities, in order to improve the game. By learning about players' likes and dislikes, the content can be better adapted to the general public in different countries, making the selling process easier.

3.3.3 Game platform

The *Itch.io* platform is a marketplace platform for independent videogames where developers can sell the contents that they have created. Access to the site is limited, but there is a small part of the gaming community that has access to some downloadable files and a demo in order to test and fix specific problems. These testers are from various parts of the world and are available to collaborate and identify all kinds of errors or inaccuracies in order to help the game developer.



Figure 8. Itch.io platform.

3.3.4 Demo version

After the testers have tested the updated version of the game and all possible modifications have been made, the worldwide community can download the demo version of the game. The localizer will also depend on the testers' helpful feedback regarding linguistic and/or cultural appropriacy and can make the necessary adaptations to make it more interesting and fulfilling in terms of gameplay.

3.3.5 Demonstration video

Another way of launching a videogame product is by means of a demonstration video,¹¹ which promotes and facilitates the cooperation of the fan base in terms of suggestions for gameplay, design, localization, and language used. This project, as the work of independent videogame developers and creators, depends on voluntary help from others (Figure 9).

¹¹Demonstration video - <https://fluxogramadigital.itch.io/sofiabarbarian> (Accessed: 12 January 2022).



Figure 9. Demo video from the game *Sofia and the Barbarian – a Kid's Tale*.

3.3.6 Fan-based promotion and validation

Soliciting help from the wider Internet community has become a new and innovative way of solving problems and making game development and creation a cooperative and satisfying experience. Here, internet users voluntarily contribute their domain knowledge on the subject, enabling the developer to constantly improve the content and design of the product. This empowers the users, as well as being very beneficial for the creators and their budgets.

In our case, one useful suggestion that emanated from the internet community was that a specific font should be created that evoked a child's handwriting, bringing more authenticity to the game and making it more reader friendly. This means that the child will have to write all of the letters of the different alphabets that will be used in the game, and, in the case of Russian, Chinese and Japanese, use different scripts.

Another suggestion was the use of icons instead of words in the user interface (for example in choosing the language, since the former are, generally speaking, more universally understood). This was suggested especially because icons generally offer a more universal perspective and can relate assertively at a cultural and sociological level. They are also useful for game players with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Dyslexia, for example. In these cases, the player could have the choice between handwritten information or icons.

In terms of the testing phase, it is fundamental for fans to undertake the gameplay or localization testing, because they can pinpoint errors, mistakes or bugs that the software developer, translators or localizers may have overlooked or do not have knowledge of. This supplies the videogame with accessibility and value, bringing more sales success worldwide.

Language testers also check for grammar mistakes, typos, repetitions, and problems with text layout, while the localization team checks the ethical, cultural and sociological-related information. Creating content that is clear and accessible for users around the world is beneficial in terms advertising and revenue of the game.

3.3.7 Crowdfunding

In this game, crowdfunding was used to generate financial support for continuous software development, game promotion and localization. The process began in February of 2021, in order to give the developer enough time to develop the multimedia content that will be the foundation of the publicity for this crowdfunding campaign.

4. Conclusion

This tale of localization in the world of videogames has sought to provide an insight into the process from a practical perspective. Although the project is still ongoing, the constant commitment shown by its creative team and the fact that it already has got its very own fan base has made it possible to believe in the continuity of the project. Through a good localization service, the creative team can bring not only the language, but also the characters and the whole game experience closer to the player.

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