

Original Paper

Localization of Online Game *Genshin Impact* Based on Multimodal Analysis

Siqing Li¹

¹ School of Foreign Languages, East China University of Science and Technology, Shanghai, China

Received: September 15, 2023 Accepted: September 29, 2023 Online Published: October 16, 2023

doi:10.22158/elsr.v4n4p85

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/elsr.v4n4p85>

Abstract

Genshin Impact (Yuan shen 原神), a fantasy-themed open-world action role-playing game, has been a runaway success since its initial release in September 2020, implying Chinese game is gaining popularity in the whole world. *Genshin Impact* achieves a major cultural export around the world owe to its successful game localization. Prior studies focused on analyzing the linguistic and visual modes. Therefore, the study analyzes how audio modes make effects on audio translation and linguistic translation in a case study of elemental skill dubbing for Zhongli and Xingqiu and inventive opera Divine Damsel of Devastation based on multimodal analysis.

Keywords

Genshin Impact, online game, multimodal analysis, localization

1. Introduction

Genshin Impact (Yuan shen 原神; miHoYo 2020), an open-world action roleplaying game developed by Chinese company miHoYo, hit a great success since its release in 2020. During nearly three years, *Genshin impact* achieves its cultural export in English, Korean, Japanese, French, German, Indonesian, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese countries. The game story takes place in a fictional continent called “Teyvat” (Ti wa te 提瓦特) where different zone in it has its own corresponding national prototype. Among all, the character design, regional names, game storyline, and skill names in Liyue (Li yue 璃月), designed based on China, fully embody the characteristics of Chinese culture. For one thing, due to the cultural discrepancy between China and English-speaking countries, it is difficult to achieve complete equivalence. For another, *Genshin Impact*, a video game, displays its meaning in the form of an interactive audiovisual text (Mejías-Climent, 2021). Audiovisual text refers to “a semiotic construct woven by a series of signifying codes that operate simultaneously to produce meaning” (Chaume, 2012). Therefore, localization, defined as a translation modality characterized by some

specificity like subtitling and dubbing, tries to achieve the overseas cultural promotion successfully. Prior studies on *Genshin Impact* spot on cross culture communication and its international influence. Studies on English translation of *Genshin Impact* tend to focus on the culture-loaded words and cross culture communication by discussing only from one modal. As video game consists of image, verbal signs, and sound (verbal and non-verbal) (Rogers, 2018), study on game localization such as *Genshin Impact* should be discussed from not only linguistic and visual mode, but also audio modes. Therefore, the study analyzes how audio modes make effects on audio translation and linguistic translation in a case study of elemental skill dubbing for Zhongli and Xingqiu and inventive opera *Divine Damsel of Devastation* based on multimodal analysis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Studies on Multimodal Theory

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001, p. 20) defined the concept of “multimodality” as “the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event”. They focused on multi-modes including color grammar, visual images, newspaper layout and the role of different media. Multimodal discourse is the phenomenon of using various senses including sight, hearing and touch to communicate through language, image, sound, and action (Zhang, 2009).

In terms of the translation field, multimodal theory is becoming a combination that is receiving more and more attention. Gottlieb (1994) proposed the multi-symbol text type in film and television subtitle translation, which refers to the text type that includes more than two communication channels. In an effort to merge the two dimensions of text media and mode, Gerzymisch-Arbogast (2005) proposed multidimensional translation, focusing more on the conversion of symbols in the media during the translation process. According to Kaindl (2020), translation should be reinvented as a way of cultural engagement in which intermediaries from three areas—modal, media, and genre—transform the symbols and cultural barriers in the text that the audience encounters.

2.2 Studies on Game Localization

The concept of “localization” is often closely related to the term game translation, but not exactly the same. Localization is described as “the process of adapting products and services (websites, manuals, and software applications) to the linguistic, cultural, technical, functional, and other locale-specific requirements of the target market” (Singh, 2011). Localization implied a “broader and more sophisticated” (Pym, 2004) process including the field of audiovisual translation (Miguel, 2022). Video games are, of course, a kind of interactive narrative and hence close in this sense to literary texts, although they are distinguished by their realization as dynamic multimodal productions consisting of image, verbal signs, and sound (verbal and non-verbal) (Rogers, 2018).

The following three categories generally correspond to current domestic game localization research: 1) case studies of certain video games; 2) an overview and training of game translation; 3) and reporting on pertinent translation practice. For the first category, Liu and Ma (2020) concluded that game localization

is one of the main businesses of localization industry. In the second category, Zhu et al. (2021) analyzed the adaptive translation performed by translators for the mobile game *Brawl Stars* was done from a variety of perspectives, including communication, language, and culture. The third type concentrated on researching the Chinese translations of well-known games from abroad by analyzing the translations of video games from English to Chinese (Zhao, 2022). As for *Genshin Impact*, there are only several studies on it. Xiao (2023) discussed about the translation strategies applied in interpreting culture-loaded information. Chen (2023) focuses on linguistic and visual modes by analyzing two promotion videos and an in-game quest in *Genshin Impact* from four levels of culture, context, content and expression. Therefore, study on the audio modes need more discussed.

3. Case Study of Audio and Linguistic Translation

3.1 Dubbing of Skill Names with Chinese Four Characters

Genshin Impact is an action roleplaying game with “gacha” monetisation system, whose characters have different skill actions with his/her specific elemental skill type messages. There are 7 kinds of elements (Pyro 火, Hydro 水, Dendro 草, Electro 雷, Anemo 风, Cryo 冰, Geo 岩) in total, which of all will appear elemental reactions to enhance the ability of attack. While the players are using one of the characters, they will hear the verbal messages as soon as they press the elemental skill button. Besides, verbal messages are unique as each character role has their own characteristics. Two characters Zhongli and Xingqiu are selected in Table 1 whose identities are quite different. Unique identities affect the text of each slogan dubbing when the character is using one elemental skill.

Table1. ST and TT of Skill Slogan Dubbing for Zhongli and Xingqiu

Character	Identity	Skill Type	ST of Slogan	TT of Slogan
Zhongli	Legendary and knowledgeable lord of Geo:	Elemental Skill	壁立千仞	Rise!
			震天撼地	Quake!
			靡坚不摧	Crumble!
			俱收并蓄	Gather.
			安如磐石	Stabilize.
			固若金汤	Solidify.
Xingqiu	A young man like a bookworm	Elemental Skill	雨线难画	Rain outlined your fate!
		Elemental Burst	古华深秘	Witness the power of Guhua!

织诗成锦

Let me weave you a
verse.

彩雨留虹

Raincutter!

Zhongli serves as the legendary lord of Geo while Xingqiu is a teenager in Feiyun Commerce Guild who is carrying a longsword and frequently seen at book booths. For both Zhongli and Xingqiu's identity, they are of great knowledge. In this way, the source texts of their skill slogan are almost all four-character words, but their translation is quite different.

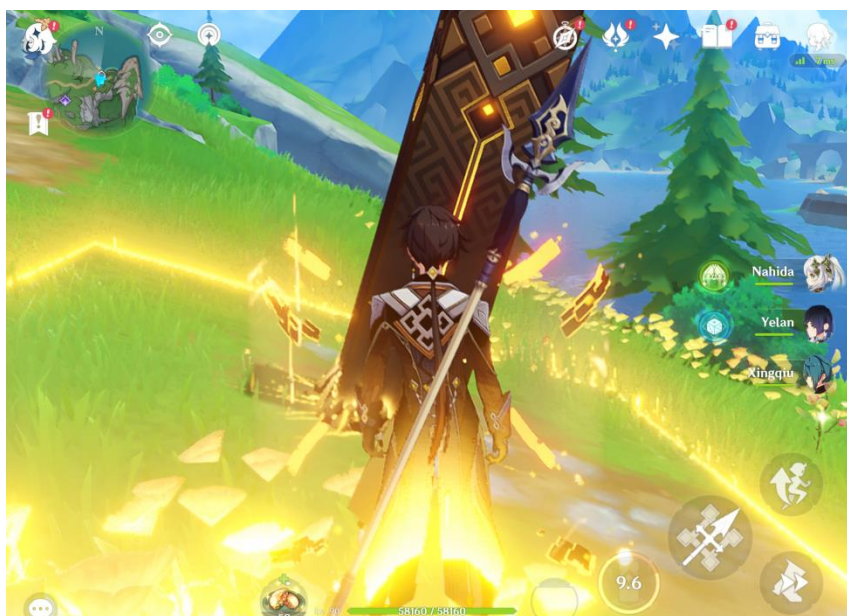


Figure 1. Zhongli's Using His Elementary Skill

For Zhongli's verbal message, the six verbal skill slogan “壁立千仞” (stand bolt upright), “震撼地” (shake the universe), “靡坚不摧” (be secure against assault), “俱收并蓄” (absorb anything and everything), “安如磐石” (steady as a rock), “固若金汤” (defenses as strong as iron) in Chinese can be read quickly with a tremendous momentum. As the skill slogan has no subtitle for they will appear by the form of verbal message instead of being subtitled on the game screen. Specifically speaking, as shown in *Figure 1* for character Zhongli, he is using his elemental skill: prism attack. These skills will make effect in just one second. If Zhongli's skill slogans are translated literally, it will spend more several seconds and players may find it tedious when fighting against the enemies. Zhongli, as a lord of Geo, saying too long slogans does not fit his identity. As an archon, his skill slogan should be short and powerful. Besides, Zhongli's E skill is that he summons a Geo pillar quickly for defense. Therefore, for the limited time and the legendary identity, the target text of Zhongli's skill slogan is translated into only

one word to make sure the verbal message (audio modal) sounds quick and powerful to let the player know that Zhongli is making orders. Tedious explanation would weaken Zhongli's "status" in Liyue.



Figure 2. Xingqiu Is Using His E Skills

For Xingqiu's verbal message, different from Zhongli's one word translation, Xingqiu is more like a well-educated scholar. His elemental skills are not quicker than that of Zhongli. In order to personalize each character, translation for Xingqiu's skills is not one word, but a four-word slogan at average. “雨线难画”, “古华深秘”, “织诗成锦” and “彩雨留虹” are not Chinese idioms but inventive Chinese four-character phrases. As *Figure 2* depicts, Xingqiu can summon four small swords by his side for melee combat with five consecutive attacks. This means that Xingqiu's elemental skills last a little bit longer than Zhongli's. For dubbing, audio mode provides the translator to consider not just a one-word order, but several-word slogan that is dubbed at a fast speed. However, considering the dubbing of character's skill, generally speaking, it is much concise when the character is on a fight. Therefore, Xingqiu's translated verbal message is liberally applied. Apart from the length of skill names, Xingqiu's dubber is chosen a voice actress using a male voice to dub this male character, making the dubbing of Xingqiu's elemental skills more a youthful voice or a voice that sounds like that of a young boy. In this way, the translations like “Rain outlined your fate” (雨线难画), “Witness the power of Guhua” (古华深秘), “Let me weave you a verse” (织诗成锦), and “Raincutter” (彩雨留虹) seem much softer compared with that of Zhongli's.

In conclusion, both Zhongli and Xingqiu's elementary skills have influence on the budding of the two characters. Dubbing also affect the translation of the skill slogan (verbal text): For Zhongli, because of his identity Lord of Geo and short time of starting his E skill, translation for his slogan is almost one-word length, ensuring the foreign players fully know the characteristics of Zhongli; For Xingqiu, his

identity as a book lover, his a little bit longer-time of E skill and his verbal message dubbed by a voice actress, translation for his slogan is much more longer length and softer to cater to his own identity.

3.2 Subtitling and Dubbing of *Divine Damsel of Devastation*

Divine Damsel of Devastation is an original and inventive Chinese opera created by the development team of *Genshin Impact* to celebrate the New Year in 2022, coinciding with the release of a new storyline in the game. The opera draws inspiration from the life story of the new character “Shenhe” (申鹤) and is performed by the character “Yunjin” (云堇) who is also the renowned opera performer “Yun Xiansheng” (云先生). In a sense, the lyrics of *Divine Damsel of Devastation* can be seen as a form of “narrative verse”, condensed with rich information and the beauty of sound. The lyrics contain numerous Chinese cultural symbols and allusions, and whether overseas players can understand and appreciate the opera depends on the translator’s successful translation of these elements and the gorgeous performance of the dubber (a Chinese opera performer).

Table 2. ST and TT of *Divine Damsel of Devastation*

ST	TT
可叹！	Alas!
秋鸿折单复难双	Two loving souls by death cruelly parted
痴人痴怨恨迷狂	In madness and grief, a dark path started
只因那邪牲祭伏定祸殃	Calamity was drawn, rituals subverted
若非巾幗拔剑人皆命丧	But by her cold steel was death averted
凡缘朦朦仙缘滔	Mortal ties broken, with the adepts she went
天伦散去绛府邀	Their abiding place filling paternal bonds rent
朱丝缚绝烂柯樵	To her red strings of binding they sent
雪泥鸿迹遥	And they dwell long together, content
鹤归不见昔华表	The crane returned to a home without luster
蛛丝枉结魂幡飘	The cobwebs overgrown, the grave-shrouds a-flutter
因果红尘渺渺	But one bond upon her
烟消	This world could not muster
《神女劈观》到这里本该接近尾声	Thus does the Divine Damsel’s tale duly end
但今日我再添一笔——	But today a new tale I have to append
唱与——诸位——听——	Which I shall now tell — if you shall attend

曲高未必人不识	From the world she seems apart
自有知音和清词	But there are those who know her heart
红缨猎猎剑流星	With crimson spear and flashing brand
直指怒涛洗海清	To still the raging tides they stand
彼时鹤归，茫茫天地无依靠，孤身离去。	The crane once returned
今日再会，新朋旧友坐满堂，共聚此时。	And once, she was spurned
	She turned, and left alone
	Now, she might be found
	With friends all around
	To whom she is bound — a home

For the textual translation of this opera, liberal translation is applied by using the beauty of ending rhymes (aabbccdd eeffggg...) to achieve the beauty of sound. There are so many allusions and unfamiliar words in the ST, even hard for Chinese players to understand. In this way, the TT only shows the core and main content of this story. For instance, “彼时鹤归，茫茫天地无依靠，孤身离去” is rendered into “The crane once returned. And once, she was spurned. She turned, and left alone”. “茫茫天地无依靠” is omitted, only the meaning that Shenhe is lonely is delivered by the translation “And once, she was spurned”. “Spurn” is defined as “to refuse to accept someone’s love or friendship”, only using passive voice can directly reflect how lonely Shenhe is. The textual translation is trying to cater to the foreign players to understand as this text is put as the subtitle. Foreign players are encountered with linguistic, visual, audio modes when watching the game storyline. At that time, audio mode is critical as opera has its unique singing style; visual mode is telling players the story of Shenhe by showing different images; linguistic mode is subtitling. For the foreign player, visual mode and audio mode is critical as they are not familiar with the opera or the story. They are first attracted by the images and singing. From this aspect, there is no need to render the subtitling according to the ST. Images can help players understand how the story is going on. Therefore, the linguistic translation is rendered more concisely compared to ST.

For the audio translation, the original opera is used. There is no audio translation for this opera. Mihoyo, has translated all the characters and storylines into the target language, including animation PVs (promotion video) and images. However, for Yunjin’s performance of *Divine Damsel of Devastation*, the audio modes seem to provide a true essence of traditional Chinese opera performance, thus making the only part using the original audio mode instead of having the voice actress sing the translated version. Various channels to export the culture make different strategies. In the PV submitted in Youtube channel, Mihoyo has chosen to add English subtitles to this part, along with scrolling images, creating a

multimodal intertextuality (Figure 3). However, for the English PV in Chinese own social media Bilibili, there is no English subtitles for players to read (Figure 4).

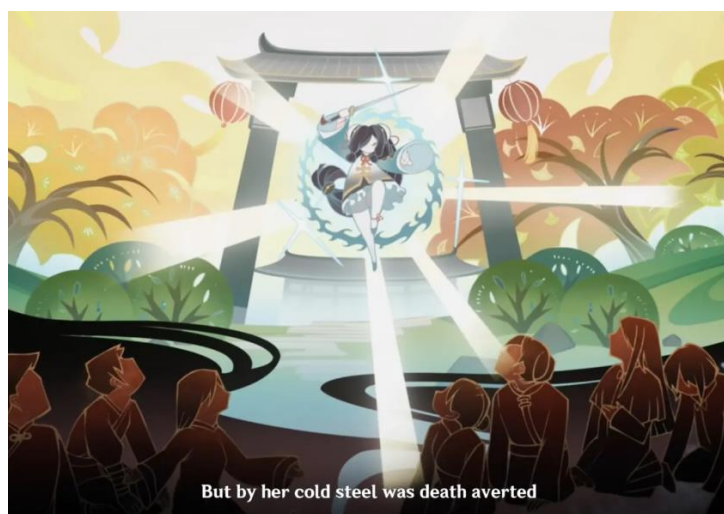


Figure 3. Screenshot in PV of *Divine Damsel of Devastation* on Youtube Channel (Note 1)



Figure 4. Screenshot in PV of *Divine Damsel of Devastation* on Bilibili Channel (Note 2)

Genshin Impact takes advantage of visual and audio modes in *Liyue* Chapter, such as image, subtitling and dubbing to provide players a detailed and vivid context to experience the Chinese culture. Audio modes like dubbing have influence on the translation of verbal message and text by rendering the core content of the text concisely based on the visual mode like images.

4. Conclusion

Based on the multimodal analysis, the study analyzes the English translation of elemental skills for Zhongli and Xingqiu and inventive opera *Divine Damsel of Devastation* in the *Genshin Impact* by focusing on how audio modes influence the audio translation and linguistic translation. Through the case study, conclusions can be made as follows:

For rendering the dubbing of elemental skills for Zhongli and Xingqiu, audio modes will have influence on the translation of the verbal message dubbing. Dubbing also affects the translation of the skill slogan (verbal text): For Zhongli, translation for his slogan is very concise, ensuring the foreign players fully know the characteristics of Zhongli because of his identity Lord of Geo and short time of starting his attack skills; For Xingqiu, his a little bit longer-time of E skill allows the voice actress can read more. His identity as a book lover with no authority makes the translation for his slogan much longer and softer to cater to his own identity.

As for the translation of opera *Divine Damsel of Devastation*, visual modes such as the images of the story telling and audio modes such as the singing of the opera make the liberal translation of *Divine Damsel of Devastation* by rendering only the main story. Besides, one of the biggest social media channels Youtube and Bilibili vary from each other as the former one is subtitled with English translation of the verbal message of the opera while the latter one is not. In other words, in *Liyue* Chapter, *Genshin Impact* uses audio and visual modes like picture, subtitling, and dubbing to give players a rich and deep understanding of Chinese culture. Due to the way that audio modes like dubbing express the verbal text's main ideas succinctly based on visual modes like visuals, they have an impact on how verbal and written messages are translated.

Reference

- Chaume, F. (2016). Audiovisual translation trends: Growing diversity, choice, and enhanced localization. In *Media Across Borders* (pp. 68-84). Routledge.
- Gerzymisch-Arbogast, H. (2005). Introducing multidimensional translation. *MuTra: Challenges of Multidimensional Translation. Proceedings of the Marie Curie Euroconferences-Saarbrücken* (pp. 2-6).
- Gottlieb, H. (1994). Subtitling: Diagonal Translation. *Perspectives-studies in Translatology*, 2, 101-121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.1994.9961227>
- Jiménez, C., & Miguel, Á. (2022). "Localization" @ ENTI (*Encyclopedia of translation & interpreting*). AIETI. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6369108>
- Kaindl, K. (2020). A theoretical framework for a multimodal conception of translation. In M. Boria, A. Carreres, M. Noriega-Sanchez, & M. Tomalin (Eds.), *Translation and Multimodality: Beyond Words* (pp. 49-70). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429341557-3>
- Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*.
- Mejías-Climent, L., & Mejías-Climent, L. (2021). *Enhancing video game localization through dubbing*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88292-1>
- Pym, A. (2004). *The moving text: Localization, translation, and distribution* (Vol. 49). John Benjamins Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.49>

- Rogers, M. (2018). From binaries to borders: Literary and non-literary translation. In *Moving Boundaries in Translation Studies* (pp. 151-167). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315121871-10>
- Singh, N. (2011). *Localization strategies for global e-business*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511920226>
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2021). *Multimodality and Identity* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003186625>
- Chen, P. (2023). *Game Translation Based on Multimodal Discourse Analysis: A Case Study of Genshin Impact* (MASTER DISSERTATION, Beijing Foreign Studies University). Retrieved from https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=ID5CuVSaeOuV4OUEUxEad1SPilUmj15Y4CZKaVgWqzB_Ae0DpvfAFCbn6BUXGEg2CmlVCe2PVvaRET4Kj0JITH3bLOIHZYddnHvaCjgiIkka fEN40-38oI2UQyPf7w&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS
- Luan, J. Y. (2020). Research on Localization Translation of TCG Game Software: Taking Hearthstone as an Example. *Modern Communication*, 22, 77-79.
- Xiao, N. H. (2023). A Research on the Translation of Genshin Impact. *Comparative Study of Cultural Innovation*, 15, 25-29.
- Zhao, H. R. (2022). *Game Localization from the Perspective of Skopos Theory: Taking the Japanese translation of Genshin Impact as an example* (Master Dissertation, Sichuan International Studies University). Retrieved from https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=ID5CuVSaeOv1Cs4Rk00udJT6va2wusNUQhna6MspoMr5-sQtHSjH4HsfNSnI_pzsUwEKrWViWSWmg5dtsgep-t5U6yqFufg6hhpKVLcQryg_NYAGrM4VCNIZXbMdDLOV3roVW2Ayb3E=&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS
- Zhang, D. L. (2009). On a Synthetic Theoretical Framework for Multimodal Discourse Analysis. *Foreign Languages in China*, 1, 24-30.
- Zhu, Y. F., & Mujing. (2021). Research on English to Chinese Translation of Mobile Games from an Ecological Perspective: A Case Study of Game Text Translation in Brawl Stars. *English Square*, 34, 28-31.

Notes

Note 1. The website for PV in Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiAhMr6IJTQ>

Note 2. The website for PV in Youtube Channel: https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1kS4y1T7kK/?p=3&share_source=copy_web